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WHO, WHAT, HOW: A Roadmap for Predicting Men's Support for Gender Equality Efforts Led by Men vs. Women

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WHO, WHAT, HOW: A Roadmap for Predicting Men's Support for Gender Equality Efforts

Led by Men vs. Women

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of

Philosophy in Psychology

by

Sophie Mako Tanaka

2023

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

WHO, WHAT, HOW: A Roadmap for Predicting Men's Support for Gender Equality Efforts
Led by Men vs. Women

by

Sophie Mako Tanaka

Doctor of Philosophy in Psychology

University of California, Los Angeles, 2023

Professor Yuen J. Huo, Chair

The extent to which advantaged group members, such as men, support equality efforts can
impact the success and sustainability of these efforts. The present work aims to outline a
roadmap for predicting men's support for gender equality programs as a function of WHO is
leading them, WHAT type of threat the program poses to the gender hierarchy, and HOW they
are implementing it. This research draws on various organizational and psychological literatures
to clarify the conditions under which some leaders of gender equality will receive more support
than others. **Study 1** is an archival study of real-world men vs. women leaders, examining how

the politician's perceived level of threat to the gender hierarchy predicts reactions to their online gender equality message. This study helps demonstrate how the gender of different leaders impacts the support they elicit for gender equality efforts. **Study 2** aims to replicate Study 1's result in a controlled environment and investigate men's reactions to business leaders of gender equality. **Study 3** branches off to a separate but related line of work. It will explore how the variable of leadership styles impacts responses to men vs. women leaders of gender equality. Unpacking the psychological processes that impact men's responses to different leaders of gender equality efforts, the insights generated in this research yield downstream implications for the real-world people organizing these efforts.

The dissertation of Sophie Mako Tanaka is approved.

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2023

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Introduction

WHO, WHAT, HOW: Developing a Roadmap for Predicting Men's Support for Gender Equality Efforts Led by Men vs. Women

"It is time that men and boys recognize the part they must play in gender equality and join with the voices and actions of the women and girls who are trying to reshape society in the interests of us all."

\- 39th U.S. President, Jimmy Carter.

The idea that all people—men included—have a place inside the movement for gender equality has emerged in settings ranging from industry platforms (B. W. Johnson & Smith, 2018; JPMorgan Chase & Co., 2018; Prime & Moss-Racusin, 2009), to academic research (Cihangir et al., 2014; Drury & Kaiser, 2014), to global human rights campaigns (*Because I Am a Man Campaign*, n.d.; *HeForShe | Global Solidarity Movement for Gender Equality | HeForShe*, n.d.). In organizational settings, efforts to promote gender equality could include implementing family-friendly policies, mentorship programs, bias training programs, and more (Jackson et al., 2014; Sadwick et al., 2016; Simard, 2009; Stout et al., 2011). Building men's support for these gender equality efforts is critical, given their disproportionate power and influence within most organizations (Ochoa et al., 2021; Prime & Moss-Racusin, 2009). Yet, this support might be challenging for leaders to build because men may feel that gender equality efforts are "not their place" (Sherf et al., 2017) or may find gender equality efforts to be threatening (Danbold & Huo, 2017; Flood et al., 2021). Given the recent interest in the role that men leaders play in advancing gender equality objectives (Caprino, 2019; de Vries, 2015; Smith et al., 2021; Subašić et al., 2018), the proposed research will explore how individuals may respond differently to gender equality efforts in politics and business when led by a man or woman leader. Specifically, this

research will address the possibility that individuals—especially men—will respond more favorably to gender equality efforts when led by a man.

Although there is some qualitative evidence from interview-based research showing that men leaders of organizational gender equality efforts may experience unfair advantages (de Vries, 2015), there has yet to be a comprehensive program of research that confirms this phenomenon. The proposed research aims to outline the ways in which leader gender could impact individuals' cooperation with gender equality efforts. Namely, this research will unpack the mechanisms and contexts that may produce obstacles for women leaders while systematically advantaging men leaders in this domain. While it is certainly "problematic" and reflective of inequality that men enjoy these advantages (de Vries, 2015), this research exposes how the privilege experienced by men leaders of gender equality efforts could be leveraged to build support for these efforts—especially among fellow ingroup members (i.e., other men). The proposed research joins the emerging body of research on the factors underlying support for diversity, inclusion, and equality efforts (Dover et al., 2016; Holladay et al., 2003; Jansen et al., 2015a; Kidder et al., 2004; Plaut et al., 2011). The research will propose research to test the impact of leader gender on support for gender equality efforts (**Studies 1 & 2**) and the interaction between leader gender and the approaches they use to solicit support for gender equality efforts (**Study 3**).

Significance

Who is leading these efforts for gender equality could make a difference in how well the efforts are received by others. Examining the role of gender in shaping what reactions different leaders will incur when implementing equality efforts is important for several reasons. Firstly, there is concern over marginalized groups—including women—bearing the bulk of the burden

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when it comes to equality work (Misra et al., 2021; Porter et al., 2018; Social Sciences Feminist Network Research Interest Group, 2017). If men leaders have advantages in this context, it further adds to the argument that men leaders could take on a portion of the responsibility and work (de Vries, 2015). Second, there are simply more men in leadership positions than women (Nikos-Rose, 2020; *Women in Management (Quick Take)*, 2020), making it valuable to understand how their gender will play a role if they volunteer for or are tasked with implementing these types of efforts.

What level of threat the effort poses to the gender hierarchy could also impact the amount of support that men will give to men vs. women leaders of gender equality pursuits. Not all equality efforts are perceived equally; some may be seen as paying lip service to equality values, while others are seen as greatly disrupting the status quo (Allison, 1999). The proposed research will introduce a novel rationale for why men and women leaders of gender equality efforts will have varying levels of success in building support, depending on what type of effort they champion. This would have direct implications for institutions and organizations associating these efforts with leaders from marginalized vs. advantaged groups.

How these efforts are being implemented is a third and critical factor in predicting the amount of support that men will give to men vs. women leaders of gender. While some past work has underscored the impact of framing and implanting diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts (Holladay et al., 2003; Morgenroth et al., 2018; Rios & Wynn, 2016; Trawalter & Davidson, 2016), the proposed research will be the first to test how leadership styles differentially impact women vs. men leaders of gender equality.

Furthermore, the real-world (Domonoske, 2018; Griffith, 2022; Kim, 2016) and empirical examples (Dover et al., 2016; Legault et al., 2011) of pushback against equality efforts highlight

the timeliness of research on individuals' response to gender equality efforts. By studying men's responses to these efforts, this research directly contributes a gender dynamics perspective to the burgeoning body of work regarding dominant group reactions to diversity, equity, and inclusion (D.E.I.) efforts—a collection of work that primarily studies racial and ethnic group identities (Brannon et al., 2018; Dover et al., 2016; Jansen et al., 2015b; Kidder et al., 2004; Plaut et al., 2011; Stevens et al., 2008). Unpacking the psychological processes that impact individuals' responses to different leaders of gender equality efforts, the insights generated in their research yield downstream implications for the real-world people organizing these efforts. Despite a history of women being tasked with "solving" gender inequities (Morgenroth et al., 2018), this line of research confronts the prospect that men leaders may encounter unique advantages.

Thus, I will outline the theoretical basis for predicting that men and women will receive different levels of support depending on contexts, outline how the leadership approaches they use may impact these patterns, and outline three studies to test these ideas.

Who is leading?: The Role of Gender in Evaluating Leaders

Building individuals' cooperation with gender equality efforts—either attitudinally or behaviorally—might be disproportionately easier for some leaders than others. How people perceive and evaluate a leader may play an important role in how they respond to the leader's actions (Martinko et al., 2018). In particular, a more positive relationship with a leader can ultimately increase a person's cooperation with the leader's decisions (Mastrangelo et al., 2004). This dynamic should hold in the context of gender equality efforts, where leaders will likely elicit greater support for an equality-related agenda when people feel more positively about them. Below, I will unpack prior work, primarily from psychology and organizational literature,

suggesting that gender biases contribute to important differences in how men and women leaders are evaluated by others.

Holding women leaders to higher standards

One way that individuals may respond to men and women leaders differently is by holding them to different standards. For instance, past research finds that men and women are held to different standards across domains, such as competence (Biernat & Kobrynowicz, 1997), integrity (Thomas & Petrow, 2020), and dominance (Brescoll et al., 2016). Higher bars for women leaders produce significant leadership obstacles, such as women having a harder time being viewed as legitimate (Vial et al., 2016) or women having to work much harder than men to be evaluated as highly competent (Biernat & Fuegen, 2001). Additionally, research shows that in situations where evaluators feel threatened by leaders, it is much harder for women leaders to be seen as competent (Sinclair & Kunda, 2000). This suggests that threatening contexts may exacerbate these evaluative disparities—an important factor given that some individuals view gender equality efforts as threatening (Flood et al., 2021). The unique expectations placed upon women can even force them to navigate trade-offs where they are viewed positively on one dimension (e.g., competent) but negatively on another (e.g., cold) (Cuddy et al., 2011; Heilman et al., 2004). Commonly referred to as the "double-bind" dilemma, it is said that "women leaders are seen as competent or likable, but rarely both" (*The Double-Bind Dilemma for Women in Leadership (Infographic) | Catalyst*, n.d.). Because the standards placed on women and men leaders are not the same, women leaders could face more obstacles in building support for their efforts.

Evaluating women leaders more negatively

In addition to being held to different standards, women leaders may have a more difficult time than men leaders in garnering support for equality efforts because women leaders are systematically evaluated more negatively than man leaders (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Eagly & Makhijani, 1992; Schneider & Bos, 2014) This prejudice—appearing in both evaluations of women leaders' characteristics and evaluations of women leaders' performance—is heightened in male-dominated domains (Koenig et al., 2011; Ritter & Yoder, 2004). Of course, male-dominated organizations are likely to be the same organizations where gender equality efforts are highly relevant (Ashcraft et al., 2016; Huang, 2017).

Research suggests that this widespread prejudice results from inconsistencies between women's gender roles and leadership roles (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Ritter & Yoder, 2004). Specifically, the characteristics that are stereotypically associated with leaders are usually the same as those considered masculine (i.e., agentic and dominant) and associated more strongly with men than women (Koenig et al., 2011). Women in leadership roles often receive more negative social evaluations because they are violating gender role expectations (Eagly & Karau, 2002).[1] This process is thought to especially burden women leaders who act more assertively

(Phelan & Rudman, 2010; Rudman & Glick, 1999), and in political spheres, can impact women perceived as "power-seeking" (Okimoto & Brescoll, 2010). Thus, there may be social consequences for women leaders if they are viewed as acting assertively or seeking power when advocating for gender equality.

The individual characteristics of the individuals may also impact the degree of support they give to men vs. women leaders. Indeed, research suggests that a bias against women leaders may be amplified by individual factors, such as a person's gender (S. K. Johnson et al., 2008).

Importantly, bias against women leaders is especially pronounced among men (Eagly & Makhijani, 1992; Koenig et al., 2011; Schein, 2001). This suggests that women leaders of men could face the most prejudicial obstacles—a pertinent consideration given that men are inherently overrepresented in male-dominated institutions. This hurdle for women leaders of men is documented in both lab (Vial et al., 2017) and industry contexts (Ayman et al., 2009) and is consistent with the broader idea that leaders may face more obstacles when working with individuals with whom they do not share important social identities (Tsui & O'reilly III, 2017).

