RUNNING HEAD: PERVASIVENESS AND CONFRONTATION

When do high and low status group members support confrontation? The role of perceived pervasiveness of prejudice

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Abstract

This paper examines how perceived pervasiveness of prejudice differentially affects high and low status group members' support for a low status group member who confronts. In Experiment 1 (N = 228), men and women read a text describing sexism as rare or as pervasive and subsequently indicated their support for a woman who confronted or did not confront a sexist remark. Experiment 2 (N = 324) specified the underlying process using a self-affirmation manipulation. Results show that men were more supportive of confrontation when sexism was perceived to be rare than when it was pervasive. By contrast, women tended to prefer confrontation when sexism was pervasive relative to when it was rare. Personal self-affirmation decreased men's and increased women's support for confrontation when prejudice was rare, suggesting that men's and women's support for confrontation when prejudice is rare is driven by personal impression management considerations. Implications for understanding how members of low and high status groups respond to prejudice are discussed.

Keywords: prejudice, confrontation, sexism, self-affirmation

When do high and low status group members support confrontation? The role of perceived pervasiveness of prejudice

Confronting prejudice consists of directly expressing dissatisfaction to the source of prejudice (Kaiser & Miller, 2004). Confrontation is an effective prejudice reduction strategy (Blanchard, Crandall, Brigham, & Vaughn, 1994; Czopp, Monteith, & Mark, 2006), particularly if supported by members of the high status group (Czopp & Monteith, 2003). It is, however, an uncommon response to prejudice (Shelton & Stewart, 2004; Swim & Hyers, 1999; Woodzicka & LaFrance, 2001), largely due to the negative interpersonal evaluations that confronters incur at the hands of high status group members (Czopp et al., 2006; Dodd, Giuliano, Boutell, & Moran, 2001; Kaiser, Dyrenforth, & Hagiwara, 2006; Kaiser & Miller, 2001). Understanding when high status group members are likely to support confrontation is important, since their support is likely to make this response to prejudice both more likely and more effective (Drury & Kaiser, 2014).

This paper examines whether perceived pervasiveness of prejudice affects high and low status group members' support for a low status group member who confronts prejudice. Prior research demonstrated that members of a low status group are more likely to support a fellow ingroup member who confronts prejudice to the extent that they see prejudice against their group as pervasive in society (Garcia, Schmitt, Branscombe, & Ellemers, 2010). We propose that the opposite is the case for high status group members, who are more likely to support confrontation by a low status group member when they perceive prejudice to be rare than when they perceive it to be pervasive. We suggest that this pattern emerges because the perceived pervasiveness of prejudice towards low status group members has divergent implications for members of low and high status groups. Crucially, we argue that members of high and low status groups can both demonstrate support for confrontation, but that they do so for different reasons, and thus also under different circumstances.

When Do High Status Group Members Support Prejudice Confronters?

High status group members may not support confronters of prejudice because confrontation raises threats to their collective identity, centering on concerns about their group's privileged status. High status group members go to great lengths to maintain the perception that the status quo is legitimate (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Sidanius & Pratto, 2001), such as by strategically downplaying their privilege (Kahn, Ho, Sidanius, & Pratto, 2009), or minimizing the low status group's disadvantage (Adams, Tormala, & O'Brien, 2006). Confrontation can be threating for high status group members because it raises questions about the status quo. First, when a low status group member confronts prejudice from a high status group member, the high status group's privileged position is questioned (Jost & Burgess, 2000; Stone, Whitehead, Schmader, & Focella, 2011). This is consistent with research showing that the stronger the need to justify the social system, the more high status group members derogate members of low status groups who claim to be targets of prejudice (Kaiser et al., 2006). Second, by highlighting the low status group's potential for social redress, confrontation can draw attention to the possible loss of the high status group's privilege through social change (Wright, 2010; Wright, & Lubensky, 2008; Wright & Tropp, 2002). In sum, confrontation constitutes a direct challenge to the status quo, which high status group members are motivated to protect, and is thus an important collective threat for high status group members. For these reasons, high status group members may be unwilling to support a low status group member who confronts prejudice.

However, at times, high status group members may instead support confronters of prejudice due to different personal identity motivations. One such personal identity motivation reflects an individual's desire to appear egalitarian. Derogating low status group members who confront prejudice is problematic for high status group members as it makes them vulnerable to appearing prejudiced themselves. Responding to strong normative

pressures in Western societies to avoid expressing prejudice (Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986; Monin & Miller, 2001; Plant & Devine, 1998), high status group members are very concerned about the possibility of being seen as prejudiced (Shelton, Richeson, & Vorauer, 2006; Vorauer, 2006). As a consequence, being accused of expressing prejudice is a highly aversive experience that involves feelings of guilt and shame (Czopp et al., 2006; Stone et al., 2011). Thus, high status group members may express support for a low status group member who confronts prejudice to demonstrate allegiance to egalitarian norms and avoid appearing prejudiced at a personal level.

