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Taking It Too Far? Examining Derogation in Sexism Confrontations

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TAKING IT TOO FAR? EXAMINING THE ROLE OF HUMOUR & DEROGATION

IN CONFRONTATIONS AGAINST SEXISM

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TAKING IT TOO FAR? EXAMINING THE ROLE OF HUMOUR & DEROGATION

IN CONFRONTATIONS AGAINST SEXISM

The statistics regarding women's experiences in which they are harassed, sexually

assaulted, or insulted based on their sex is alarming. For example, one in three women are likely

to experience sexual or physical assault in their lifetime (World Health Organization, 2021). In

addition, The Everyday Sexism Project, https://everydaysexism.com, a website dedicated for

public submissions regarding individuals' sexism experiences, has received over 100,000

submissions since its launch (Bates, 2012). While social norms generally vilify overt prejudice

and blatant acts of discrimination (Crandall et al., 2002; Crandall & E shleman, 2003; Crandall &

Stangor, 2005; McDonald & Crandall, 2015), the continued prevalence of sexist behavior

contradicts such findings. Unfortunately, recent research shows that social norms are shifting to

accept even blatant acts of discrimination (i.e., The Trump Effect on Prejudice, Crandall et al.,

2018).

With this shift in the tolerance of prejudice and discrimination, targets of sexism may

frequently need to respond to bias. A significant body of research has considered when and how

targets of sexism confront the perpetrator (Czopp & Monteith, 2003; Czopp et al., 2006; Dodd et

al., 2001; Gulker et al., 2013; Kaiser & Miller, 2001; Mallett & Wagner, 2011; Woodzicka et al.,

2015; Woodzicka et al., 2020). Confrontation is addressing someone, on your own or someone

else's behalf, and expressing displeasure and disagreement on their thoughts, actions, or ideologies (APA, 2022; Czopp et al., 2006).

Most of this research shows that although confronting prejudice can reduce the likelihood that it will happen again (Czopp & Monteith, 2003; Czopp et al., 2006; Mallett & Wagner, 2011) those who confront often face social costs for doing so (Czopp & Monteith, 2003; Dodd et al., 2001; Gulker et al., 2013; Kaiser & Miller, 2001). This research tests whether the use of humor and derogation when confronting sexism affect those social costs. Specifically, I tested how the confrontation (i.e., whether a target is confronting the sexism or using a bias-neutral confrontation), the use of humor (i.e., humorous or serious confrontations), and the derogative nature (i.e., whether the confrontation is derogative or non-derogative) of the confrontation impacts the likeability of the confronter.

Consequences of Confrontation

Confrontation can have positive consequences for targets and can potentially reduce prejudiced behaviors in perpetrators. For targets, confronting a sexist perpetrator can increase feelings of empowerment (Haslett & Lipman, 1997; Hyers, 2007), self-esteem (Gervais et al., 2010), and confidence (Kaiser & Miller, 2004). For perpetrators, confrontation may reduce immediate and future engagement in sexist remarks (Czopp & Monteith, 2003; Czopp et al., 2006; Mallett & Wagner, 2011). In addition, when perpetrators are confronted it increases their need to compensate (e.g., reducing the awkwardness of the confrontation or try to affirm that they are not sexist), which increases mutual liking (Mallett & Wagner, 2011).

There are also negative consequences (i.e., social costs) for targets of sexism when they choose to confront their perpetrator. Social costs can take a number of forms. For example, when a target decides to confront their perpetrator, the perpetrator may not take the confronter

seriously (Czopp & Monteith, 2003) or may dismiss the confrontation/confronter (Gulker et al., 2013). In addition, when confronted perpetrators often report increased levels of other-directed anger or irritation, which may allow them to justify a hostile reaction toward the confronter (Czopp et al., 2006). One of the most common consequences for the confronter is being evaluated negatively, including being generally disliked (Dodd et al., 2001). Many studies show that the confronter is perceived as a "complainer" (Czopp et al., 2006, Kaiser & Miller, 2001) or thought to be "overreacting" (Czopp & Monteith, 2003). Since these social costs tend to focus on how the confronter is perceived by those around them (e.g., Czopp et al., 2006; Dodd et al. 2001), this proposal will use likeability ratings to measure the social costs of confronting.

Factors that Influence Social Costs for the Confronter

Content of Confrontation

Research shows that the social costs associated with confrontation vary depending on a number of factors, many of which relate to the extent to which the confrontation poses a threat to the perpetrator (Monteith et al., 2019). To date, research has not systematically examined the extent to which various forms of threat inherent in confrontation affect the social costs assigned to a confronter. The present research disentangles the threat posed by a confrontation by manipulating the type of confrontation (i.e., gender bias or bias neutral), the use of humor during confrontation (i.e., humorous or serious confrontation), and the derogative nature of the confrontation (i.e., derogative or non-derogative confrontation).