In sum, literature on gender bias and leadership suggest that people—especially men (Eagly & Makhijani, 1992)—likely respond more favorably to men leaders than women (Elsesser, 2016). With women leaders facing bias in the form of different standards (Biernat & Fuegen, 2001) and more negative evaluations (Elsesser, 2016), it is possible that women leaders would have a harder time than men leaders in getting followers to cooperate with their agendas. Additionally, the literature on gender and leadership overall stressed the importance of context (Ritter & Yoder, 2004; Sinclair & Kunda, 2000); situations like being in a competitive, male-dominated environment can create or heighten hurdles for women leaders (Ritter & Yoder, 2004). Consistent with the idea that men make effective allies against sexism (Drury & Kaiser, 2014), perhaps these evaluative advantages that men leaders hold could be leveraged to effectively build support for gender equality efforts.

However, equality-related efforts can be challenging to lead (Dobbin & Kalev, 2016) and require care in how they are implemented (Brannon et al., 2018; Kalev et al., 2006; Legault et al., 2011; Pierson & Lien, 2017). Thus, knowing how individuals *generally* react to men and women leaders, overall, might not be enough. It could also be critical to consider how individuals will react to men vs. women leaders when their leadership agendas *specifically*

advocate for gender equality. The next section explores how the distinct context of seeking gender equality may itself prompt differing reactions to leaders that compound existing gender biases.

What are they leading?: Gender and Leadership in the Context of Seeking Equality

Gender equality efforts inherently disrupt the gender hierarchy and thus are a different type of leadership context than others. When someone challenges social inequality, the person's membership in a traditionally advantaged or disadvantaged group affects how other people respond (Iyer & Ryan, 2009; Ochoa et al., 2021). Overall, members of advantaged groups tend to have more socially favorable experiences when advocating for diversity, equity, and inclusion (Dickter et al., 2012). The context of gender equality is no different. Because men as a group are on the advantaged side of gender inequality, they may advocate for gender equality from a position of privilege (Flood, 2011). Thus, when women lead gender equality efforts, there may be both an effect of gendered stereotypes of leadership and backlash to a marginalized group member confronting inequality. In other words, in addition to the previously summarized general bias in favor of men leaders, bias in favor of dominant group members when challenging inequality could further advantage to men leaders (de Vries, 2015). This section unpacks whether gender equality efforts are a unique context of leadership wherein individuals would cooperate differentially with men vs. women leaders.

Advantages for Men Leaders of Gender Equality Efforts

To begin with, men leaders of gender equality efforts might have an easier time building cooperation because equality pursuits harm perceptions of women leaders more than those of men (Hekman et al., 2017). For example, research shows that women leaders are penalized (i.e., lower competency and performance ratings) for promoting organizational equality in a way that

men leaders are not (Hekman et al., 2017)**.** Likewise, in academic institutions, men faculty who teach about gender (in)equality receive more positive evaluations than women faculty teaching the same content (Flood, 2011). Thus, men can engage in equality work without risking negative evaluations of their competence and performance, but women do not have this same security. Although these negative perceptions focus on performance-related reactions to leaders and not reactions to the equality work itself, people reacting more positively to men leaders of gender equality efforts may mean more support given to those efforts.

Additionally, men leaders may have advantages in seeking organizational gender equality because they can get other men on board with equality pursuits (Subašić et al., 2018; Wiley et al., 2012). For instance, when men supporters of gender equality are portrayed in a positive way, this significantly increases men's support of gender equality (Wiley et al., 2012). Similarly, research finds that men are able to communicate well with other men about gender equality issues (Subašić et al., 2018). Specifically, when gender equality messages come from a man (vs. a woman), men express a greater desire to participate in collective action for gender equality, view gender inequality as less legitimate, and even report more solidarity with feminists (Subašić et al., 2018). This suggests that men may give more support gender equality efforts when they are led by a man.

Taken together, these findings suggest that individuals—especially men—may respond more cooperatively with men leaders of gender equality efforts. While the current research on reactions to leaders of gender equality efforts is sparse, insights can be drawn from the confronting sexism literature to further probe whether people would cooperate differently with men and women leaders of organizational gender equality.

Insights from the confronting sexism literature

The literature on confronting sexism reveals how people respond differently to men vs. women when they challenge instances of sexism (Drury & Kaiser, 2014). This literature largely focuses on *interpersonal confrontations* like speaking up against biased decisions, discriminatory treatment, or prejudiced remarks (Ashburn-Nardo et al., 2008; Drury & Kaiser, 2014; Gervais & Hillard, 2014; Kaiser & Miller, 2004). Calling out (i.e., "*confronting*") sexism in everyday situations is different from *leading* gender equality efforts, but they both challenge the gender status quo. Thus, women leaders of gender equality efforts might face barriers to garnering others' cooperation if they are subject to the same disadvantages that women are known to experience when they confront instances of sexism. For instance, research finds that when women confront sexism, they are more likely than men to be seen as "complainers" or "troublemakers" (Eliezer & Major, 2012; Kaiser & Miller, 2001) and less likely to be taken seriously (Drury & Kaiser, 2014). If these same reactions apply to leaders of gender equality efforts, women leaders could be labeled a troublemaker or have their equality efforts not taken seriously by others.

Additionally, women confronting sexism may be met with accusations of self-interest (de Vries, 2015), perhaps due to women being positioned as the target beneficiaries of gender equality efforts (Subašić et al., 2018). If the same applies to women leaders, it is possible that women leaders seeking equality could be dismissed as trying to benefit themselves. These effects highlight how people might react less cooperatively towards women leaders of gender equality efforts.

In the same vein, men leaders of gender equality efforts might experience more cooperation from followers if they are subject to the same advantages that men confronting

sexism experience. When men confront sexism, they are perceived more positively—as *less* of a complainer and *more* credible—than women confronting gender inequality (Cihangir et al., 2014; Dodd et al., 2001; Drury & Kaiser, 2014). If these positive perceptions extend to men leaders of equality efforts, followers may respond more cooperatively to men leading these efforts. For instance, consider how these perceptions could impact leaders instituting the commonly used gender bias training programs (Zelevansky, 2019). Perhaps men leaders would not be as readily trivialized as "complaining" about gender bias as women leaders of these same efforts could be.

Research also suggests that when men confront gender bias, people might be more concerned about gender bias than when women confront it (Czopp & Monteith, 2003). Specifically, this research has participants imagine that they had made a hypothetically biased choice (e.g., choosing a man for a surgeon role in a play) and were confronted for it. When they imagined being confronted by a man (vs. a woman), they expressed more guilt and self-criticism. The scholars assert that people may be discounting women's confrontations as overreactions but taking men's confrontations more seriously. Although leaders of organizational gender equality may not individually monitor decisions of bias in everyday situations, these insights hint at the possibility that individuals would react more favorably to men leaders than women leaders when they implement efforts to challenge gender bias in organizations and institutions.

Overall, differences in individuals' reactions to men vs. women leaders of gender equality could be due in part to attributions made about group interests. Women are the target group of gender inequality (Morgenroth et al., 2018), so women seeking gender equality may be seen as acting to serve their group interests. As research has shown, women engaging in self-advocacy can be socially and professionally penalized (Eagly & Karau, 2002). On the other

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hand, men are on the advantaged side of gender inequality, so they may be seen as sacrificing group interest when confronting gender inequality (Drury & Kaiser, 2014). Because men aren't presumed to benefit from their actions, their confrontations might be harder to dismiss. Furthermore, scholars have posited that the reason why men perceivers are more likely than women perceivers to derogate women confronting sexism is that a) men react harsher to people who violate gender roles and b) women acting assertively to change gender hierarchies may be seen as violating gender roles (Dodd et al., 2001). This would help explain why men may show more bias against women leaders than men leaders when they attempt to make the organizational gender hierarchy more equal.

Taking follower gender into consideration

The literature on confronting sexism also explores how the gender of the perceiver influences the extent to which they respond differently to men vs. women who confront sexism (Drury & Kaiser, 2014). These insights can be applied to consider how the gender of the follower would impact cooperation with equality efforts. Overall, research has found that women tend to rate someone who confronts gender inequality more positively than men do (Gervais & Hillard, 2014), suggesting that leaders of equality efforts might get more positive reactions from women than men. Importantly, this consideration of follower gender also begs the question of whether men—more than women—would express the myriad biases against women leaders of organizational gender equality mentioned above.

For one thing, the confronting sexism literature suggests that women leaders might, indeed, encounter less bias when leading these efforts from their women followers. To illustrate, consider research looking at how people react to a man or woman confronter of sexism—specifically, how credible they find the confronter and how sexist they perceive a perpetrator's

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actions (Drury & Kaiser, 2014). This research found that women perceivers take men and women who confront gender inequality *equally* seriously. In other words, women's reactions (i.e., their credibility and sexism ratings) did not differ depending on whether the confronter was a man or a woman. Thus, when looking at women followers' responses to leaders of gender equality efforts, differences between the man and woman leader might be minimized.

The opposite is likely true for men followers. The men participants in this research rated the man confronter as more credible and rated the actions of the perpetrator as more sexist when the confronter was a man (Drury & Kaiser, 2014)—suggesting that the bias against women confronting sexism may be driven more by men perceivers. This idea is supported by additional research showing that only men perceivers like a woman significantly less when she confronts sexism (Dodd et al., 2001). Taken together, this research suggests the gender of a leader would have a *stronger* effect on cooperation with equality efforts when the individual pool has *more men*. More specifically, any favoritism expressed towards a man leader of organizational gender equality might be particularly salient in male-dominated spaces. This underscores the need for research to unpack the psychological mechanisms that predict men's support or opposition of these efforts.

Likelihood of Men's "Ally Advantage" in leading gender equality

While there is limited empirical work to test whether men and women leaders of gender equality elicit different levels of support, the *advantages that men hold in confronting sexism provide a solid basis for predicting responses to leaders of gender equality*. By and large, insights from the confronting sexism literature indicate that men and women leaders will likely face different reactions when they advocate for organizational gender equality pursuits. The bulk of these findings suggests that individuals would cooperate more readily with men leaders of

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gender equality efforts, being less likely to stigmatize the man as a complainer (Eliezer & Major, 2012; Kaiser & Miller, 2001), being less likely to brush the man off (Drury & Kaiser, 2014), and being more likely to criticize their own biases (Czopp & Monteith, 2003). Moreover, men can play an important role in getting other men, who may otherwise be skeptical of gender equality initiatives (Flood et al., 2021), on board with their equality agendas (Drury & Kaiser, 2014).

These findings could imply that men leaders have a unique opportunity to leverage their privilege and advance gender equality in organizations. Such opportunities would mirror the call for increased engagement among allied men to lessen the burden of change on women themselves (Prime & Moss-Racusin, 2009). However, not all research suggests that men leaders would receive preferential responses (Gervais & Hillard, 2014), and popular media examples highlight instances of men disparaging other men for associating with gender equality (JRE Clips, 2019; Richman, 2021). Thus, it is important to consider whether there are boundary conditions to the advantages that men leaders experience in this context.

Possibility of "black sheep" effect: conditions where men may elicit less cooperation

First, men leaders may find it more difficult to build up support for equality efforts if they are hindered by social stigmas. Research shows that men seeking gender equality may encounter critical judgments about their presumed masculinity, such as being seen as weaker, more likely to be gay, and more feminine (Rudman et al., 2013). This occurs in a process called "stigma by association," wherein men are penalized for their deliberate association with the social cause of a lower-status group (i.e., women). Thus, men who associate themselves with organizational gender equality efforts may risk these social penalties—like being seen as weaker—from their colleagues and followers. It is possible that, over time, this type of stigma may decrease the likelihood that individuals cooperate with their equality agendas.