Given these conflicting motivations, when do high status group members support confrontation by members of the low status group? We propose that *beliefs regarding the pervasiveness of prejudice* towards low status group members are likely to moderate the extent to which each of these collective and personal threats guides high status group members' support for confrontation. As a result, we propose that high status group members are less likely to support confrontation when they perceive prejudice to be pervasive than when they perceive prejudice to be rare. Specifically, we suggest that when prejudice is pervasive the high status group has more to lose from actions that challenge the status quo, such as low status group members' confrontation of prejudiced events. As such, when prejudice is *pervasive*, confrontation constitutes a more significant *collective threat*. At the same time, when prejudice is perceived to be pervasive it is also perceived to be more normative, reducing the importance of appearing prejudiced. Indeed, impression management is highly sensitive to salient norms (e.g., Crandall, Eshleman, & O'Brien, 2002; Leary, 1995). Therefore, when prejudice towards low status group members is perceived to be pervasive, high status group members are particularly likely to display responses to confrontation that derive from a collective motivation to defend the group's status, such as derogating confronters, or demonstrating little support for confrontation.

By contrast, we predict that support for confrontation by high status group members will increase when prejudice is perceived to be rare. When prejudice is rare, collective threats are less salient, while personal motivations may become more primary, leading to more support for confronters of prejudice. When prejudice is rare, high status group members have less symbolic or tangible status to lose, so the threat confrontation presents to their collective status is reduced. Prejudice is also less normative, so appearing personally prejudiced is likely to be more problematic, and it may be in the individual's best interest to support confronters (Crandall et al., 2002). Although one could also be concerned about the group being seen as biased by not supporting confronters, this group level threat is less central when prejudice is rare, due to the fact that rare prejudice defines the larger group as unbiased. An individual's support of confronters of prejudice can also convey notions of paternalism toward the low status group, as one could be seen by others as a protector of the low status group (Jackman, 1994; Kay, Jost, & Young, 2005). This personal motivation to support confronters could serve to further bolster one's self-image. As such, when prejudice is *rare*, high status group members' responses to confronters of prejudice are likely to be primarily driven by *personal threats*, such as appearing prejudiced and being anti-normative, which is likely to drive high status group members to support confrontation of prejudice from low status group members.

When Do Low Status Group Members Support Prejudice Confronters?

Ironically, what makes prejudice confrontation less threatening for members of the high status group might make it more threatening for members of the low status group—leading low and high status group members to express greater support for confronters under different conditions. Specifically, and in contrast to what we predicted for high status group members, we expect low status group members to be *less* supportive of ingroup confronters

when prejudice is rare than when it is pervasive. This pattern again reflects the distinct threats that confrontation presents to the low status group's personal and collective identities.

Individuals from low status groups may support confronters of prejudice because it calls attention to unfair treatment and injustice against the group, a collective motive. If confrontation highlights the potential for social change and action, then it may have tangible beneficial consequences for the low status group's social position (Blanchard et al., 1994; Czopp et al., 2006). As such, low status group members have worthy reasons to support confrontation to improve the group's position.

However, low status group members do not always support ingroup confronters. Confrontation can also be threatening to the low status group due to its potential to portray the individual (personal threat) as oversensitive or as making unreasonable claims (e.g., Garcia, Reser, Amo, Redersdorff, & Branscombe, 2005; Kaiser & Miller, 2001). Ingroup members may be particularly mindful of ingroup members' actions that reflect poorly on themselves (Garcia et al., 2005). Members of low status groups are well aware of the social costs of confrontation and of how it might damage their own reputation (Shelton & Stewart, 2004). In sum, low status group members may be unsupportive of confrontation because this may threaten their personal reputation.

We hypothesize that perceived pervasiveness of prejudice towards the low status group can shift the emphasis on these personal and collective motivations, which is likely to affect support for ingroup confronters. We expect that low status group members will be more supportive of confronters when they perceive prejudice to be pervasive than when they perceive it to be rare. Pervasive prejudice is more likely to make salient collective concerns about the group's unfair low status. Pervasive prejudice indicates that the low status group is being unfairly and ubiquitously discriminated against in society, which is particularly harmful to the group and its members (Eliezer, Major, & Mendes, 2010; Schmitt, Branscombe, &

Postmes, 2003; Stroebe, Dovidio, Barreto, Ellemers, & John, 2011). If prejudice is perceived to be pervasive, the collective motive of invoking social change is likely to be at the forefront of low status group members' concerns, leading to support for confrontation.

If, however, prejudice is perceived to be rare and infrequent, there is little tangible benefit to the group to be gained by confronting, reducing the emphasis on this collective motive. Because prejudice is by definition infrequent, confronting will do little to improve the low status group's status in the societal structure. In this context, the possibility that confrontation (and support thereof) might threaten the individual's (personal threat) reputation by portraying them as oversensitive becomes a primary concern. When prejudice is perceived to be rare, the problem is unlikely to be seen as sufficiently significant to warrant confrontation, rendering those who support confrontation vulnerable to appearing unreasonable or oversensitive. By expressing support for confrontation when prejudice is rare, therefore, individuals risk their own reputation. Together, these heightened personal considerations are likely to render low status group members' support for confrontation unenthusiastic when prejudice is rare. Although this hypothesis for low status group members has as yet to be tested experimentally, correlational evidence is suggestive of this pattern (Garcia et al., 2010).