One type of threat is the content of the confrontation (i.e., whether it targets gender bias or is bias-neutral). Page (2015) argues, from a theoretical perspective, that perpetrators may find being labeled sexist as morally threatening because the perpetrator may feel, or even fear, that by being accused of bias they are being perceived as immoral. The need to be seen as moral is a

core social motive (Fiske, 1992). In line with this idea, Kamins and Dweck (1999) found that when children received criticism that referred to their character, they reacted more negatively than when the criticism referred to their behavior or when they received no criticism. In essence, it is possible that when targets label the perpetrator a sexist, that the threat of the confrontation itself compounds with the threat of being seen as an immoral person, which may elicit greater social costs for confronters because they are implicating the person rather than the behavior.

Supporting this idea, research consistently shows that confronters face greater social penalties when they use a bias confrontation versus a bias-neutral confrontation. Examples of the methods that have been used to demonstrate this effect are reviewed below. Some studies assessing the social costs of confrontations set up participants to engage in bias, which is then confronted. For example, Czopp and colleagues (2006) had participants engage in a conversation with a confederate over online chat after completing a photo inference task that had participants associate people with descriptions (e.g., "this person spends a lot of time behind bars", could be associated with a bartender or criminal). The confederate then delivered a racial bias confrontation (i.e., *"I think some of your answers seemed racist"*) or bias-neutral confrontation (i.e., *"I think some of your answers seemed goofy"*). After participants received this confrontation, they assessed how much they liked and wanted to be friends with the confronter. They found that people liked the confronter less when receiving a racial bias confrontation in comparison to receiving a bias-neutral confrontation.

More often, research uses vignettes (i.e., hypothetical scenarios) that describe a confrontation and ask participants to rate perceptions of the confronter using various dimensions (Czopp & Ashburn-Nardo, 2012). For example, Saunders and Senn (2009) had participants imagine themselves in a vignette that posed them working on a class assignment with a female

partner. During the assignment, the participant imagined they made sexist remarks to their female partner, who then confronted the participant by using four different confrontation styles that varied in content (i.e., labeling the sexism or not). They found that confronters who labeled the sexism had higher social costs than confronters who did not label the sexism.

Similarly, Gervais and Hillard (2014) had participants read a vignette in which they imagined they were being interviewed and overheard a sexist remark. The researchers then manipulated whether the sexist remark was confronted directly or indirectly. They found that confronters were perceived more negatively when they received a confrontation that named sexism (i.e., *"your comment was sexist"*) versus a confrontation that did not name sexism (i.e., *"your comment was unfair"*). This shows that directly naming the bias during the confrontation produces greater social costs than not directly naming the bias during the confrontation. This study utilized vignettes because vignettes allow more flexibility to manipulate the variables of interest. Similar to this study and to past research (Czopp et al., 2006), I hypothesized that when the confronter uses a sexist confrontation, she will be perceived more negatively than when she uses a bias-neutral confrontation.

Using Humor to Combat Prejudice

Given the potential for confrontation to produce social costs for the confronter, it would be natural to look for a way to avoid the social costs that are typically associated with standing up for oneself. Using humor within conversation activates a "playful" or "relaxed" mindset instead of a serious mindset (Gray & Ford, 2013). As such, humor may be used to deflect social penalties that may occur if one makes a remark that would otherwise be objectionable.

In the context of research on prejudice, the majority of research has looked at the use of humor to disguise sexism (e.g., sexist jokes, Ford et al., 2001 Ford, 2015; Mallett et al., 2016;

Saucier et al., 2020). This research finds that when a biased remark is delivered in a humorous way, it is less likely to be identified as bias than when the same basic content is delivered in a serious manner. Little research has tested whether using humor in a bias confrontation can reduce the social costs of confronting. This proposal intends to examine how humor can help deflect social costs.

Confronters who use humor to stand up for themselves may avoid some of the social costs that typically accompany confrontation. Past research from Ryan and colleagues (2000) presented participants with a vignette of a nurse who made an ageist statement while fetching a nursing home resident for their daily hour of arts and crafts. The researchers manipulated how the resident responded to the remark by using a humorous confrontation of the bias (i.e., *"I've made more crafts than a Girl Guide group!"*), a bias-neutral confrontation (i.e., *"I've already planned to watch TV"*), or no confrontation (i.e., passively agrees to go with the nurse). They found that when a nursing home resident used the humorous confrontation, they were perceived more positively than when they used the bias-neutral confrontation. In this case, it appears that humor provided some protection for confronting the ageist remark.

Using humor to confront sexism also increases the likeability of the confronter in comparison to serious confrontations. Specifically, Woodzicka and colleagues' (2020) had participants read a vignette that described a man (Mark) telling a sexist joke to a group of coworkers. A coworker who heard the joke confronted Mark with a humorous, derogative (i.e., *Still single, Mark?*) or non-derogative, serious confrontation (i.e., *"you're not funny, Mark"*). They found when the coworker confronted Mark using a humorous, derogative confrontation she was perceived more positively (i.e., greater likeability ratings) than when she used a serious, non-derogative confrontation. Interestingly, the humorous confrontation combined wit with an

insult to the confronter. As a result, we do not know how the confronter would be perceived if she used humor without derogating the perpetrator.