More significantly, most of the research highlighted above documents what happens when individuals confront inequality in the form of a *prejudiced remark or interaction* (Drury & Kaiser, 2014). It is possible that *leading* gender equality efforts—especially those that successfully challenge the gender status quo in organizations (Danbold & Huo, 2017) —will be perceived differently. New research argues that men who support gender equality may not always receive better evaluations from other men—particularly when they act on their equality beliefs (Kutlaca et al., 2020). This research compared men's responses to a man who "politely" confronts gender inequality vs. a man who silently dislikes the inequality but does not act to confront it. Men in the study did not rate the confronter as acting more appropriately than the man engaging in silent non-action. In fact, other men were more likely to rate the confronter as overreacting. The researchers conclude that while men who hold pro-gender equality attitudes may be evaluated favorably by other men, men who take action to challenge inequality may not. Critically, this research raises the possibility that men leaders may face different responses from ingroup members depending upon context: whether they are seen as signaling support for gender equality vs. taking tangible action in support of it. Put differently, this could mean that men leaders who pay lip service to organizational gender equality causes get more positive reactions from other men, but men leaders who change the organization hierarchy get backlash from other men.

Therefore, men leaders of gender equality efforts might have a polarizing effect on other men, mostly garnering more positive reactions but sometimes garnering more negative reasons than women. If men leaders are not received positively by men followers, pushback could arise because those followers perceive the leader to be acting against the group's interest. Social identity theory has outlined a phenomenon called the "black sheep effect," wherein members of a

group who behave in ways that deviate from group norms and standards are met with social penalties instead of ingroup favoritism (Marques et al., 1988). These penalties derogate the ingroup member's deviant behavior to a larger extent than outgroup members' engaging in the same behavior. Norms surrounding men's actions toward gender equality are constraining, with data showing that men feel it is not their place to get involved (Sherf et al., 2017)—suggesting a possibility that men followers could perceive men leaders' involvement as stepping out of place. Therefore, men leaders could potentially receive less cooperation from men than women leaders of gender equality efforts if and when men perceive the man leader to be acting against group norms and interests. The research above highlights the possible boundary conditions to the advantages that men vs. women leaders will have in garnering men's cooperation with gender equality efforts. As calls increase for men to play a role in equality movements, increase (Caprino, 2019; Prime & Moss-Racusin, 2009), understanding these boundaries has vast societal implications for the ultimate success and sustainability of the efforts. Furthermore, the possibility of a black sheep effect between leaders and other men highlights the importance of research which focuses on *men's* reactions to leaders' gender equality efforts.

Overall, the research that has been discussed points to an advantage that men leaders might experience in most situations when leading gender equality efforts. Put simply, *who* is leading these efforts can impact how individuals respond. Moving into the next section, it is important to ask: Does *how* leaders carry out these efforts also make a difference*?* There is a growing body of research showing that the way people respond to equality efforts can depend on how those efforts are communicated and implemented (Holladay et al., 2003; Morgenroth et al., 2018; Rios & Wynn, 2016; Trawalter & Davidson, 2016). This means that the *process* leaders

are using to carry out these efforts matters, too. In what follows, I will explore how leader gender may interact with the use of leadership styles to shape cooperation with gender equality efforts.

How are efforts being led?: Gender, Leadership Styles, and Cooperation

Data from the management consulting firm McKinsey & Company show that women leaders engage in more equality-related work (e.g., organizing relevant events, mentoring women, etc.) than their male counterparts (McKinsey & Company, 2021). The research previously discussed showed how gender biases may impede women's ability to lead gender equality efforts. Prior work has also suggested that using leadership styles can help women overcome gender-related barriers (van Gils et al., 2018) and help leaders advance equality-related agendas (Kezar et al., 2008). When women lead gender equality efforts, how might the styles that they employ affect subordinate cooperation? This section explores how one specific type of style—relational leadership style—may either help or hinder cooperation. Specifically, three possibilities for these styles are outlined: 1) they could equally benefit all leaders, including women, 2) they could benefit women leaders more than men, or 3) they benefit men leaders more than women.

Although various styles abound, the current focus will be on ***relational leadership styles***—such as those that focus on strengthening the interpersonal relationship between a leader and a subordinate (Tyler & Lind, 1992). Many common leadership approaches throughout history tap into this relational dynamic—like "interpersonally-oriented" approaches, democratic leadership, and transformational leadership (Eagly et al., 2003). Understanding how these styles interact with leader gender will be fruitful because these types of approaches are used frequently by women leaders (Eagly et al., 2003; Post et al., 2019) and have been shown to elicit cooperation very reliably (de Cremer & Vugt, 2001; Tyler & Lind, 1992).

Could relational styles work equally well for everyone?

One possibility is that relational styles provide a buffer to offset the cooperation barriers women face when leading gender equality efforts because they work *equally well* for everybody—women included. Indeed, relational approaches are considered highly impactful in garnering subordinate support—increasing trust in a leader and making subordinates feel respected by leaders (Eagly & Carli, 2003; Tyler & Lind, 1992). For instance, consider the well-established relational style of listening to employees about their concerns and views (i.e., providing "**voice**"). This behavior has been shown to increase subordinates' acceptance and compliance with leaders' decisions, even ones they may disagree with (Huo et al., 1996; Lind & Tyler, 1988; Tyler & Lind, 1992). This style could be helpful to all leaders looking to get subordinates on board and of particular relevance to women because of the aforementioned barriers to cooperation they likely endure.

Could relational styles work better for women leaders?

A second possibility is that relational styles help to offset barriers for women leaders of gender equality efforts because the styles work even *better for women* leaders than men leaders. One study found that a relational type of leadership style had the strongest positive effect on subordinate performance when used by a woman leader with men subordinates (van Gils et al., 2018). The scholars explain that this type of leadership is stereotypically congruent with feminine gender roles and may therefore buffer the evaluative disadvantages that harm women leaders (van Gils et al., 2018). Other research supports the idea that relational styles could be especially useful for women leaders by testing the efficacy of relational approaches during times of organizational uncertainty (Post et al., 2019). This research found that women leaders using relational styles increased subordinates' trust during uncertain times more so than men leaders

using these styles. Although outcomes such as performance and trust are not the same as support for a leader's equality agenda, these studies help broach the idea that relational styles could help women leaders in unique ways.

Could relational styles work better for men leaders?

A third possibility is that relational styles may work *better for men* leaders, perpetuating a disparity in cooperation between women and men leaders of organizational gender equality. Indeed, there is evidence to show that women leaders can be evaluated more negatively than men, even when using the same leadership style (Bongiorno et al., 2014; Wiley & Eskilson, 1982)**.** When it comes to relational leadership behaviors (e.g., those that include individual consideration and listening to subordinates), some research suggests that women leaders do not experience the same benefits as men leaders and are evaluated more negatively by subordinate men (Ayman et al., 2009; Arnold, & Loughlin, 2013). This runs counter to the evidence above (van Gils et al., 2018), highlighting the possibility that relational styles may activate, rather than buffer against, the consequences of gender role stereotypes (Ayman et al., 2009).

Another reason why relational styles could work better for men leaders is that these styles might work better when the leader and subordinate come from the same group. Extending the earlier idea that leaders face fewer obstacles when they share social categories with subordinates (Tsui & O'reilly III, 2017), men leaders may be able to use relational styles more easily than women leaders to get cooperation from men. For instance, the extant research on the relational style of providing voice (i.e., listening to the opinions and views of subordinates) finds that voice more effectively reduces concerns over an organizational decision outcome or agenda when individuals share a social category with a leader (Huo, Molina, Sawahata, & Deang, 2005; Huo et al., 1996; Smith, Tyler, Huo, Ortiz, & Lind, 1998; Tyler,

Lind, Ohbuchi, Sugawara, & Huo, 1998). Put differently, voice is most effective when provided by an ingroup leader (also called the "social categorization effect"). While the literature on voice has not yet adapted the paradigm to a gender equality context, this further supports the idea that using relational leadership styles may introduce a type of ingroup advantage for men leaders in male-dominated organizations.

In sum, there are conflicting insights in the literature to understand what type of leader would be best able to leverage relational styles to build cooperation with gender equality efforts. While some of the research suggests that the styles will particularly benefit women due to consistencies between these "feminized" styles and women's gender roles, other research suggests that men have the advantage, especially when leading other men. Future research needs to be conducted on how leader gender and leadership styles shape cooperation with gender equality efforts.

The Proposed Research

The literature reviewed, thus far, calls attention to the timeliness of studying men's reactions to gender equality efforts led by men and women leaders: men are the perceivers most likely to discriminate against women leaders of gender equality (Drury & Kaiser, 2014), men perceivers could push back against men leaders of gender equality in more threatening contexts (Kutlaca et al., 2020), and men perceivers might give more support to a male leader using a relational leadership style than a woman leader (Tyler, Lind, Ohbuchi, Sugawara, & Huo, 1998).

Based on the preceding discussion, I propose an organizational roadmap for predicting men's support for gender equality programs as a function of WHO is leading them, WHAT type of threat the program poses to the gender hierarchy, and HOW they are implementing it. The WHO WHAT HOW roadmap is tested across three studies (Figure 1).
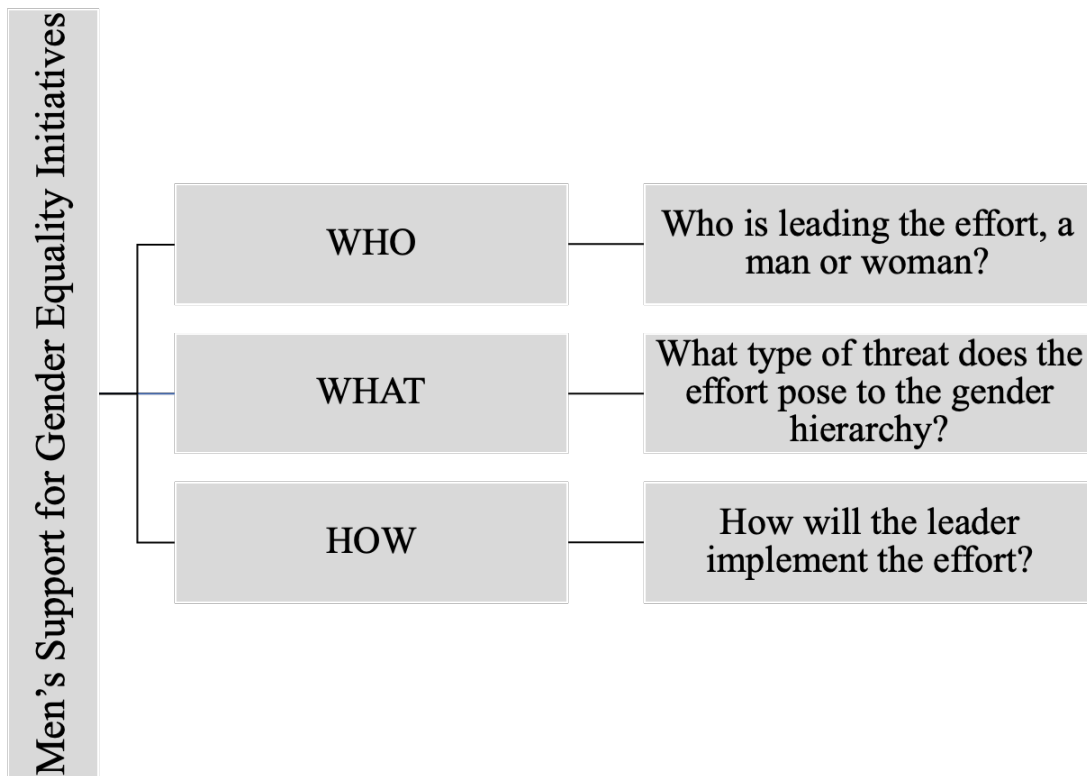
Figure 1. Model depicting the who, what, and how roadmap to predict men's level of support for gender equality pursuits.