The Current Studies

The research reported extends past research in several ways. First, we examine the circumstances under which high status group members are supportive of confrontation (Experiments 1 and 2). We predict that high status group members (men) will express more support for confrontation of prejudice when prejudice is portrayed as rare than when it is portrayed as pervasive (Hypothesis 1). Second, building on existing correlational evidence, we experimentally test whether pervasiveness of prejudice affects low status group members' (women) support for confrontation (Experiments 1 and 2). We predict that low status group

members will express greater support for confrontation when prejudice is portrayed as pervasive than when it is portrayed as rare (Hypothesis 2). Third, we provide insight into the psychological mechanisms underlying these responses by examining the role of personal and collective threat in producing these divergent effects of pervasiveness of prejudice on high and low status group members' support for confrontation (Experiment 2). We propose that when feelings of personal threat are mitigated by personal self-affirmation, personal threats (e.g., fear of appearing sexists; being seen as oversensitive) will no longer affect men's and women's support for confrontation (Experiment 2, Hypotheses 3-6).

Experiment 1

Experiment 1 offers an experimental examination of Hypothesis 1 and 2 by testing how perceived pervasiveness of sexism affects men's and women's evaluations of a woman who confronts or does not confront a man who expresses prejudice. Comparisons between the confrontation and the no confrontation conditions ensure that increased support is specific to confrontation, rather than a reflection of a more generalized increase in motivation to demonstrate support for women, irrespective of their behavior.

Method

Design and Participants

One hundred and thirty four females and 94 males were randomly distributed to experimental conditions in a 2 pervasiveness of sexism (pervasive vs. rare) X 2 confrontation (target confronts vs. does not confront) between participants factorial design. Participants were recruited from the MTurk online data collection system and received compensation for participation. Participants were located in the United States and were fluent in English. Participants' average age was 33.4 years old (*SD*=12.4), with 176 identifying as White/Caucasian (77.2%), 21 as Asian/Asian American (9.2%), 12 as Latino/Hispanic (5.3%), 14 as African American/Black (6.1%), and 5 as "Other" (2.2%).

Materials and Procedure

After agreeing to participate, participants were directed to an online survey which assessed people's perceptions of American society and how individuals form impressions about other people. After filling out demographic information, participants read the pervasiveness of sexism manipulation, developed by Schmitt, Branscombe, and Postmes (2003). Participants read a paragraph titled either "The Pervasiveness of Sexism" or "Reductions in Sexism." The paragraph described how women either face "widespread" (pervasive condition) or "infrequent" (rare condition) prejudice and sexism in many important areas of life, including "employment, salary, education, politics, the courtroom, and in everyday interpersonal interactions." It discussed that "recent psychological research has shown that between 90 and 95% of men hold sexist (non-sexist) attitudes and will (refuse to) discriminate against women if given the opportunity." As a manipulation check, participants answered 3 questions with the following prompt, "To check whether you understood the information you have just read, please answer the following questions about men and women in US society." An example items is "How often do you think that women can expect to face gender discrimination?" (from Schmitt et al., 2003; responses on 1-7 Likert-type scales; $\alpha = .93$).

Next, participants read a paragraph purportedly written by a 23 year old White woman who had participated in a previous study where participants had been asked to write about an event they witnessed in the last week. The paragraph was as follows:

> I was having lunch at a restaurant one afternoon. While I was eating my lunch, I heard a businessman talking to his friend about how he preferred to hire males instead of females at his company. He said that women are not as committed to the job as men, always have childcare issues, are too emotional, and are too soft for the business world. I don't think they noticed me because my table was half hidden from their

view. After eating lunch, the friend he was speaking to left. I did not like what the businessman said.

In the confrontation condition, the paragraph ended with, *"I went to his table and told him that I found his comment offensive and sexist."* In the no confrontation condition, the paragraph closed by saying, *"I found his comment offensive and sexist, but I did not say anything."*

Participants then responded to seven items that assessed their support for the target's response to the sexist comment– either confronting or not confronting the businessman. Specifically, participants were asked how much they agreed with the woman's reaction, how much they agreed with how the woman handled the situation, and the extent to which they felt content, calm, confident, irritated (reverse coded), and annoyed (reverse coded) about the woman's response to the businessman (from 1= strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree; α= .81). To check on the confrontation manipulation, participants indicated whether or not the female target confronted the perpetrator (yes or no). To examine whether sexism in the scenario was perceived similarly across conditions, participants indicated the extent to which they perceived the perpetrator's comment as sexist on a 1-7 Likert-type scale. Finally, participants were debriefed, wrote comments about the experiment, were paid, and thanked for participation.