It is possible that, even if the perpetrator is labeled sexist, using humor may reduce the social costs because it induces a "playful" mindset (Ford & Ferguson, 2004). That is, using humor during the confrontation may mitigate the social costs assigned to the confronter by disguising some of the threat that is typically posed by confrontation (Ryan et al., 2000; Woodzicka et al., 2020). Therefore, I predicted a main effect of humor, such that confronters who use humor will be perceived more favorably than confronters who use serious confrontations. However, I also expect for humor to moderate the likeability perceptions of confronters. Specifically, I predicted that when delivering a confrontation against sexism, confronters will be liked more when they use a humorous versus serious confrontation. I expect that the use of humor will not have as big of an impact on the liking of the confronter when she delivers a bias-neutral confrontation as that confrontation should be less threatening overall.

The Derogative Nature of Confrontation

Generally, research has found that those engaging in socially deviant behavior (e.g., being rude) are liked less than those who engage in social normative behavior (Bown & Abrams, 2003). Specifically, Bown and Abrams (2003) presented a vignette of a socially deviant worker (e.g., is rude to coworkers, criticizes management, has low motivation for work) in comparison to a non-socially deviant worker (e.g., is not rude to coworkers, completes tasks on time, keeps to themselves). They found participants perceived the non-socially deviant worker as more likeable than the socially deviant worker, which shows that even when bias is out of the picture, people generally dislike a person who uses derogation.

However, we do not yet know how adding a derogatory comment to a humorous confrontation will affect the likeability of the confronter. The Woodzicka and colleagues (2020) study described above confounded the use of humor and derogation, which may be a source of threat for perpetrators when confronted. That is, they used humor that derogated the perpetrator on their inability to find a partner.

Indeed, it is possible that adding derogation—independently of the accusation of bias-- may increase the threat posed by a confrontation, which may impact the likeability perceptions of the confronter. One source of threat comes from being labeled as a sexist (Page, 2015). Another source of threat may be induced by the use of insults or derogation during confrontation. Monteith and colleagues (2019) explain that confronters that use hostile, aggressive, threatening, and extreme (H.A.T.E.) confrontations are more likely to be perceived as threatening and disliked compared to confronters who avoid threatening the perpetrator. That is, participants typically like confronters less when the confrontation includes the use of physical violence (e.g., slapping the perpetrator, Becker & Barreto, 2014) or hostile language such as profanity (Czopp et al., 2006, Hyers, 2010, Saunders & Senn, 2009). For example, recall Saunders and Senn (2009) study of participants imaging themselves engaging in sexist behavior. The researchers not only manipulated whether the confronter used a sexist or bias-neutral confrontation, they also manipulated the hostility of the confrontation (e.g., the use curse words or not). Specifically, participants imagined receiving a derogative (i.e., "*Listen a**hole, stop…making those comments*") or non-derogative (i.e., "*your behavior is inappropriate…don't act that way again*") confrontation for their sexist remarks. When participants imagined a non-derogative confrontation, the confronter was perceived as more likeable than when participants imagined a derogative confrontation. Similarly, Hyers (2010) had participants read a vignette where a man

heard someone make an anti-LGBTQ+ comment about his roommate. The person who made the biased remark was either confronted using a hostile confrontation (i.e., *"I don't see why it is a damn problem…"*), a non-hostile confrontation (i.e., *"I don't see why it is a problem…"*), or was not confronted (i.e., "*I don't know what to say…"*). When the roommate confronted using a non-hostile confrontation, he was perceived more favorable than when he used a hostile confrontation or did not confront. This shows that confronters face more social penalties when using strong language, such as profanity. It is not yet known whether using derogation, independent of a bias accusation, will produce additional social costs for the confronter.

Therefore, I predicted a main effect of derogation, such that when the confronter uses a derogative confrontation she will be perceived as less likeable in comparison to when she uses a non-derogative confrontation. Further, I also predicted a three-way interaction between the confrontation (i.e., sexist or bias-neutral confrontations), humor (i.e., humorous or serious confrontations), and the derogative nature (i.e., derogative or non-derogative confrontation) of the confrontation. Based on Monteith and colleagues (2019) H.A.T.E. approach, I predicted that confrontations that use humor and avoid derogation will elicit fewer social costs for the confronter than those that are serious and derogate the perpetrator.

Does the Gender of the Perceiver affect Social Costs?

Some may wonder whether the gender of the perceiver will affect the extent to which they are threatened by the confrontation, thereby affecting social costs assigned to the confronter. However, research that has tested the social costs of confrontation for men and women participants does not typically find gender differences. Gervais and Hillard (2014) found that women and men did not differ in their ratings of confronter likeability. Instead, women and men participants rated the bias-neutral confronter as more likeable than the person who confronted

sexism. Similarly, Saunder and Senn (2009) found no gender differences in the extent to which men and women participants liked the confronter who used a low-threatening versus a high-threatening confrontation. Finally, Woodzicka and colleagues (2020) found that men and women did not differ in their ratings of likeability for confronters who used a serious versus humorous confrontation. As past research in this area has not detected gender differences for confronter likability, I did not include participant gender as a factor in my design.