The purpose of this research is to unpack critical factors that underlie men's support or opposition to gender equality efforts, programs, and initiatives. This research draws on the various organizational and psychological literature discussed earlier to clarify the conditions under which some leaders of gender equality will receive more support than others. Specifically, the proposed research will help address the following research goals: understanding how a leader's gender impacts the support they elicit for gender equality efforts (**goal 1**), understanding how that supports changes when efforts pose different levels of threat to the gender hierarchy (**goal 2**), and understanding how the leadership styles that leaders used to implement these efforts will predict the support they receive (**goal 3**).

To address these goals, I conducted three studies of mixed methodology. **Study 1** will be an archival study of real-world men vs. women political leaders. I will examine how the politician's perceived level of threat to the gender hierarchy predicts reactions to their online gender equality messaging (**goal 1**). **Study 2** will aim to replicate Study 1's result in a controlled environment by examining men's responses to business leaders of gender equality (**goal 1**). **Study 3** branches off to a separate but related line of work. It will build off of a pilot study that explores how the variable of leadership styles impacts responses to men vs. women leaders of gender equality (**goal 2**).

Study 1: An archival multiple-case study of whether men and women leaders elicit different reactions when expressing support for gender equality in the real world

In study 1, I use an archival, multiple-case study design to test whether real-world men leaders garner a higher level of public support than women leaders when expressing support for gender equality. Additionally, I explored how these patterns may be moderated by a leader's perceived ability to challenge the gender hierarchy (low or high).

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Men political leaders will elicit significantly more support than women leaders when expressing support for gender equality online.

Hypotheses 2 (H2): Perceived threat to the gender hierarchy will moderate the effect of gender on support, such that men's advantage in support will decrease when they are perceived as a greater threat to gender hierarchy.

This study contains two stages: scraping data from Twitter from real political leaders (*Study 1a*) and asking participants to rate these leaders on their perceived ability to challenge the gender hierarchy (*Study 1b*). This study provides initial evidence to probe the "WHO" and the "WHAT" in the roadmap.

Study 1a Methods

Procedure

The goal of this study is to gather archival data on the response patterns towards male and female leaders when they engage in discussions related to gender equality on Twitter. Twitter is a free online social media platform that allows users to post short messages called "*tweets.*" I will investigate whether male politicians receive more positive responses to their tweets about gender equality compared to their female counterparts, despite having similar content in their tweets. I will also explore whether some men politicians (i.e., those perceived as *less* threatening to the gender hierarchy) hold more of an advantage than other men politicians (i.e., those perceived as *more* threatening to the gender hierarchy) when posting about gender equality.

Why Twitter? Before delving into the selected politicians and the rationale behind their selection, it is crucial to understand why Twitter was chosen as the preferred social media platform. Twitter emerged as the optimal choice due to its accessibility and the availability of application programming interfaces (APIs), which grant researchers convenient access to publicly available content hosted on the website. Whenever a tweet is created, the website automatically generates a unique conversation ID that the API can use to identify all the replies related to the original Twitter post. Because I have obtained a researcher-licensed API, I can use the R package academictwitteR (Barrie & Ho, 2021) to retrieve public user replies to the conversation IDs associated with the gender equity-related Twitter posts.

Why __Political__ Leaders? The social media posts of political leaders were examined due to the availability of political leaders' public communications (i.e., they communicate frequently with the public) and the potential for diverse public engagement (i.e., many different types of people will engage with their representatives (*Social Media and Political Engagement*, 2012).

Although there are two major political parties in the U.S., it should be noted that I focus on leaders associated with the Democratic Party. The rationale for examining Democratic Party political leaders, specifically, is threefold. First, Democratic Party leaders use the Twitter platform more often than their Republican counterparts (Van Kessel et al., 2020). Second, it would be easier to contrast tweets among men and women Democratic politicians simply because there is more of a balance between men and women leaders in the Democratic Party vs. the Republican Party (Leppert & Desilver, 2023). Third, Democratic politicians are more likely than Republican politicians to post about gender-related issues on Twitter (Van Kessel et al., 2020).

Selecting A Sample of Democratic Politicians. I first needed a list of U.S. Democratic politicians that post about gender equality on Twitter. I compiled a list of Democratic politicians posting about women's issues or causes using prominent gender hashtags (e.g., #internationalwomen'sday, #equalpay, etc.). The politicians serve constituents in various regions of the United States and hold various political appointments.

Matching Politicians. To create pairs of matched men and women politicians, I looked for comparable men and women politicians–who share a similar racial background and age range of no more than ten years apart. This resulted in three pairs of political leaders who post about gender equality on Twitter: 1) Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren, 2) Eric Swalwell and Katie Porter, 3) Barack Obama and Kamala Harris.

Matching Tweets. For all three pairs of men and women leaders, we selected similar gender equality tweets to compare. The tweets needed to be posted within the same year (e.g., Sanders' tweet posted in the same year as Warren's), on the same gender equality topic, or using the same gender equality hashtag (e.g., Sanders' tweet about #equalpayday and Warren's about

#equalpayday), and posted within a few years of the present research (i.e., 2020-present). To see the six verbatim tweets selected, please refer to Appendix A.

   Scraping Tweet Data. Once tweets were found and selected for analysis, I logged the relevant tweet analytics (e.g., like counts) and scraped the data of all public replies/responses to the tweets.[1] Additional information about the tweets can be found in Appendix A. Finally, I ran the scraped data of the replies through Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC) software to detect levels of positive and negative emotions.

Outcomes
   Adjusted Like Counts. A metric that was used to indicate the level of public support was adjusted like counts. On Twitter, "liking" a post is a positive reaction that indicates your support, agreement, and/or appreciation for the post. Unadjusted like counts are limited–simply the number of likes a post received at the time of analysis. However, I calculated the adjusted like count by computing a like count by follower count ratio for the leaders' tweets. Follower counts represent the number of Twitter users that subscribe to a person's Twitter posts. By dividing the number of likes by the number of followers, I partially adjusted for the fact that a leader with more followers may inherently garner more responses to their posts. This is important because 80 likes on a post from a leader with 100 followers are different than 80 likes on a similar post from a leader with 10,000 followers.

   Replies to Tweets (positive/negative). To measure the positive and negative sentiments expressed in replies to leaders' tweets, I used the well-established linguistic analysis tool, Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC). This approach enabled a more profound comprehension of the prevailing sentiment towards the posts made by these leaders.

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[1] It is important to note that this data was scraped from Twitter in June, 2022. All subsequent likes or replies to these tweets are not captured in the data presented.

Study 1a Results and Discussion

      I hypothesized that men leaders will elicit significantly more support than women leaders when expressing support for gender equality. Study 1a allowed me to map the support comparable male vs. female leaders received when tweeting about gender equality. The results–adjusted like counts and replies–can be seen in table 1. Across each of the three pairs, I found that tweets from a male politician have a higher adjusted like count than comparable tweets from a matched woman politician. Specifically, Obama's adjusted like count was about two times greater than Harris', Swalwell's adjusted like count was about six times greater than Porter's, and Sanders' like count was about three times greater than Warren's. This is aligned with literature on confronting sexism that reveals an advantage for men when challenging gender inequality.

      Similarly, in the majority of pairs, the man's tweet elicited more favorable responses (i.e., less negative sentiment and more positive sentiment) than the woman counterpart. This is the case for pair 1 (Obama and Harris) and pair 2 (Swalwell and Porter). However, in pair 3 (Sanders and Warren), we fail to see this sweeping male advantage. Specifically, Sanders' tweet received more negative sentiment and less positive sentiment than Warren's.

Table 1. *Comparison of Leaders' Adjusted Like Counts and Negative and Positive Sentiment*

Leader	Adjusted Like Count[a]	Negative Sentiment	Positive Sentiment
1) Barack Obama	0.00031	1.82	7.09
1) Kamala Harris	0.00015	2.83	4.06
2) Eric Swalwell	0.01826	4.77	5.55
2) Katie Porter	0.00301	5.28	1.97
3) Bernie Sanders	0.00061	2.69	2.90
3) Elizabeth Warren	0.000184	2.19	3.34
4) Keith Ellison	0.001257	1.28	1.50
4) Kamala Harris	0.000069	1.36	3.03
5) Eric Swalwell	0.000716	0	0.62
5) Elizabeth Warren	0.000267	0.440638	0.36

Note. Table of leader pairs and like count information. ***Both pairs below the dotted line were introduced in Study 1, stage 2***.
[a]Adjusted like count refers to the ratio of the number of likes of a tweet to the number of followers the leader has.

As a whole, the results support the predicted hypothesis (H1); the men politicians were more likely than the women politicians to receive favorable responses to gender equality tweets. However, the differing pattern in reply sentiment in pair 3 (Sanders and Warren) raises a key question regarding boundary conditions for men's advantage. Perhaps some men, like Sanders, do *not* hold the same advantages when advocating for gender equality. This idea would be

consistent with H2–we expect an advantage for male leaders to decrease when those leaders are perceived as threatening the gender hierarchy. Bernie Sanders is a well-known progressive ("Remake the Democratic Party", 2016) who may be seen as more threatening to the gender hierarchy compared to other male politicians.

However, to confirm this interpretation, I need to measure perceptions of how much these politicians threaten the gender hierarchy. Thus, I collected additional data in the next stage of study (Study 1b) to understand whether some of the politicians may be viewed as threatening the gender hierarchy more so than others and whether this aligns with the patterns observed in Study 1a.

Additionally, two new pairs were introduced in the study: pair 4 consisting of Keith Ellison and Kamala Harris, and pair 5 consisting of Eric Swalwell and Elizabeth Warren.[2] Pair 4 was added because Keith Ellison is another well-known progressive who, like Sanders, may be perceived as a greater threat to gender hierarchy. Additionally, the inclusion of Keith Ellison in pair 4 provides an opportunity to observe how the patterns change when comparing Kamala Harris to a less progressive male, Obama, and a more progressive male, Keith Ellison. Furthermore, to mitigate the potential influence of race as a confounding factor, pair 5 extends the same rationale with an additional pair of white politicians: I can now compare patterns between Warren and a less progressive male, Swalwell, to Warren and a more progressive male, Sanders.

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[2] Note that Harris and Warren were included in earlier pairs, but Ellison and Swalwell are new.

Study 1b Methods

To assess the perceived level of threat to the gender hierarchy posed by the selected leaders, I conducted an online panel consisting of both men and women, who were asked to rank them.

Participants

A sample of one hundred participants, comprising near equal distribution of men and women (49 men, 47 women, and four non-binary individuals), was recruited from the Prolific online survey site. All participants met the inclusion criteria of being U.S. born and possessing English language fluency. A majority of the sample identified as liberal (72%) and earned a Bachelor's degree or higher (60%). The mean age of participants was 36.32 years (SD= 14.44). I compensated participants with $1.00 for completing the survey, which was approximately five minutes long.

Procedure

Prior to the rating process, participants were provided with clear instructions regarding the nature of the task, which involved evaluating U.S. politicians based on a range of characteristics. Recognizing the possibility of participants being unfamiliar with certain politicians, I gave explicit guidance to select a "*no opinion*" option whenever encountering an unfamiliar political leader.

Participants were shown the names, prominent political titles, and pictures of the selected U.S. politicians from Study 1a in a random order. Alongside this information, a rating matrix was provided, allowing participants to indicate their perception of the politicians' various characteristics. The survey ended with a short demographic questionnaire.

Measure [3]

Level of threat to gender hierarchy. The following item was adopted from Pew research surveys on gender equality: "*Gender equality efforts led by [Politician] will negatively impact men*" (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The results were used to contrast the tweet patterns we obtained from women paired with the men that pose a "higher threat" vs. a "lower threat" to the hierarchy.