Results

Manipulation Checks and Descriptive Variables

Data from 16 participants (~7%) were excluded because they failed the confrontation check (N=12) or because they explicitly wrote at the end of the study that they had not believed the paragraph used to manipulate pervasiveness (N=4). Results when these participants are included are similar to what is reported here. This left a final sample size of 212 participants. As intended, participants believed the comment to be highly sexist

(M=6.06, SD=1.16), which did not vary across gender or experimental conditions. Results from the pervasiveness manipulation check showed that participants understood the paragraphs' different sexism messages, indicating that sexism was more pervasive in the pervasive condition (men: M=5.17, SD=.99; women: M=5.78, SD=.89) than in the rare condition (men: M=2.44, SD=1.05; women: M=2.59, SD=1.06), $F(1, 208)=460.87$, $p<.001$; partial η^2 =.69. There was also a main effect of gender, such that women perceived sexism described in the paragraph to be more pervasive than did men, $F(1, 208)=7.56$, $p<.001$; partial η^2 =.04.

Support for Target's Response

An ANOVA revealed the predicted three way interaction between gender, pervasiveness of sexism, and confrontation condition on support for confrontation, $F(1, 210)= 3.97$, p=.04, partial η^2 =.02 (see Figure 1). We then examined our a priori hypotheses for men and women using simple effects tests. Hypothesis 1 focused on the effects predicted for male participants (the high status group). In support of this hypothesis, men supported the target's confrontation response when sexism was rare (M=4.65, SD=.91) more than when it was pervasive (M=4.03, SD=1.06), $F(1, 204)= 3.65$, p=.05, partial η^2 =.02. By contrast, support for no confrontation did not differ across pervasiveness conditions (Pervasive: M=4.02, SD=.89; Rare: M=3.98, SD=.91; $F(1,204)=.01$, p=.92, partial η^2 =.00). This suggests that male participants' greater support for the target's confrontation when prejudice is rare does not reflect a generalized desire to show support for whatever women choose to do, but a specific desire to express support for the act of confronting sexism. Also providing additional support for the logic behind the hypothesis, men supported confrontation (M=4.65, SD=.91) more than non-confrontation (M=3.98, SD=.91) when sexism was rare, $F(1, 204)= 4.50$, p=.03, partial η^2 =.02, but not when it was pervasive, $F(1, 204)=.001$, p=.97, partial η^2 =.00.

Hypothesis 2 focused on the effects predicted for women as the low status group. Contrary to predictions, women did not support the target's confrontation more when prejudice was pervasive (M=4.48, SD=1.09) than when it was rare (M=4.44, SD=1.27), $F(1, 204)=.02$, $p=.89$, partial $\eta^2=.00$. In light of this non-significant effect, we tested a complementary hypothesis that is consistent with the reasoning of Hypothesis 2: that women would prefer confrontation over non-confrontation only when prejudice was pervasive (and not when it was rare). As described above, perceiving prejudice as pervasive enhances the salience of the collective motive to improve women's low status. Thus, women should support confronters under those conditions. When prejudice is perceived to be pervasive, a woman who chooses to not confront is perceived to act against that collective motive, so other women should be less supportive of their behavior. Rare prejudice does not make this collective threat salient to the same extent—but rather emphasizes personal threats of being seen as oversensitive—and thus women should support confronters over non-confronters under pervasive prejudice only. Tests of this new extended hypothesis revealed that women did support confrontation (M=4.48, SD=1.09) more than non-confrontation (M=3.58, SD=1.13) when prejudice was pervasive, $F(1, 204)=12.46$, $p<.001$, partial $\eta^2=.06$, but not when it was rare, $F(1, 204)=1.82$, $p=.17$, partial $\eta^2=.01$.

Discussion

In line with Hypothesis 1, pervasiveness of prejudice moderated high status group members' support for a low status group member who confronted sexism. Men supported confrontation of sexism to a greater extent when they perceived sexism to be rare than when they perceived sexism to be pervasive. By contrast, and inconsistent with prior correlational research (Garcia et al., 2010), the evidence for women was mixed. Contrary to Garcia et al. (2010), who employed a correlational approach to examining the effects of perceived pervasiveness, we experimentally manipulated beliefs in the perceived pervasiveness of

sexism and did not find that these affected women's support for confrontation. However, consistent with the reasoning underlying this hypothesis, female participants did express more support for confrontation over non-confrontation only when prejudice was pervasive, and not when it was rare. We hypothesize that pervasive prejudice makes salient the collective threat of the low status group's disadvantaged status and that, under these circumstances, women should be more supportive of confrontation. When women do not confront when prejudice is pervasive, their behavior is counter to the salient collective motive to improve women's status in society, and thus women withdraw their support. This preference for confrontation over non-confrontation was not found when prejudice was rare, which we suggest is because the collective threat to the groups' low status is less salient. Instead, women should be more sensitive to the threat of appearing oversensitive when (other) women confront when prejudice is rare. Although Hypothesis 2 was not directly supported, this finding, together with past correlational evidence, supports a continued investigation into this process among women in Experiment 2.