Hypotheses

The present research tested how various forms of threat present in a confrontation affects the social costs for a confronter. I examined the influence of confrontation (i.e., confronting the sexism or confronting in a bias-neutral manner), the use of humor (i.e., humorous or serious confrontation), as well as the derogative nature of the confrontation (i.e., derogative or non-derogative confrontations) on confronter likeability. I tested the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1

I predict a Main effect of Confrontation. Women who use a bias-neutral confrontation will be perceived more positively (i.e., have higher likeability ratings) than women who use a sexist confrontation (recall Czopp et al., 2006).

Hypothesis 2

I predict a Main effect of Humor. Participants will perceive the confronter more favorably (i.e., higher likeability ratings) when she uses humor rather than a serious style of confrontation (recall Woodzicka et. al, 2020).

Hypothesis 3

I predict a Main effect of Derogation. Participants will perceive the confronter more favorably (i.e., higher likeability ratings) when she does not use derogation, compared to when she does use derogation in the confrontation (recall Hyers, 2010; Saunders & Senn, 2009).

Hypothesis 4

I predict an interaction between confrontation and humor. When the server confronts sexism, I expect that she will be liked more when she does so with humor versus without humor. When the server uses a bias-neutral confrontation, I expect that the use of humor will have less of an impact on her likeability.

Hypothesis 5

I predict a three-way interaction between confrontation, humor, and derogation. When the server confronts sexism in a humorous manner, participants will perceive her as more likeable when she does not use derogation compared to when she does use derogation. Similarly, when the server confronts sexism in a serious manner, participants will perceive her as more likeable when she does not use derogation compared to when she does use derogation. I expect that likability will be significantly lower when the confronter uses derogation, and that humor will do little to buffer the social costs associated with confronting sexism when it is paired with an insult (i.e., derogation). In comparison, I predict that when the confrontation does not use derogation, using a humorous (versus serious) confrontation will protect the confronter from the typical social costs associated with challenging bias.

I predict the same basic pattern of effects when the server delivers a bias-neutral confrontation, but overall likeability should be higher in these conditions. That is, I expect that when she delivers a bias-neutral confrontation in a humorous manner, participants will perceive

her as more likeable when she does not use derogation compared to when she does use derogation. When she delivers a bias-neutral confrontation in a serious manner, participants will perceive her as more likeable when she does not use derogation compared to when she does use derogation.

Method

Participants

Participants were recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turk (i.e., MTurk) and Loyola University Chicago (via the SONA system). Participants from MTurk were compensated $1.00 for completing the study, which matches federal minimum wage requirements, whereas Loyola participants were compensated with class participation credit. Based on a range of effect sizes documented in prior research using similar variables (Dodd et al. 2001; Gervais & Hillard, 2014; Hyers, 2010; Ryan et al., 2000), a G-Power analysis was conducted to determine how many participants should be recruited to achieve a .10 effect size. Therefore, this 2 (confrontation: sexism or bias neutral) x 2 (derogatory: non-derogative or derogative) x 2 (humor: serious or humorous) study recruited 856 participants to achieve statistical power within analyses and account for those who failed attention checks or had unusable data.

Of the 856 participants who completed the study, 41 participants were removed for failing my attention checks. Two participants were removed for indicating their data was unreliable (i.e., scoring below a 3 on the accuracy of data check measure). This left 813 participants for data analysis. Of these participants, 305 identified as a man, 482 identified as a woman, six identified as another gender, and 20 did not specify. In addition, 567 participants identified as White, 69 identified as Black, 44 identified as East Asian, 23 identified as South Asian, 37 identified as Spanish, 41 identified as more than one race, 13 identified as another

race, and 19 did not specify. The average age of my participant sample was 40.28 years old (*SD*

= 15.02 years).

Materials & Measures

Confrontation Manipulation. Using a between subjects design, participants were

randomly assigned to one of eight vignettes manipulating confrontation (i.e., confronting sexism

or confronting in a bias-neutral manner), humor (i.e., humorous or serious confrontations), and

derogative nature (i.e., derogative or non-derogative confrontations). The vignettes listed are

separated by confrontation and humor with the derogative approach listed first and the non-

derogative approach manipulation denoted in parentheses:

> Sexism (Humor):
> Imagine you are at a nice restaurant having dinner with some friends. As you are eating
> dinner, you notice a man dining alone at another table talking with your female server.
> He says, "if you clean at home as well as you served me here tonight, you can marry me
> anytime!" The server then responds, "Wow, sexism in the wild. It sounds like you're
> looking for a Roomba instead of a wife. No wonder you're dining alone tonight." ("Wow,
> sexism in the wild. It sounds like you're looking for a Roomba instead of a wife. I think
> there is a Best Buy down the street").

> Bias-neutral (Humor):
> Imagine you are at a nice restaurant having dinner with some friends. As you are eating
> dinner, you notice a man dining alone at another table talking with your female server.
> He says, "if you clean at home as well as you served me here tonight, you can marry me
> anytime!" The server then responds, "Wow, where did you learn your manners? If you
> paid for lessons, I think you should ask for a refund. No wonder you're dining alone
> tonight." ("That was an incredibly rude thing to say. It might help to brush up on your
> manners. You should really be more thoughtful.").