Study 1b Results and Discussion

Study 1b was run to understand which men politicians are seen as posing more of a threat to the gender hierarchy than others. Table 2 shows the averages for the men politicians on the hierarchy threat item. Sanders and Ellison were ranked at or higher than the median on threatening the hierarchy for the men politicians ($Mdn = 1.8$), and their scores do not significantly differ ($t = .1$, $p = .445$). This finding is consistent with our prediction that would be viewed as more threatening to the hierarchy than more centrist male politicians. The other male politicians, Obama and Swalwell, were ranked below the median on threatening the hierarchy among the male politicians, and their ratings did not significantly differ from one another ($t = .000$, $p = 1.000$). When collapsing across Sanders' and Ellisons's scores (the two higher-threat males), and Obama's and Swalwell's scores (the two lower-threat males), I find a significant difference in threat ratings ($t = 5.8$, $p < .000$).

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[3] The measure included a "no opinion option" for participants who do not know the politician.

Table 2. *Comparison of men leaders' perceived threat to the gender hierarchy.*

Leader	Threat To The Gender Hierarchy (harm men)
Bernie Sanders	1.88
Keith Ellison	1.83
Barack Obama	1.77
Eric Swalwell	1.59

[a]Item: Gender equality efforts led by [Politician] will negatively impact men

Although my predictions only pertain to men politicians' level of threat to the gender hierarchy, I also collected data about women's level of threat to gender hierarchy (Table 3). Among women, Warren and Harris were ranked at or higher than the median (*Mdn* = 2.18), and their ratings do not significantly differ from one another ($t = .21$, $p = .418$).

Table 3. *Comparison of women leaders' perceived threat to the gender hierarchy.*

Leader	Threat To The Gender Hierarchy (harm men)
Kamala Harris	2.18
Elizabeth Warren	2.18
Katie Porter	1.73

[a]Item: Gender equality efforts led by [Politician] will negatively impact men

Critically, the patterns that we found in Table 1 map onto this categorization and help us interpret the patterns we observed. We see that a decrease in men's advantage occurs when the pairs include the higher-threat men (HTM). As shown in figure 2, when women are compared to lower-threat men (LTM), the men in the pair always get more positive sentiment and less negative sentiment.
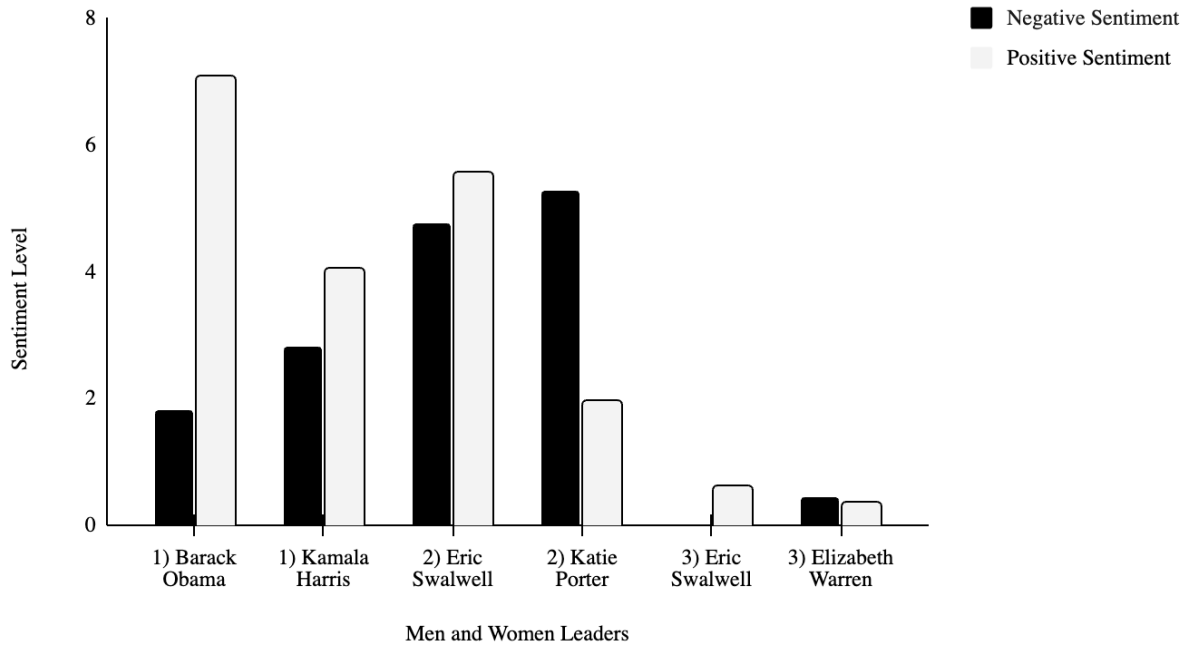
Figure 2. Patterns of sentiment when women are compared to lower-threat men. [4]

In contrast, figure 3 show that when women are compared to higher-threat men, the men in the pair get *less* positive sentiment and sometimes get more negative sentiment. Generally, the results align with hypothesis (H1), such that men leaders elicit more positive reactions than women leaders when posting about gender equality unless they pose a higher threat to the gender hierarchy.

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[4] There is no black bar present for Eric Swalwell because he received no negative sentiment.
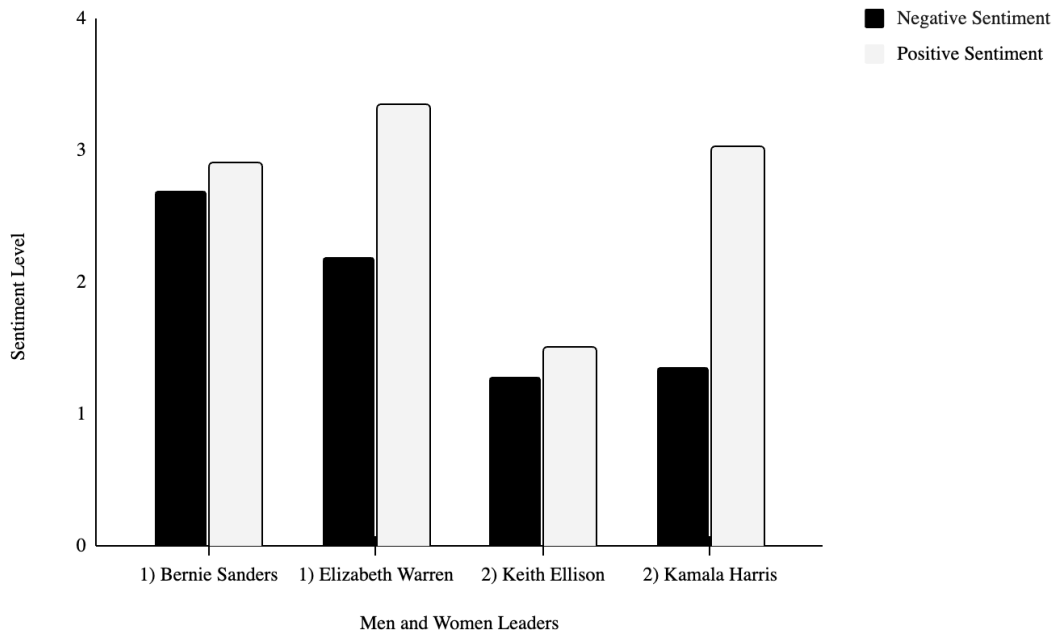
Figure 3. Patterns of sentiment when women are compared to higher-threat men.

A strength of the data collected is that we can make comparisons between a woman's tweet and a higher threat vs lower threat man counterpart. For instance, Kamala Harris' tweet receives entirely less favorable responses compared to a similar tweet from a LTM (Obama) but gains an advantage (more positive sentiment) when a tweet of hers is matched with a tweet from a HTM (Ellison). The same can be said for Elizabeth Warren, who receives less favorable responses relative to a LTM (Swalwell) but garners more positive reactions relative to HTM (Sanders).   This suggests that perceptions of the man leader drive the patterns we observe in responses to men and women leaders advocating for gender equality.

As a whole, the results from Study 1 provide initial evidence that men leaders hold an advantage over women leaders when advocating for gender equality. In every pair tested, the male leader got more likes for his tweet about gender equality than a similar tweet from a comparable woman politician. This suggests that women leaders who speak about the same

gender-related cause as a male counterpart may not elicit the same level of public support and cooperation.

However, it is important to note that this advantage may be subject to certain boundary conditions. Specifically, my findings suggest that the advantage enjoyed by male politicians is not absolute, particularly when they are perceived as posing a greater threat to the established gender hierarchy. This was evident in the sentiment expressed in tweet replies. For instance, when comparing male politicians such as Sanders and Ellison to female politicians like Harris and Warren, we observed a notable disparity. Ellison received approximately half the positive sentiment that Harris did, while Sanders encountered a higher proportion of negative sentiment and less positive sentiment compared to Warren. These results indicate that if male leaders are perceived as challenging or threatening the existing gender hierarchy, the advantage they typically enjoy may diminish or even reverse. This highlights the complex interplay between leaders' gender, hierarchy power dynamics, and social attitudes.

The difference in results between likes and sentiment of tweet replies is not entirely surprising. Firstly, the act of liking a tweet is relatively effortless and requires minimal engagement. People may like a leader's tweet based on a quick glance or agreement with the content, without necessarily engaging deeply with the message or its implications. On the other hand, replying to a tweet involves more active participation, as users take the time to compose a response and express their thoughts or sentiments in more detail.

Study 2: An experimental test of whether men and women leaders elicit different levels of support for a specific, gender equality decision

In study 1, I expected to find that men leaders received more positive reactions from others when advocating for gender equality, specifically on social media. Although this multiple-case study design provides valuable information about real-world interactions with high generalizability, an experimental study is necessary to supplement to these findings. Factors such as the wording or framing of the tweets, the timing of the posts, or the specific characteristics or reputations of the politicians involved could influence the responses received. Without controlling for these variables, it is challenging to attribute the observed differences solely to the gender of the politicians. By running an experiment, I can ensure that gender is the *only* characteristic that varies between two leaders. Furthermore, it is not possible to reliably know the gender of the Twitter *respondents* in Study 1. An experiment would allow me to recruit respondents that identify as men, and thus, gauge whether men perceive women vs. men leaders differently when they promote gender equality.

Furthermore, while Study 1 provided insights into the perceived threat posed by leaders to the gender hierarchy, it did not specifically explore how a particular policy or decision affects this hierarchy. This distinction is important as prior research has highlighted the differentiation between decisions that pose symbolic threats (such as threats to values) and realistic threats (such as threats to power) (Stephan, Ybarra, & Rios Morrison, 2009), as well as the differentiation between symbolic and substantive diversity practices (Allison, 1999). To address this gap, Study 2 expands upon Study 1 by investigating whether individuals' responses to leaders vary when those leaders advocate for efforts that entail symbolic or realistic disruptions to the gender

hierarchy. This will provide a deeper understanding of the dynamics involved and shed light on how different types of threats impact perceptions of leadership.

Finally, because Study 1 used only Democratic politicians, it is difficult to generalize the findings across both party lines. I suspect that a majority of the people interacting with Democratic leaders on Twitter identify with the Democratic Party, themselves. This means that Study 1 may be picking up on Black Sheep effects that are unique to democratic individuals. To address this limitation, study 2 will intentionally recruit roughly equal proportions of Republican and Democratic-identified individuals.

Study 2 tests competing hypotheses regarding whether men leaders have an advantage or a disadvantage when leading efforts that greatly challenge the gender hierarchy.
Competing Hypotheses:

    a. H1-A: <u>Ally Advantage Hypothesis</u>- Men leaders will incur significantly *more favorable* responses than women leaders when advocating for gender equality efforts, regardless of whether the effort poses a symbolic or realistic threat.

    b. H1-B: <u>Black Sheep Hypothesis</u>- The effect of gender on support will depend on threat type, such that men leaders will receive more favorable responses than women leaders when their gender equality actions are symbolic but *not* receive more favorable responses than women leaders when their gender equality actions are realistically challenging the gender hierarchy.