Experiment 2

Experiment 2 provides additional tests of Hypotheses 1 and 2 and focuses on the mechanisms responsible for these effects. Specifically, Experiment 2 offers an examination of the role of threat in producing differential support for confrontation under conditions of rare and pervasive sexism for high and low status group members. To test these hypotheses, Experiment 2 employed a manipulation of personal self-affirmation, which is commonly used to examine the role of personal threat in a variety of processes (see e.g., Taylor & Walton, 2011). Affirmation can affect responses at different levels of self-definition (self level or group level), and there needs to be a match between the level of the threat and the level at which self-affirmation is conducted to ensure that the specific threat (and related responses) is alleviated (e.g., see work by Derks, Van Laar, & Ellemers, 2009). In Experiment 2, we first

seek to replicate Experiment 1's finding corresponding to Hypothesis 1 (for men) and, in line with Garcia et al.'s (2010) correlational study, to find support for Hypothesis 2, for women. If both of these hypotheses are confirmed, we can then examine whether reducing *personal threat*, through a manipulation of self-affirmation, would eliminate the effects that we propose are driven by personal threats—i.e., women's lower support and men's relatively higher support for confrontation when prejudice is rare.

Self-affirmation theory posits that individuals can protect their self-image from threat, and thereby reduce defensive responses to this threat, by affirming an unrelated aspect of their personal identity (Steele, 1988; Steele & Liu, 1983, see for reviews: Aronson, Cohen, & Nail, 1999; Sherman & Cohen, 2002; 2006). When participants are not self-affirmed and threats are present, we expected to find support for Hypotheses 1 and 2. However, if men's and women's support for confrontation when prejudice is *rare* is driven by *personal* threats (albeit different ones), we should find that self-affirmation modifies the extent to which men and women express support for the confronter in the rare conditions. Since these personal threats are proposed to differ for men and women, we expected self-affirmation to affect men and women (in the rare conditions) differently.

Specifically, if men's relatively high support for confrontation when prejudice is rare (vs. pervasive) is driven by a personal threat (such as the concern of appearing sexist), self-affirmation should reduce this concern and thereby also reduce men's support for confrontation (Hypothesis 3). If we are able to find evidence for Hypothesis 2 in Experiment 2, which is also consistent with Garcia et al.'s (2010) correlational findings, then women's lower support for confrontation when prejudice is rare (vs. pervasive) is more likely to be driven by a personal threat (such, as we propose, the concern with being seen as oversensitive). As follows, self-affirmation should reduce this concern and thereby increase women's support for confrontation when sexism is rare (Hypothesis 4).

Because the manipulation we employed affirms the personal self, rather than the collective self, we expected that the manipulation would have little effect on *collective* threats and corresponding responses. As such, we do not expect self-affirmation to modify men's and women's responses in the *pervasive* conditions. The personal self-affirmation manipulation should not affect support for confrontation under pervasive prejudice neither for men (Hypothesis 5) nor for women (Hypothesis 6). In sum, if personal self-affirmation alters support in the rare condition, it further supports the idea that personal threats play a primary role in these conditions; a lack of change in the pervasive condition would support the idea that personal threats are not as primary in these conditions—where we propose support for confrontation is primarily driven by collective threats.

Method

Design and Participants

Three hundred twenty four participants (127 males, 197 females) were randomly assigned to experimental conditions in a 2 pervasiveness of sexism (pervasive vs. rare) X 2 self-affirmation (affirmation vs. no affirmation) between participants factorial design. Given the focus of this study on eliminating the personal threats associated with confrontation, and to keep the design manageable, all participants read about a target who confronted. As in Experiment 1, participants were recruited from MTurk, resided in the United States of America, and received payment. Participants who completed Experiment 1 were not eligible to participate in Experiment 2. Two hundred fifty five identified as White/Caucasian (78.7%), 25 as Asian/Asian American (7.7%), 24 as African American/Black (7.4%), 14 as Latino/Hispanic (4.3%), and 6 as "Other" (1.9%). The average age of the sample was 31.4 years old (*SD*=11.3).

Materials and Procedure

The procedure was the same as in Experiment 1 except for the following changes. After answering demographic questions, participants completed a personal self-affirmation manipulation, which followed the personal value ranking procedure by Cohen, Aronson, and Steele (2000; see McQueen & Klein, 2006; Sherman & Cohen, 2006 for reviews). Participants ranked 11 personal values from most important (1) to least important (11) to them personally. In the self-affirmation condition, participants then wrote a paragraph describing why they chose their first ranked value as the most important to them and detailed a time in their life when it proved meaningful. In the no affirmation condition, participants instead wrote about why someone else might choose their 9th ranked value as their most important value. Participants were instructed to write for five minutes and include at least five sentences. Following this section, participants read the same pervasiveness of sexism manipulation, answered the same manipulation check questions, and read the same confrontation of sexism scenario as in Experiment 1.

Participants next provided their reactions about the female target and her behavior. Identical to Experiment 1, seven items focused on participants' support for the target's reaction to the sexist comment, $\alpha = .86$. In addition, in this study we added six items to measure impressions of the confronting target—a commonly used dependent variable in the confrontation literature (e.g., Garcia et al., 2010; Kaiser et al., 2006; Kaiser, Hagiwara, Malahy, & Wilkins, 2009). Two items measured general impressions: A feeling thermometer, measuring cold to warm feelings toward the female target and one item measuring participants' overall impression of the target, from very negative to very positive (response on a 1-7 Likert-type scale). Focusing on competence and agency as the domains in which women displaying assertive behavior are derogated (Rudman, 1998), participants rated how assertive, powerful, capable, and efficient the target seemed as a specific trait impression measure (from 1=strongly disagree to 7= strongly agree), α=.80. The 13 items displayed

identical patterns, loaded in one factor, reliably scaled together, and were collapsed into one scale measuring support for the target, α=.90. After answering the manipulation checks, participants were debriefed, could write comments about the experiment, and received payment.