> Sexism (Serious):
> Imagine you are at a nice restaurant having dinner with some friends. As you are eating
> dinner, you notice a man dining alone at another table talking with your female server.
> He says, "if you clean at home as well as you served me here tonight, you can marry me
> anytime!" The server then responds, "That was incredibly sexist of you to say. Women
> do more than cook and clean. No wonder you're dining alone tonight." ("That was
> incredibly sexist of you to say. Women do more than cook and clean. You should really
> be more thoughtful.").

Bias-neutral (Serious):

Imagine you are at a nice restaurant having dinner with some friends. As you are eating dinner, you notice a man dining alone at another table talking with your female server. He says, "if you clean at home as well as you served me here tonight, you can marry me anytime!" The server then responds, "That was an incredibly rude thing to say. It might help to brush up on your manners. No wonder you're dining alone tonight." ("That was an incredibly rude thing to say. It might help to brush up on your manners. You should really be more thoughtful.").

Attention checks. Participants responded to the first attention check after reading the vignette (i.e., *"Who was speaking to the man in this situation?"*) with the options of: "*the server" or "another customer"*. The second attention check (i.e., "For this item, p*lease check the 7th scale point very much agree.*") was presented during the perceived threat manipulation check.

Perceived threat manipulation check. Participants also responded to six items on a 1 (very much disagree) to 7 (very much agree) point Likert scale regarding their perceived threat from the confrontation. Items include: *The server's response was disrespectful toward the patron; The server was trying to humiliate the patron; The server's response was insulting toward the patron; The server's response threatens the patron's reputation; The server's response was hostile toward the patron; The server was rude toward the patron*. All items were averaged together to form a scale with higher scores indicating higher perceptions of threat in the confrontation ($\alpha = .91$).

Likeability of server. Participants responded to six items on a 1 (very much disagree) to 7 (very much agree) point Likert scale regarding their perceived likeability of the server. This scale was adapted from the scale used in Woodzicka and colleagues (2020) study. Items include: *The server was nice toward the patron; The server is a nice person; I could be friends with the server; The server was approachable toward the patron; The server was unpleasant toward the*

patron (reverse); The server was an unpleasant person (reverse). All items were averaged together to form a scale with higher scores indicating higher likeability ($\alpha = .83$).

Humor manipulation check. Participants also responded to two items on a 1 (not at all true) to 7 (very true) point Likert scale regarding their perception that the confrontation was humorous *(i.e., I think the server's response was funny toward the patron; The server was trying to be humorous)*. These items allow a test of whether the server who uses a humorous confrontation is perceived to be funnier than the server who uses a serious confrontation. Each item was analyzed separately. Higher scores indicate higher perceived humor.

Confrontation manipulation check. To verify that the participant noticed the confrontation of sexism in conditions where it occurred, participants answered a single item, "*The server was accusing the patron of sexism*" on a 1 (not at all true) to 7 (very true) point Likert scale. This item was presented during the perceived threat manipulation check.

Demographics. Participants were asked to provide their age, race, gender, and political orientation. Please see Appendix A for the full list of items.

Accuracy of data check. Participants responded to the single item, "*Should we rely on the answers that you provided in the study to inform our research? Your answer to this question will not affect your compensation*," on a 1 (not at all reliable) to 5 (completely reliable) Likert scale. This item intends to verify that participants gave accurate and true answers to the items presented in the study.

Hypothesis guessing. Participants were asked an open-ended question at the end of the study, "*What do you think the researchers were testing with this study? That is, what were they trying to figure out*?"

Procedure

Participants accessed the study online via Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) or Loyola University Chicago SONA system and were redirected to the study on Qualtrics. After reading and providing informed consent, participants were randomly assigned to read one of the eight vignettes. After reading their vignette, the first attention check was presented. Then, participants responded to the perceived threat manipulation check, likeability measure, and humor manipulation check. After completing these measures, participants responded to the demographics questionnaire, the accuracy of the data check, and finally the hypothesis guessing item. Once they completed the study, participants were debriefed, compensated, and thanked for their participation.

Results

I began by screening my data. I only included participants who indicated "*the server*" in response to the item, "*Who was speaking to the man in this situation?*" I excluded 25 participants who failed this attention check. Similarly, for the second attention check I verified that participants checked "*very much agree*" and excluded 16 participants who did not check "*very much agree*". For the item, "*Should we rely on the answers that you provided in the study to inform our research?*" I retained participants who answered a 3, 4 or 5. I read the open-ended responses to the item regarding the purpose of the study, and no participants accurately guessed the hypothesis of the study.

To understand if participants were able to distinguish between sexism and bias-neutral conditions (i.e., the confrontation variable), participants responded to the item, "*The server was accusing the patron of sexism*". An independent samples t-test showed that this manipulation check was successful in verifying the distinction between those who received the vignettes that

described a sexism confrontation ($M = 6.38$, $SD = 1.20$) and those that described a bias neutral

condition ($M = 5.16$, $SD = 1.68$), $t(795) = 11.90$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.45$.