In study 2, I test whether men respond differently to men vs. women leaders advocating for gender equality. Specifically, men participants will be evaluating gender equality ideas proposed by hypothetical business leaders in news articles. These ideas will differ based on

whether they signal support for gender equality (i.e., a symbolic threat) versus propose shifts in power within organizations (i.e., a realistic threat).

This study uses a 2 (gender of leader: man or woman) x 2 (threat type: symbolic or realistic) design. The outcomes of interest include support for the policy and perceptions of the leader.

Methods

Participants

Men participants (N=400, based on a power analysis specifying a small effect with .8 power) were recruited via Prolific. Aside from gender, inclusion criteria included identifying as White, being fluent in English, and being located in the U.S. I recruited white men, in particular, to ensure that participants' race would match the race of the displayed leaders in the study. As mentioned above, I purposefully recruited participants across the political spectrum to ensure that my conclusions can generalize across party lines. In the sample, 50% of the men identified as Republican, and 48% identified as Democratic. A small majority (57%) of participants have earned a bachelor's degree or higher. The mean age of participants was 43.45 years ($SD = 14.52$)

Procedure

Participants were given a cover story that they were going to evaluate two ostensibly real news articles published within the last six months. Keeping with the cover story, I told participants that I removed the name of the news outlet and author(s) so that their reaction to the article is not influenced by the source of the news. All participants first viewed and responded to one distractor article about efforts to discourage littering on beaches.

Subsequently, the experimental manipulation was carried out by randomly assigning participants to one of four articles, each focusing on efforts related to gender equality. Within

these articles, participants were informed that the policy being advocated for was endorsed by either a male or a female leader. Additionally, the gender equality policies presented in the articles represented either a symbolic or realistic disruption to the existing gender hierarchy.

To portray a symbolic threat to the hierarchy, one article discussed a leader's call for companies to incorporate images of women on their organization's website. On the other hand, to convey a realistic threat to the hierarchy, another article highlighted a leader's request, inspired by the NIH Director's letter titled "Time to End the Manel Tradition,"[5] to increase the representation of women on corporate boards of directors.

Consequently, the study encompassed four distinct articles: a male leader advocating for a symbolic effort, a female leader advocating for a symbolic effort, a male leader advocating for a realistic effort, and a female leader advocating for a realistic effort. Lastly, participants responded to various outcomes, individual differences, and demographic measures.

Materials

The content used in the experimental articles was pre-tested by men on Prolific to ensure that 1) the gender of the leader can be easily recalled, and 2) men perceive the aforementioned policies to have varying levels of perceived disruption to the gender hierarchy.

Filler article. A filler article (Appendix B) was used to advance the cover story that participants are evaluating news articles. The filler article covered a non-gender related topic (i.e., littering on beaches) but followed a similar format as the experimental articles described below.

Experimental articles. The experimental articles were written about a business mogul who is calling for some type of action related to gender equality. Different versions of this article

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[5] "Manel" refers to an all-male speaking panels.

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were made by varying the gender of the leader (man or woman) mentioned and the type of policy

mentioned (symbolic or realistic; see Appendix C for examples of all four articles).

Across all four articles, the leader is presented as a public figure and CEO of multiple

Fortune 500 companies who is calling for other companies to incorporate a specific gender

equality idea. The leader was depicted as either a white man (Christopher) or a white woman

(Christine). Their proposed idea represented either a symbolic threat to the gender hierarchy or a

realistic threat to the gender hierarchy. To illustrate a symbolic threat, the leader called for more

images of women on corporate websites. To illustrate a realistic threat, the leader called for more

women on corporate boards.

Dependent variables

The dependent measures were presented to participants in three categories: 1) reactions to

articles (containing filler items), 2) comprehension of article content (manipulation checks), and

3) attitudes about policies discussed (outcomes of interest). The reactions to the article items

were consistently displayed across all conditions.

Reactions to the articles. Two distractor items were used to advance the cover story:

"Have you read this article previously?" ("Yes," "No," or "Unsure") and "How interesting was

the article to read?" (1= *Not at all interesting* to 5 = *Extremely interesting*).

Manipulation Checks. Two items were used as manipulation checks to ensure

participants recalled the gender of the leader and the type of policy discussed. *"*What is the full

name of the person mentioned in the article?" and "In your own words, briefly summarize the

main points of the article (3-5 sentences)."

Support for the Leader's Proposal– Filler article. Two items were used to measure the

level of support that participants held for the leader's proposal as outlined in the filler article:

"Overall, I support placing signposts to prevent littering on the beach." and "Encouraging clean-up on the beach is a good idea." (1 = *Strongly disagree to* 5 = *Strongly agree*).

Support for the Leader's Proposal–Experimental article. Four items were used to measure the level of support that participants held for the leader's proposal in either the realistic or symbolic threat condition: "Overall, I support [ending all-male boardrooms/encouraging more images of women on websites].", "[Board room policies for gender equality/Including images of women on websites] are a good idea.", "Companies should [hire less men in order to hire more women/include less images of men in order to include more images of women on their websites]." and "Companies should [promote less men in order to promote more women/promote less men in order to promote more women.]." (1= *Strongly disagree to* 5 = *Strongly agree*). The items were collapsed to create one support variable (a = .86).

Support-related Behavioral Intentions–Experimental article. Three items were used to measure the supportive behaviors that participants would engage in: "Would you like to receive training information about how to [implement gender-balanced boardroom in your personal workplace?/pick an image of a woman for your corporate website?]" ("Yes" or "No"), "The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) is proposing a new law to require publicly traded companies to implement [at least one woman on their corporate board/at least one picture of a woman in their corporate website]. Would you like to sign a petition to support this proposed policy?" ("Yes" or "No"), and "Women's United of America is collecting donations to fund its outreach efforts related to [gender balanced boardrooms in the workplace/representation on corporate websites]. Would you like to donate a percentage of the compensation you will earn from today's survey?" (0–100%).

Other measures

Demographics. Demographic items included age, race, education, SES, and geographic location (i.e., Urban, Suburban, Rural).

Results and Discussion

Manipulation Checks.

Data was filtered to select out 10 cases where participants failed the manipulation checks (i.e., did not know the name of the leader and/or did not know the topic of the policy). These cases were roughly spread out across the conditions.

Support for the Leader's Proposal.

To test the competing *ally advantage* and *black sheep* hypotheses, 2x2 ANOVAs were conducted. If there is support for an ally advantage, then I will see a main effect of gender such that the man leader elicits more support than the woman leader. If there is support for a black sheep effect, then I will see a significant interaction between leader gender and threat type, such that men elicit more support than women *only* in the symbolic threat condition.

I observed no significant interaction between leader gender and threat type on overall support for the effort ($F(1, 390)= .01$, $p= .909$), a significant main effect of leader gender ($F(1, 390)= 3.96$, $p = .047$) such that participants expressed more support when the leader was a man ($M = 3.410$, $SD = 1.063$) than a woman ($M = 3.194$, $SD = 1.106$), a significant main effect of threat type ($F(1, 390)= 8.55$, $p = .004$) such that participants expressed more support when the effort was symbolically ($M = 3.46$, $SD = .839$) vs. realistically threatening the gender hierarchy ($M = 3.14$, $SD = 1.269$). These results align with the main effect predicted for the ally-advantage hypothesis but do not support the black sheep hypothesis.

Support-related Behavioral Intentions

The first behavioral intention item asked whether participants wanted more information about how to implement related gender equality ideas in their own workplace. I observed no significant interaction between leader gender and threat type on receiving additional training information ($F(1, 390)= 1.39$, $p= .239$), no significant main effect of leader gender ($F(1, 390)= .212$, $p = .646$), and no significant main effect of threat type ($F(1, 390)= 1.31$, $p = .253$).

The second behavioral intention item captured whether participants wanted to sign a related petition. I observed no significant interaction between leader gender and threat type on signing a corresponding petition ($F(1, 390)= 3.03$, $p= .083$), no significant main effect of leader gender ($F(1, 390)= .965$, $p =.327$), and no significant main effect of threat type ($F(1, 390)= .697$, $p = .404.$).

The last behavioral intention item asked participants whether they wanted to donate a portion of their compensation to a related cause. As shown in Figure 4, I observed a significant interaction between leader gender and threat type on donations ($F(1, 390)= 4.85$, $p= .028$), no significant main effect of leader gender ($F(1, 390)= .654$, $p =.419$), and no significant main effect of threat type ($F(1, 390)= .190$, $p = .663$). Simple effects tests reveal that men leaders elicit significantly more donations than women leaders in the symbolic condition ($p = .035$), but not in the realistic condition ($p = .323$). Additionally, there is a *marginal* simple effect of threat type for women leaders ($p = .065$), such that women leaders may be garnering more in donations for symbolic vs. realistic efforts. There is no such effect for men leaders going from realistic to symbolic efforts ($p = .209$).

Changes in Donations by Effort Type and Leader Gender
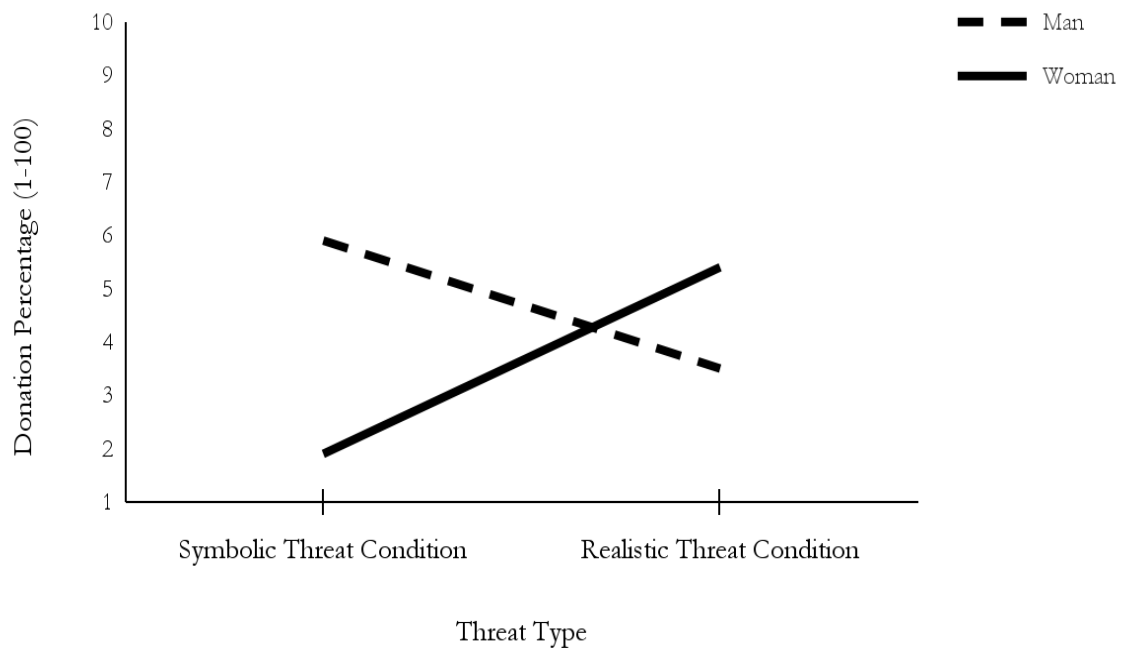
Figure 4. The interaction between leader gender and effort type on participants' donations to a related cause.

Leader perceptions.

There were no significant interactions between leader gender and threat type on the leader perception outcomes. Outcomes with significant main effects are reported below.