Results

Manipulation Checks and Descriptive Variables

A total of 17 participants (~5%) were excluded for failing the basic manipulation checks: 14 for failing the confrontation condition check, and 3 for stating, at the end of the study, they had not believed the pervasiveness text. The final sample of 307 participants found the comment highly sexist (*M*=6.01, *SD*=1.20), irrespective of gender or experimental condition. Regarding the manipulation check, participants reflected back the paragraphs' messages about sexism, specifying that sexism was more pervasive in the pervasive condition (men: *M*=5.22, *SD*=1.31; women: *M*=5.53, *SD*=1.03) than in the rare condition (men: *M*=2.51, *SD*=1.14; women: *M*=2.75, *SD*=1.33), $F(1, 303)=378.91$, $p<.001$, partial $\eta^2=.56$. As in Experiment 1, there was a main effect of gender, such that women perceived more sexism than men, $F(1, 303)=3.76$, $p=.05$, partial $\eta^2=.01$.

Support for Confronters

A 2X2X2 ANOVA confirmed the predicted three way interaction on support for the target who confronts[1], $F(1, 299)=6.35$, $p=.01$, partial $\eta^2=.02$ (see Figure 2). Replicating Experiment 1, and as predicted by Hypothesis 1, non-affirmed men supported the confronter more when sexism was rare (*M*=4.90, *SD*=.88) than when it was pervasive (*M*=4.36, *SD*=1.03), $F(1, 299)=3.64$, $p=.05$, partial $\eta^2=.01$. Consistent with Hypothesis 2, when not affirmed, women supported the confronter more when sexism was pervasive (*M*=5.06, *SD*=1.09) than when it was rare (*M*=4.49, *SD*=1.08), $F(1, 299)=7.37$, $p=.01$, partial $\eta^2=.02$.

[1] Analyzing the support for the target's behavior and general impression items separately produces similar patterns of results.

We next examined the role of threat in producing these differential support patterns. The effect of pervasiveness on support for the confronter was eliminated when participants were self-affirmed: in the self-affirmation condition, there was only a main effect of gender, $F(1, 299)=9.21$, $p=.002$, partial $\eta^2=.03$, such that women ($M=4.91$, $SD=1.09$) were more supportive of confrontation than were men ($M=4.38$, $SD=1.04$).

We then examined Hypotheses 3 through 6, i.e., the effects of personal self-affirmation and non-affirmation on the support expressed by men and women in the pervasive and rare conditions. Hypothesis 3 and 4 examine changes in support between the personally affirmed and non-personally affirmed participants when personal threats are hypothesized to be primary motivators: when prejudice is rare. Confirming Hypothesis 3, self-affirmation significantly affected men's support for confrontation when sexism was rare: when sexism was rare, self-affirmation decreased men's support for the confronter (no affirmation condition: $M=4.90$, $SD=.88$; affirmation condition: $M=4.38$, $SD=1.11$), $F(1, 299)=3.95$, $p=.04$, partial $\eta^2=.01$. This is consistent with the idea that men's support for the confronter when sexism is rare is at least partially driven by personal threat (such as the threat of appearing sexist).

Examining women's responses, self-affirmation reliably affected women's responses when prejudice was rare. In line with Hypothesis 4, when prejudice was rare, women expressed more support for confrontation when they were self-affirmed (i.e., not threatened; $M=4.98$, $SD=1.15$) than when they were not affirmed ($M=4.49$, $SD=1.08$), $F(1, 299)=4.72$, $p=.03$, partial $\eta^2=.02$. This finding suggests that the effect of pervasiveness of sexism for non-affirmed women is likely to be guided by personal threats, such as appearing oversensitive, when confronting prejudice that is believed to be rare.

Because the self-affirmation manipulation involved personal level affirmations, it was not predicted to affect support for the confronter under conditions primarily motivated by

collective level threats. Hypothesis 5 and 6 examined whether support changed based on self-affirmation when collective threats were primary motives, e.g., under pervasive prejudice conditions. For men, self-affirmation did not affect support for the confronter when sexism was pervasive (self-affirmation: M=4.39, SD=.97; no-affirmation: M=4.36, SD=1.03), $F(1, 299)=.01$, $p=.93$, partial $\eta^2=.00$, supporting Hypothesis 5. This suggests that men's responses to confronters when sexism is pervasive are not primarily driven by personal level threats, but are more likely influenced by collective threat (e.g., threat to group's status).

Similarly, for women, self-affirmation also did not affect responses when sexism was pervasive: support was equally high in the pervasive condition for both affirmed (M=4.85, SD=1.05) and non-affirmed (M=5.06, SD=1.09) female participants, $F(1, 299)=1.02$, $p=.31$, partial $\eta^2=.003$. This indicates that Hypothesis 6 is supported and that the effect of pervasiveness of sexism on (non-affirmed) women's support for confronters is less likely to be primarily driven by personal level threats, but instead by collective threats (e.g., the increased salience of the need for group level social change).