To test the effectiveness of my humor manipulation, I conducted an independent samples

t-test to compare the humorous and serious conditions. Indeed, participants who received the

humorous confrontation vignettes ($M = 3.89$, $SD = 2.24$) reported that the server was funnier

than participants who receive the serious confrontation conditions ($M = 2.76$, $SD = 2.01$), $t(795)$

$= 7.56$, $p < .001$, $d = 2.13$.

Similarly, to test the effectiveness of my derogative manipulation, I conducted an

independent samples t-test to compare the derogative and non-derogative conditions. As

expected, participants who received the derogative confrontation vignettes reported that the

server was perceived as more derogative ($M = 4.18$, $SD = 1.54$), than those who received the

non-derogative conditions, ($M = 3.47$, $SD = 1.64$), $t(794) = 6.34$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.59$.

To test the hypotheses, I conducted a 2 x 2 x 2 analysis of variance (ANOVA) with

likeability ratings as the dependent variable. I also conducted simple effects tests to examine the

hypothesized differences between the conditions. Table 1 shows the means and standard errors

for the independent samples t-tests for Hypotheses 1-3.

Table 1. Independent samples t-tests of differences between conditions.

Condition	Level	Mean	Standard Error
Confrontation			
	Sexism	3.94	0.60
	Bias Neutral	3.99	0.61
Humor			
	Humorous	3.90	0.60
	Serious	3.94	0.61
Derogative*			
	Derogative	3.77	0.61
	Non-Derogative	4.06	0.61

Please note the * indicates the main effect was significant at p < .05.

First, Hypothesis 1, that there would be a main effect of confrontation on likeability, was not supported. Specifically, participants perceived the server as similarly likeable, regardless if they read a sexism or bias-neutral vignette, $F(1, 792) = 0.26, p = .61,$ *partial eta*$^2 < .001$. Second, Hypothesis 2, that there would be a main effect of humor on likeability, was not supported. Participants perceived the server as similarly likeable, regardless of her use of humor, $F(1, 792) = 0.32, p = .57,$ *partial eta*$^2 < .001$. Third, Hypothesis 3, that there would be a main effect of derogation on likeability, was supported. Participants perceived the server to be less likeable when she used derogation during confrontation in comparison to when she did not use derogation, $F(1, 792) = 13.00, p < .001,$ *partial eta*$^2 = .02$.

Further, Hypothesis 4, predicting a two-way interaction between confrontation and humor, was not supported, $F(1, 792) = 0.02, p = .89,$ *partial eta*$^2 < .001$. Participants perceived the confronter similarly when confronting sexism regardless if she used humor ($M = 3.91, SE = .09$) during confrontation or not ($M = 3.97, SE = .08$). When the server confronted using a bias-neutral confrontation she was perceived similarly likeable despite her use of humor during confrontation ($M = 3.88, SE = .09$) or not ($M = 3.92, SE = .09$).

However, Hypothesis 5, predicting a three-way interaction between confrontation, humor, and derogation was marginally significant, $F(1, 792) = 2.832, p = .093,$ partial *eta*$^2 = .004$. Figure 1 displays the pattern for likability following confrontations of sexism. In contradiction of my predictions, when the server confronted for sexism in a humorous manner, the use of derogation did not affect her likability, $F(1, 786) = 1.19, p = .28$. In support of my predictions, pairwise comparisons showed that when the server confronted sexism in a serious manner, she was liked significantly more when she did not use derogation ($M = 4.24, SE = .12,$ $CI = -0.87 - 0.21$) compared to when she did use derogation ($M = 3.70, SE = .12, CI = 0.21 -$

0.87), *F*(1, 786) = 10.16, *p* < .001. Figure 2 displays the pattern for likability following bias-neutral confrontations. In support of my predictions, pairwise comparisons showed that when the server used a bias neutral confrontation in a humorous manner, she was liked significantly more when she did not use derogation (*M* = 4.07, *SE* = .12, *CI* = 0.37 – 0.70) compared to when she did use derogation (*M* = 3.70, SE = .12, *CI* = -0.70 – 0.37), *F*(1, 786) = 10.16, *p* < .001. In contradiction of my predictions, when the server used a bias neutral confrontation in a serious manner, the use of derogation did not affect her likeability, *F*(1, 786) = 0.66, *p* = .42.

Discussion

This research provides new insight into how the content of confrontations can influence the social costs associated with confrontation. In particular, this research helps understand how including an insult in addition to a bias confrontation affects the likeability of a confronter. In line with predictions, the likeability of the confronter is influenced by whether or not she used an insult. That is, there is a main effect of derogation such that the confronter is generally liked more when she did not pair the confrontation with an insult in comparison to when she did (i.e., Hypothesis 3). This successfully replicates a main effect in the literature, such that confronters are liked more when they do not use derogation, in comparison to when they do (i.e., Hypothesis 3; Becker & Barreto, 2014; Czopp et al., 2006; Hyers, 2010; Saunders & Senn, 2009).