There was a main effect of leader gender ($F = 17.77$, $p = <.001$) and threat type ($F = 9.57$, $p = .002$) on how warm a leader is perceived to be. Men leaders ($M = 3.59$, $SD = 1.013$) were seen as warmer than women leaders ($M = 3.14$, $SD = 1.087$). Furthermore, leaders of symbolic efforts ($M = 3.53$, $SD = 1.001$) were seen as warmer than leaders of realistic efforts ($M = 3.20$, $SD = 1.111$).

There was a significant main effect of threat type ($F = 4.91$, $p = .027$) on how trustworthy a leader is perceived to be, such that leaders of symbolic efforts ($M = 3.28$, $SD = 1.117$) are seen as more trustworthy than leaders of realistic efforts ($M = 3.01$, $SD = 1.218$).

There was a main effect of leader gender ($F = 15.86$, $p = <.001$) and threat type ($F = 28.62$, $p = <.001$) on how likely a leader is to go against the interests of men in favor of women. Men leaders ($M = 3.44$, $SD = 1.124$) were seen as less likely than women leaders ($M = 3.88$, $SD = 1.134$). Furthermore, leaders of symbolic efforts ($M = 3.36$, $SD = 1.123$) were seen as less likely than leaders of realistic efforts ($M = 3.96$, $SD = 1.099$).

Overall, Study 2 provides experimental evidence in support of the ally advantage hypothesis. The results demonstrate the advantages that men (vs. women) hold when they advocate for gender equality. For instance, the men leaders of gender equality efforts elicited greater support for gender equality efforts, were rated as warmer, and were seen as less likely to go against the interests of men than women leaders. Importantly, the advantage that men hold in garnering support for the efforts was found to be robust across both threat types, symbolic and realistic.

However, Study 2's lack of evidence to support the black sheep effect does not mean that this phenomenon should be ruled out. For one thing, we did see a pattern consistent with the black sheep effect on *one* of the behavioral intention items (i.e., donations). Namely, men leaders generated more hypothetical donations than women leaders in the symbolic condition, and this advantage dissipated in the realistic threat condition. It should be noted that the donation item was the only gender equality outcome item that reflected participants' willingness to sacrifice their resources (i.e., monetary compensation) for the cause. Future research could explore other gender equality outcome measures that involve personal investment or resource allocation to further explore the presence of the black sheep effect in different contexts and settings. In the same vein, future research could attempt to manipulate these variables in men's *actual* workplace, thereby reducing the intangibility of hypothetical leaders and organizations.

Relatedly, the outcome measures (e.g., support for gender equality efforts) in Study 2 could be picking up already existing ideological attitudes and may, thus, be less sensitive to experimental manipulation. For example, past research finds that gender-based ideologies strongly predict support for gender equality in political and business policies (Hideg & Ferris, 2016; Osborne & Davies, 2009). To address this, Study 3 will measure and control for relevant ideological differences such as political ideology and ambivalent sexism.

Lastly, when contrasting my findings with the black sheep effect picked up on in Kutlaca et al.'s (2020) study, I posit that our differing results could be tied to our differing operationalization of the target of evaluation. In Kutlcaca's research, men are responding to hypothetical men <u>peers</u> (not leaders). Scholars have previously discussed the phenomenon of group members granting leaders more leniency when it comes to challenging group norms, as leaders are often tasked with initiating changes and forging new paths for the group (Randsley de Moura, 2010). Building upon this perspective, it is plausible that the black sheep effect may emerge more prominently in contexts where men are evaluating the behavior of men at their same level, such as peers, rather than when men are evaluating hypothetical business moguls. In such peer evaluations, the black sheep effect may be more likely to manifest due to the higher degree of personal relevance and direct comparison among individuals in similar positions.

Study 1 and 2 Discussion

Overall, the first two studies were designed to identify contexts in which men leaders might lose an advantage when advocating for gender equality. In study 1, I explored whether leaders who pose a higher threat to the gender hierarchy appear to lose this advantage; in study 2, I explored whether men leaders who lead realistically threatening gender equality efforts appear to lose this advantage.

The first two studies provide real-world case evidence paired with experimental data which demonstrates the significant advantages men leaders hold, relative to women leaders, when advocating for gender equality. Study 1 found that all selected men leaders got more support in the form of "likes" than women leaders for their gender equality tweets, but only lower-threat men leaders got more positive replies. Study 2 found that men leaders garnered more support for gender equality efforts than women leaders. This advantage was robust across effort threat types (symbolic or realistic).

It is important to note the discrepancy in findings between Study 1 and Study 2. Specifically, the sentiment patterns of Study 1 offer more promising evidence of a black sheep phenomenon than the single donation outcome observed in Study 2. One reason for this could be linked to the difference between real political leaders and fictional business leaders. In other words, perhaps real-world men political leaders are more relevant group members to "police" the behavior of than fictional CEOs.

An implication of the research, thus far, is that men leaders are likely advantaged relative to women leaders when building support for gender equality efforts. However, the findings also suggest that some men leaders, specifically those perceived to challenge the gender hierarchy, could face obstacles when building support for gender equality efforts. These findings hold implications for researchers studying inequality, practitioners challenging inequality, and allied men leaders who hope to advance gender equality initiatives. For example, the nuances of these findings underscore the need for further exploration of strategies that can help "higher threat" men garner support for gender equality efforts.

Study 3: Examining the Role of Leadership Styles in Eliciting Support for Gender Equality

The first two studies examined how *who* is advocating for gender equality (i.e., men vs. women leaders) and *what* type of effort they are leading (i.e., symbolic vs. realistic threat efforts) impacts the support men give to these efforts. However, the leader's identity and the type of effort they are leading are only part of what may drive support levels. What about *how* they are leading?

Study 3 will address a separate but related goal (goal **2**) of unpacking the role of *leadership styles* in garnering support for gender equality efforts. Robust evidence indicates that leadership styles impact cooperation with leaders and can help leaders build support for various agendas (de Cremer & Vugt, 2001; Tyler & Lind, 1992). In study 3, I will test whether "**voice**"-- a leadership style known to be very effective–will help women and men leaders build support for gender equality efforts equally. This study will help clarify the "**HOW**" in the roadmap.

In examining the levels of support for organizational efforts, Study 3 will delve further into the concept of men's allyship advantage. Study 3 will use a 2 (leader gender: man or woman) by 2 (leadership style: voice or no voice) by 2 (content type: gender-related or neutral) design to examine levels of support for organizational efforts. In alignment with past literature, I anticipate that the use of voice will help to increase support for efforts led by a same-gender leader (i.e., a man) more than efforts led by a different-gender leader (i.e., a woman). Therefore, I predict that gender will moderate the effect of voice such that voice is most effective when provided by a man leader vs. a woman leader (H1). This expectation aligns with the earlier notion of men's allyship advantage, where men leaders may have an inherent advantage in eliciting support from their male peers for gender-related agendas.

Additionally, I aim to unpack whether these relationships are robust across issue domains (e.g., gender-related efforts and *not* gender-related efforts). It is predicted that if the issue at hand is directly related to gender, it will amplify the previously observed effects, further accentuating the advantage of male leaders leveraging their voice for gender equality compared to female leaders (H2). Lastly, because men's underlying levels of sexism are known to predict their level of support for gender equality efforts (Hideg & Ferris, 2016; Osborne & Davies, 2009), Study 3 will measure and control for ambivalent sexism as a covariate.

Methods

Participants

Men participants (N=800) were recruited via Prolific. The inclusion criteria included identifying as a man, being fluent in English, having an American nationality, being U.S. born, and being fully or partially employed (not self-employed). Participants were informed that they would be evaluating leaders and common workplace scenarios and were compensated with $1.50. After excluding 48 participants for failing our manipulation check, and 5 participants for not meeting the gender eligibility criteria, our final sample size contained 747 participants.

Participants ranged in age from 18 to 81 years, and the mean age of participants was 38.43 years. The majority of participants identified as white (74.5%). Additionally, 11.5% of participants identified as Black or African American, 1.1% identified as American Indian or Alaska Native, 8.9% identified as Asian, and 4% identified as Other/Prefer not to say. A majority of participants report having earned a bachelor's degree or higher (64.9%). Approximately 15% of participants identify as Republican, 47.3% identify as Democratic, 33.8% identify as Independent, and 3.9% identify as Other/No Preference.

Procedure

Participants were given a cover story that they are evaluating leaders and common workplace scenarios. The variables manipulated within these scenarios were leader gender (man or woman), leadership style (voice or no voice), and content type (gender-related or neutral).

After they responded to five filler questions, participants were randomly assigned to read about one of eight experimental workplace scenarios (see Appendix D for samples of these scenarios). The workplace scenario asked participants to imagine that they work for a mid-size company called Mountelligence Inc. They were informed that their supervisor had assigned them to complete a training program developed by the National Labor Institute. All participants read the following accompanying dialog from their supervisor, "The [condition] training program is a new requirement. It will improve your work experience."

Manipulating leader gender. To manipulate leader gender, the leader was either named "John" or "Jennifer."

Manipulating leadership style: To manipulate leadership styles, the leader either did or did not provide the participant an opportunity to share feedback on the assigned training program (i.e., provide **voice**). Participants in the voice condition were prompted to share their feedback to the leader with the following dialogue: "Because this is a new addition to the department, I would really like to hear what you think about it. Please use the text box below to let me know how you feel about this new requirement and any concerns you may have. Please do not write your name to keep the feedback anonymous."

Manipulating content type: To manipulate content type, the topic of the training program was either about gender diversity in organizations (gender-related) or workplace safety in organizations (neutral).

After engaging with the scenario, participants responded to several outcome measures, filled out a demographic questionnaire, and were debriefed.

Dependent variables
Manipulation Checks. One item was used to assess whether participants accurately recalled the supervisor's gender: "In the workplace situation you considered, do you recall what the gender of the supervisor is?" ("Man," "Woman," "I don't know"). Another item was used to assess whether participants accurately recall the topic of the training program. "In the workplace situation you considered, do you recall what the policy was about?" ("Workplace Safety in Organizations and Workplaces," "Cultural Awareness in Organizations and Workplaces," "Gender Diversity in Organizations and Workplaces," "Gender Quotas in Organizations and Workplaces").

Support for the Training Program. The main outcomes of interest are two items to capture overall support (vs. opposition) for the training program: "I fully support the required [condition] training program." and "Even if it were optional, I would want to participate in this [condition] training program." (1 = *Strongly disagree* to *5 = Strongly agree*). The items will be collapsed into one support variable, with 5 indicating strong support and 1 indicating strong opposition (a = .83).

Exploratory Leader Perceptions. Six items will explore participants' perceptions of the leader's various characteristics: "How competent is the supervisor?" (1 = *Not competent at all* to 5= *Very competent*), "How warm is the supervisor?" (1 = *Not warm at all* to 5 = *Very warm*), "To what extent do you trust the supervisor?" (1 = *Distrust a great deal* to 5 = *Trust a great deal*), "How fair is the supervisor to all people in the workplace?" (1 = *Not fair at all* to 5 = *Very fair*), and "How knowledgeable is the supervisor regarding the [condition] policy?" (1 = *Not fair at all* to 5 = *Very Fair*)."

Other Measures

The following individual difference measures were administered last, along with standard demographics.

Party Identification. Two items were used to measure participants' identification with U.S. political parties: "Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or something else?" ("Republican," "Democrat," "Independent," "Other," and "No preference." If the participant selected "Independent," "Other," or "No preference," they were presented with a follow-up question asking about whether they lean towards the Republican or Democratic Party: "Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican or Democratic party?" ("Republican" and "Democratic").