Discussion

Replicating Experiment 1, these results show that, when not self-affirmed, members of high status groups (in this case, men) are more supportive of confrontation when they perceive prejudice to be rare than when they perceive prejudice to be pervasive. Also, providing support for Hypothesis 2, and in line with Garcia et al. (2010), female participants revealed the opposite pattern by supporting confrontation to a greater extent when sexism was pervasive than when it was rare.

Going further, this study provided insight into the psychological mechanisms responsible for these effects. Comparing the effects of personal self-affirmation under rare and pervasive conditions allows us to suggest what levels and types of threat might guide men's and women's responses to confrontation. Personal self-affirmation should affect

responses when the primary threats are personal, and not affect responses when the threats are primarily collective. Personal threats were proposed to be the more salient mechanisms under rare prejudice. In support of Hypothesis 3, when prejudice was rare, men's support significantly decreased when they were self-affirmed. This pattern is consistent with the idea that non-affirmed men's support for confrontation when sexism is rare is driven by personal level threats, which include the threat of appearing sexist and going against established norms. Similarly, reducing personal threat through self-affirmation affected women's support for confrontation when sexism was rare. This result implies that non-affirmed women's support for confrontation was lowered due to personal threat, such as the personal threat of appearing oversensitive. Women's support was compromised when the belief that sexism was rare made them vulnerable to appearing to overreact.

Collective level threats should be less affected by our personal level self-affirmation procedure. The lack of change in support when prejudice was pervasive provides support for the hypothesis that collective level threats were more primary motives when prejudice was pervasive. The fact that self-affirmation did not affect men's responses when sexism was pervasive suggests that men's responses in these conditions may not be driven by personal level threat, and instead may be more concerned with collective level threats—in this case, potential threats to the status quo introduced by confrontation. Self-affirmation also did not affect women's support for confrontation when sexism was pervasive. The collective motives stemming from the salience of their group's low status were likely affecting their levels of support for the confronter.

General Discussion

When are members of high and low status groups more likely to support low status group members who confront prejudice? Results suggest that members of high status groups are more likely to support confrontation when they perceive prejudice to be rare rather than

pervasive. Ironically, the conditions that motivate high status group members to support confrontation make confrontation less desirable for low status group members, as they were more likely to support confronters when prejudice is pervasive rather than rare. Experiment 2 clarifies that this support pattern is influenced by group specific personal and collective threats.

It is important to acknowledge that the current data can not specify the exact personal and collective threats and levels of threats involved. Indeed, it is possible that there are both collective and personal group level threats and motivations present under pervasive and rare prejudice. For example, in addition to a personal motivation, one may also be concerned that their group may be viewed as prejudice if they do not support a confronter. However, our data suggests that the relative salience of these collective and personal motivations shift depending on the perceived nature of prejudice. Thus, both personal and collective motivation may be present, but one will be more influential on evaluations given the context.

Further, although suggestive, the effects of self-affirmation do not entirely pin down the exact processes underlying these effects. Indeed, the precise nature of the personal motivation experienced was not measured and can only be inferred from the patterns observed together with existing knowledge regarding the preoccupations of members of low and high status groups. It is possible that changes in support for the confronter stem more purely from self-enhancement motivations, rather than threat per se. Non-affirmed men may have supported a confronter to present themselves as non-prejudiced, which enhanced their self-image. Under self-affirmation, they no longer felt the need to enhance the self, and lowered their support. Importantly, however, our findings are consistent with the overall notion that high and low status group members need to consider and navigate different personal and collective threats, which lead them to respond quite differently to confrontation when prejudice is perceived as rare and when it is perceived as pervasive.

Using a collective level group-affirmation procedure, in which group level traits are affirmed, would help to further clarify this process. If relieving collective threats in the group affirmation condition decreases support for confrontation when prejudice is pervasive for women, this would support the claim that non-affirmed women who believe that sexism is pervasive are collectively threatened by the low status of their group and, consequently, focused on the possibility of social change. For men, it would provide more support for our belief that non-affirmed men express weak support for confrontation when sexism is pervasive at least in part due to the collective threat that confrontation might pose to the status quo.

Across the experiments, the results for female participants were weaker than for males. The pervasiveness of prejudice manipulation was unsuccessful in producing the expected patterns in Hypothesis 2 for females in Experiment 1, while it did in Experiment 2. It is possible that a marginal gender*pervasiveness condition interaction on pervasiveness beliefs in Experiment 1 [$F(1, 208)=2.65$, $p=.11$; partial $\eta^2=.01$] hampered our ability to find the predicted pattern for women. It was not present in Experiment 2 [$F(1, 303)=.08$, $p=.78$, partial $\eta^2=.00$], and the predicted pattern was confirmed. This might suggest that women who have personal or vicarious experiences with sexism may be particularly persuaded by the pervasive message, relative to the rare message and to men. Males may be more influenced by such statements, having less personal experience regarding incidents of sexism.