Interestingly, the past research in the confrontation literature focuses on derogation in the form of physical aggression (e.g., slapping the perpetrator, Becker & Barreto, 2014) or profanity (Czopp et al., 2006; Hyers, 2010; Saunders & Senn, 2009), while the current study derogates the perpetrator's character (i.e., *"No wonder you're dining alone tonight"*). Therefore, it is possible that this particular insult is more similar to an accusation of bias than derogation that appears in other forms in that it directly challenges the perpetrator's character or reputation. Although the

perpetrator's character is challenged outside of the context of bias, the same liking penalty occurs for using this type of personal insult. It would be interesting to conduct another study with a different control condition where the sexism is ignored—for example, where the server simply asks the patron if he would like a refill on his coffee. That would allow us to determine if the character insult differs from a true lack of response to bias.

The use of derogation continues to exert the anticipated effect in the marginally significant three-way interaction where we see that the server tends to be liked more when the confrontation is delivered without an insult versus with an insult (i.e., Hypothesis 5). Interestingly, she is liked most when confronting sexism in a serious manner and when delivering a bias neutral confrontation in a humorous manner, both without additional insult. That is, despite the fact that she directly calls out sexism the server receives ratings of likability that are above the midpoint of the scale; the liking penalty only appears when she adds insult to the injury of the serious accusation of sexism. The fact that the confronter is liked most when seriously confronting sexism may be due, in part, to the use of a scenario rather than an in person interaction. It would be valuable to replicate the situation using an in person interaction, but such research is time intensive and requires trained confederates to reliably deliver the same remarks in each experimental session. Such an experiment would show if the liking penalty differs when a participant sees it play out in real life. Yet is it promising to see that a serious confrontation of sexism has such high ratings for likeability.

The present study did not replicate the typical main effects whereby confronters are generally liked more when using a bias-neutral (versus bias confrontation) or humorous (versus serious) confrontations (i.e., Hypotheses 1, & 2; Czopp, 2006; Gervais & Hillard, 2014; Ryan et al., 2000; Saunders & Senn, 2009; Woodzicka et al., 2020). This may imply that the act of

confrontation itself is insulting, thereby mimicking the typical effects of confrontation on likeability. Alternatively, accusing one of having "bad manners" or being "rude" is similarly threatening as labeling one as "sexist", or may even be seen as a subtle sexism confrontation. Including a condition where the server ignores the bias entirely may provide a useful comparison to determine the effects of personal insult on liking.

Limitations & Future Directions

A main limitation of the present research is that it uses vignettes instead of an in-vivo design. Eastwick and colleagues (2013) contend that live interaction studies (e.g., laboratory studies) have higher external validity than imagined or vignette studies. Specifically, they suggest that by using live interaction methodology one is more likely to understand the actual responses and experiences of the participant, rather than one's projections or assumptions when using vignette or imagined methodology.

In addition, the role constraints of the situation presented may have influenced how participants perceived the confronter. It is possible that since the confronter was at work that participants may be more critical of her confrontation with her patron than if she was not at work or a part of the staff, since the service industry generally emphasizes that the "customer is always right" (Karami et al., 2019). In essence, the server may be perceived as violating service industry norms and may be criticized more when confronting as an employee rather than if she was not a part of the staff (e.g., confronting as another customer).

As such, the current research should be replicated with live interactions. For example, similar to Chaney and Sanchez (2021), women employees could be recruited to the laboratory to document how they confronted and were perceived when confronting sexism in the workplace. Future research should also consider replicating the study for the main effects within different

contexts. For example, this study focused on confrontation between strangers whereas future studies should replicate the current research between peers in a social environment, such as an academic classroom where there are different norms of conversation and it may be more acceptable to challenge bias.

Research should also test the unique contributions of bias confrontation, humor, and derogation from the perpetrator's point of view, rather than a bystander's. For example, a laboratory study where confrontations with a perpetrator are video-taped and then compare how much the perpetrator likes the confronter to a third-party's likeability ratings of the confronter, after viewing the confrontation tape would help isolate the difference between someone who is part of the interaction versus viewing the interaction. Further, this method could also examine how these variables impact the likelihood the perpetrator is to reduce their immediate and future acts of sexism (Czopp, 2006; Mallett & Wagner, 2011).

Finally, it is also possible that the present research design would replicate the typical main effects of bias confrontation and humor if the current focus was on racism rather than sexism, because sexism has been shown to be taken less seriously than racism (Woodzicka et al., 2015). Specifically, research from Woodzicka and colleagues (2015) has shown that racist jokes and statements are rated as more offensive, than sexist jokes and statements. The researchers also found that confrontations of these jokes and statements are perceived as more socially acceptable, with confronters being perceived as more likeable, if they are confronting racism, rather than when they are confronting sexism. Therefore, it is possible confronters, from a bystander perspective, may have higher likeability ratings when using humor or even derogation when they confront racism, rather than sexism. However, it also possible that the perpetrator may feel more "hurt" from the "insult" when being accused of making a racist, rather than a sexist,

joke or statement. Consequently, perpetrators (compared to bystanders) may find their confronter to be more harsh or less likeable when they are confronted for racism rather than sexism.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I found the most support for my predictions about the impact of using derogation in a confrontation on liking of the confronter. If a person chooses to confront sexism, it might not be as poorly received as they imagine. In these scenarios, the server is actually liked the most when she directly confronted sexism. That is, she did not disguise her confrontation with humor and did not add insult on top of the bias confrontation. My research suggests that social norms may be shifting to accept the direct confrontation of sexism, and may empower women to confront sexism directly, rather than having to cover up their true intentions.

While the present research may encourage women to confront their sexist perpetrators, confronters should still be cautious and aware of the potential social costs when choosing to use a hostile, aggressive, threatening, or extreme (H.A.T.E) confrontation approach (Monteith et al., 2019). In addition, by being able to confront sexism directly, this may also decrease the ambiguity surrounding bias-neutral confrontations (i.e., whether or not the perpetrator realizes they are being sexist) and may increase the likelihood that perpetrators take responsibility for their remarks or actions, which may encourage perpetrators to reduce their immediate and future sexist acts or change their attitudes toward women.
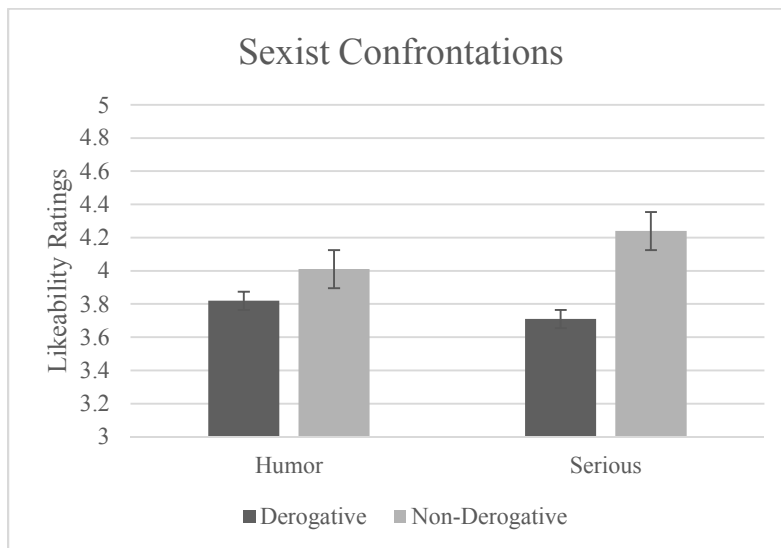
FIGURES

Figure 1. The effects of confrontation, humor, and derogation on likeability perceptions of confronters within the sexism confrontation conditions.
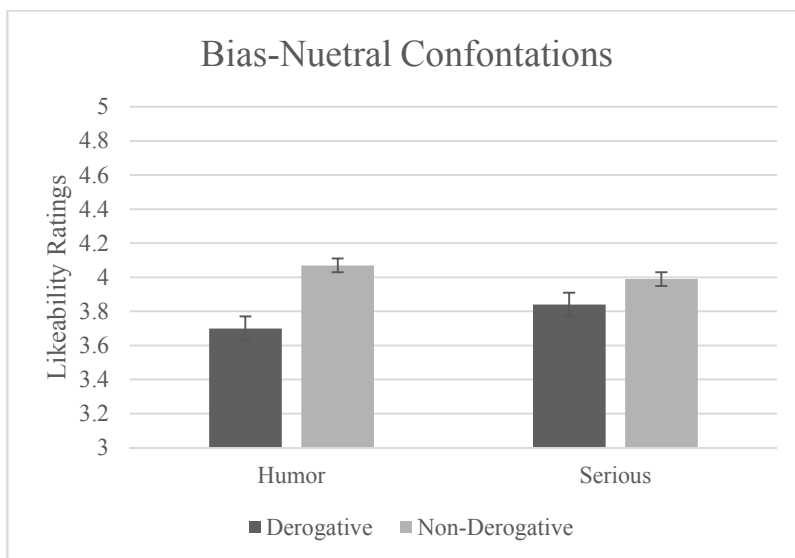

Figure 2. The effects of confrontation, humor, and derogation on likeability perceptions of confronters within the bias-neutral confrontation conditions.

APPENDIX A

DEMOGRAPHICS

1. What is your age?
   o Open ended

2. What is your race and/or ethnicity? (Please select all that apply):
   o American Indian or Alaska Native
   o East Asian
   o South Asian
   o Middle Eastern
   o African American or Black
   o White
   o Latine or Spanish Origin
   o Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
   o Another race and/or ethnicity (please specify):
   o Prefer not to say

3. What is your gender? (Please select all that apply):
   o Man
   o Woman
   o Non-binary/third gender
   o Gender non-conforming
   o Another gender (please specify):
   o Prefer not to say

4. Political Orientation:
   o What are your political views on SOCIAL ISSUES:
     • strongly liberal
     • slightly liberal
     • moderate
     • slightly conservative
     • strongly conservative

   o If you answered MODERATE, would you say that you lean liberal or lean conservative:
     • lean liberal
     • lean conservative

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VITA

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