These results build upon and are consistent with research on support for confronters of prejudice and may also have implications for why women do not confront prejudice themselves when they experience it. Prior research shows that women who claim to be targets of sexism are seen as oversensitive (e.g., Dodd et al., 2001; Kaiser et al., 2009) and that women may refrain from confronting sexism because of this personal threat (Shelton & Stewart, 2004; Swim & Hyers, 1999). Although we do not directly measure the concern of

appearing oversensitive, our results imply that this concern may also restricts women's ability to support other women who take the step to confront sexism, particularly if they believe that sexism is rare. This research thus illustrates another detrimental effect of the perceived social costs of confrontation: while low status group members may otherwise be highly supportive of confrontation, the personal threat of social costs may be sufficiently significant to cause them to stay silent. Not confronting prejudice when it is experienced may reinforce the behavior by the dominant group, and lead them to view the comments as appropriate. Through this process, prejudice may in fact be strengthened and inequalities maintained. This work also converges with prior research on the different concerns of low and high status group members during intergroup interactions (Bergsieker, Shelton, & Richeson, 2010). Although both high and low status group members are concerned with self-presentation, these concerns are of a very different nature, and have different implications for their willingness to express support for confrontation.

These findings also have clear practical implications. First, one key to recruiting the support of high status group members, who may be more likely to believe that prejudice is rare, is to potentially heighten their personal concern with appearing prejudiced. This can be achieved in a variety of ways, such as by influencing high status group member's perceptions of descriptive norms or by clarifying prescriptive norms (e.g., Hogg & Reid, 2006; Vorauer, 2006). Second, for low status group members, this research suggests that to recruit support for confrontation, or indeed for other forms of protest against social inequalities, it is important to remove concerns about appearing oversensitive for ingroup members who may not believe that prejudice is pervasive. Targeting collective level threats for both men and women under pervasive prejudice may also be effective to enhance support.

When members of socially stigmatized groups push for social redress, support from both ingroup and outgroup members can be crucial. Support from outgroup members makes

social change more likely, while ingroup support, at a basic level, is necessary for group-based collective action to occur. Whereas lack of support from the outgroup can have important consequences for one's ability to overcome discrimination, rejection by ingroup members can be more psychologically harmful (Postmes & Branscombe, 2002). Confrontation of prejudice that is not supported by fellow ingroup members could be uniquely hurtful to the confronter's identity, potentially leading to dis-identification and decreasing the likelihood that one will confront prejudice in the future. Balancing these competing forces—between garnering ingroup support while also not threatening the outgroup—remains a challenge in addressing social inequality.

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Figures

Figure 1. Experiment 1: Support for target's behavior as a function of perceived pervasiveness of prejudice, target's response (confront vs. no confront), and participant gender.

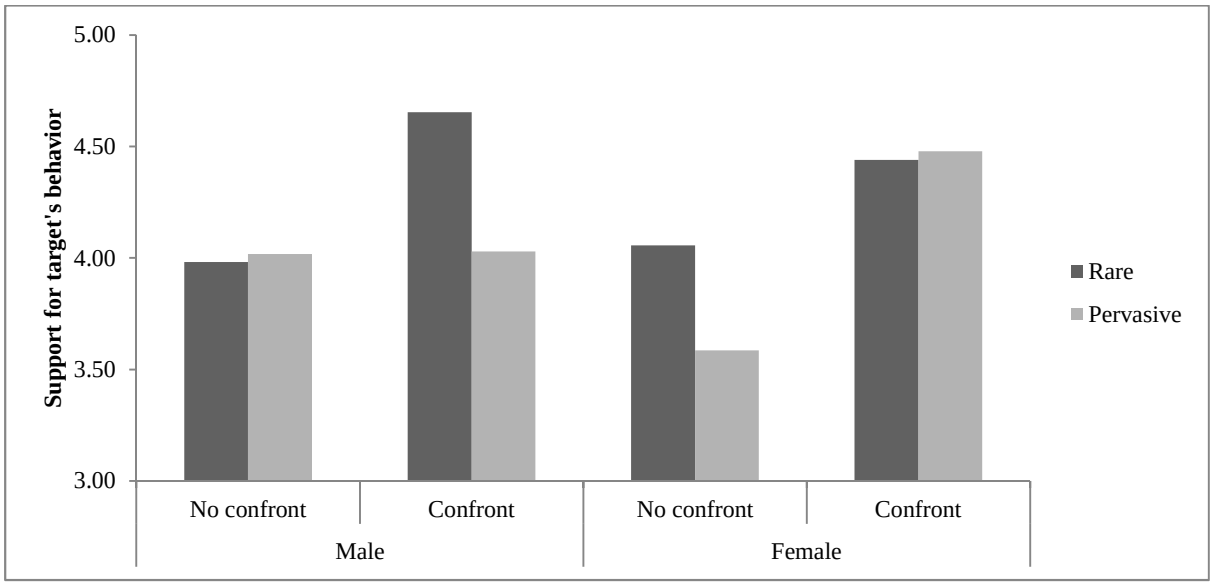

Figure 2. Experiment 2: Support for target who confronts as a function of perceived pervasiveness of prejudice, participant gender, and self-affirmation condition.