Ambivalent sexism (shortened). A subset of the shortened Ambivalent Sexism Inventory was used (Rollero, Glick, & Tartaglia, 2014). Based on a factor analysis of the 12 items in another study, six of the highest loading items were selected; three of the items reflected benevolent sexism (e.g., "Women should be cherished and protected by men.") and three of the items reflected hostile sexism (e.g., "When women lose to men in a fair competition, they typically complain about being discriminated against."; 1 = *Strongly disagree* to 5 = *Strongly agree*).

Demographics. Demographic items will include age, gender, race, and education.

Results and Discussion

The following analyses control for men's levels of ambivalent sexism. The results do not meaningfully change the controlled variable is omitted.

Support vs. Opposition Towards the Training. To test the hypothesis that leader gender, voice, and content would interact in their effects on support for gender equality policies, a 3-way

between groups ANOVA was conducted. Table 4 shows the mean level of support across all eight of the conditions.

Table 4. *Mean levels of support for the leader's proposal across all eight experimental conditions.*

Leader Gender	Voice	Content	Mean	Standard Deviation
Man	No voice	Neutral	3.934	0.905
		Gender-related	3.663	1.179
	Voice	Neutral	4.091	0.978
		Gender-related	3.598	1.231
Woman	No voice	Neutral	3.995	0.921
		Gender-related	3.505	1.253
	Voice	Neutral	3.984	1.094
		Gender-related	3.708	1.366

I expected to find a 3-way interaction such that voice would be more effective for men leaders in neutral contexts and that this advantage would be exacerbated when leader gender is made salient in gender-related contexts. I did not find a significant 3-way interaction ($F = 3.43$, $p = .065$) between leader gender, voice, and content[6]. Additionally, there were no significant 2-way interactions between leader gender and leadership style ($F = .121$ $p = .728$), between leader gender and content type ($F = .022$, $p = .883$), or between leadership styles and content type ($F = .000$, $p = .998$). I did find a significant main effect of content ($F = 23.82$, $p < .001$), such that

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[6] The results do not meaningfully change if you run the analysis with only white men.

participants reported higher levels of support for the neutral effort ($M = 4.02$, $SD = .974$) vs. the gender-related effort ($M = 3.61$, $SD = 1.257$).

Although the aforementioned 3-way interaction did not meet the threshold for statistical significance ($p = .065$), a cautious exploration of the marginal effects may reveal informative patterns among the individual factors (Harms & Lakens, 2018). As illustrated in Figures 5 and 6, it appears that the interaction between leader gender and voice is different depending on content. When the content is neutral, we see patterns similar to what H1 would expect: voice appears to be increasing support when provided by a man leader but not when provided by a woman leader. However, the classic in-group voice effect does not clearly manifest when the content is gender-related. This is counter to the hypothesis that I would observe an *exacerbated* in-group voice effect in a gender-related context, and thus, prompts a deeper inquiry into the underlying factors
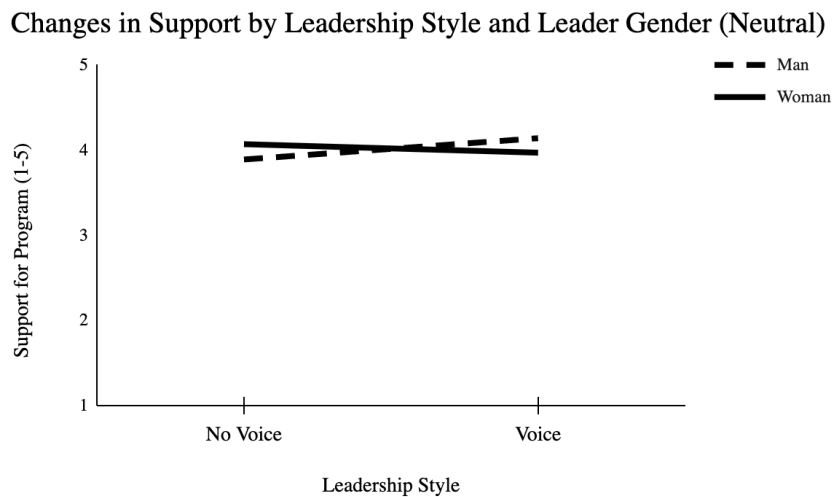
Changes in Support by Leadership Style and Leader Gender (Neutral)

Figure 5. The interaction between leader gender and voice in the neutral condition.

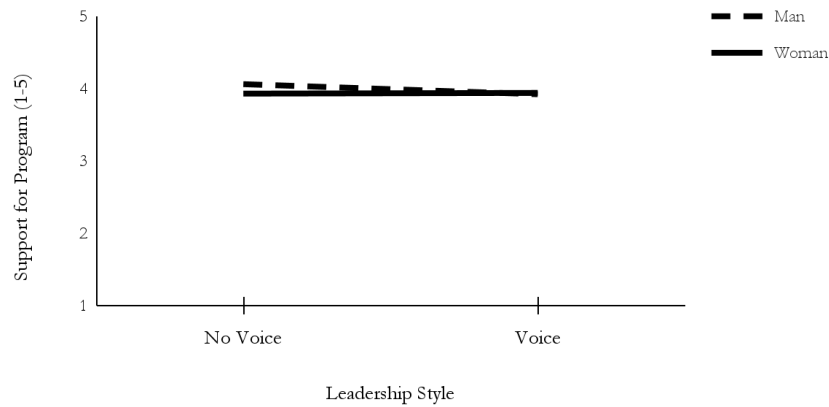Changes in Support by Leadership Style and Leader Gender (Gender-Related)

Figure 6. The interaction between leader gender and voice and the gender-related condition.

Follow-up Analysis. I propose that a key factor in explaining the counterintuitive pattern observed in the gender-related condition is the tendency for men to engage in **overcorrection** to avoid the perception of being "sexist" (Klonis et al., 2005; Mallett & Wagner, 2011; Wagner, 2013). My scenario about gender equality on a paid, online survey could be a context in which the men participants may have a heightened motivation to avoid being perceived as sexist. To test this idea, I conducted a follow-up analysis using political party affiliation as a proxy for a tendency for overcorrection and examined whether patterns differ between Republican and Democratic-identified men. I used party affiliation as a proxy for overcorrections to avoid appearing sexist because political correctness (intentions to avoid offending or marginalizing others) is commonly known to be associated with democrats in the U.S. (Silver et al., 2021). If the findings are being impacted by a social desire to appear nonsexist, then I would predict to find that Democratic men, in contexts where leader gender is made salient, would overcorrect for gender bias by increasing their stated support for the woman leader's effort.

To establish a binary party identification variable, I utilized the party identification data to assign participants who identify as Independents/Other/No Preference to either the Republican

or Democratic Party. Individuals who identified as Republicans were grouped together with those who leaned towards the Republican party, while individuals who identified as Democrats were combined with those who leaned towards the Democratic party. After splitting the data file by party identification (Republican or Democrat), I reran the 3-way interaction for leader gender, voice, and content on overall support[7].

Based on the assumption that Republican men would exhibit lower tendencies to overcorrect their behaviors to avoid being perceived as sexist, it is also anticipated that when focusing on Republican respondents specifically, there would not be a pattern indicating overcorrection (i.e., no inflating of support for women leader's efforts when leader gender is made salient). For Republicans, there was no significant 3-way interaction ($F = .088, p = .767$). Additionally, there were no significant 2-way interactions between leader gender and leadership style ($F = .061\ p = .805$), between leader gender and content type ($F = .527, p = .468$), or between leadership styles and content type ($F = .692, p = .406$). There was a main effect of content ($F = 54.75, p < .000$), such that Republican men were more supportive in response to a neutral ($M = 3.89, SD = .938$) vs. a gender-related effort ($M = 2.80, SD = 1.318$). As predicted, there is no inflating of support for women leader's efforts in a gender-related context, where a leader uses a relational leadership style (i.e., contexts where leader gender would be made salient). In fact, the direction of results (see Figures 7 and 8) for Republicans is consistent with our initial prediction that voice would be especially beneficial to male leaders in gender-related contexts.

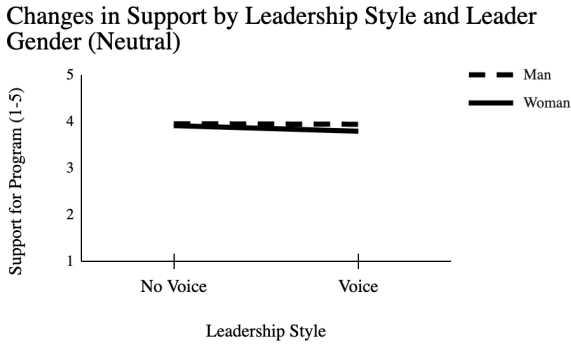[7] This analysis controls for ASI scores.

Changes in Support by Leadership Style and Leader
Gender (Neutral)

Figure 7. The interaction between leader gender and voice, in the neutral condition, for Republican participants.

Changes in Support by Leadership Style and Leader
Gender (Gender-related)
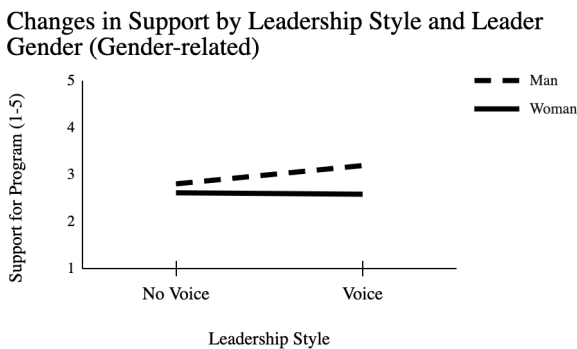
Figure 8. The interaction between leader gender and voice, in the gender-related condition, for Republican participants.

If people are overcorrecting to avoid appearing sexist, I expect to see this emerge among the Democratic male participants in particular. Specifically, I predict that Democratic men will increase the support they give to women's gender equality efforts *only* when the woman leader uses a relational leadership style (which makes the woman's gender salient). Among Democrats, there was a significant 3-way interaction between leader gender, voice, and content ($F = 5.74$, $p = .017$). There were no significant two-way interactions and no significant main effects. As depicted in Figures 9 and 10, you can see that Democratic men in the *neutral* condition show patterns of responses somewhat similar to Republican men (i.e., voice appears to slightly boost support for men leaders, only). However, responses from Democratic men participants in the *gender-related* condition (Figure 12) appear to be the source of the aforementioned counterintuitive pattern. Simple effects suggest that women leaders get marginally more support

when providing voice, vs. not providing voice, in the gender-related condition ($p = .056$). The same is untrue for men leaders ($p = .480$). No other simple effects approached significance.

Based on this follow-up analysis, I suspect that a motivation for Democratic men to appear nonsexist in gender-heightened context can explain a portion of the noise in the dataset. When men would be *less* motivated to overcorrect, such as when they affiliate with the Republican Party or when gender is not made salient, we see patterns that would be consistent with voice benefiting men leaders of men subordinates. Although contrary to our original hypothesis, one interesting potential implication of this finding is that in a specific context where men leaders provide voice to Democratic men, their advantage in using relational leadership strategies to build support may diminish.

Changes in Support by Leadership Style and Leader Gender (Neutral)
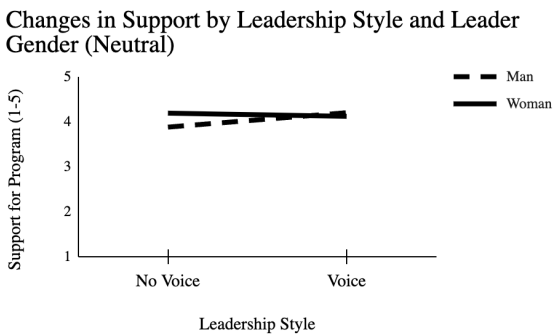
Figure 9. The interaction between leader gender and voice, in the neutral condition, for Democratic participants.

Changes in Support by Leadership Style and Leader Gender (Gender-related)
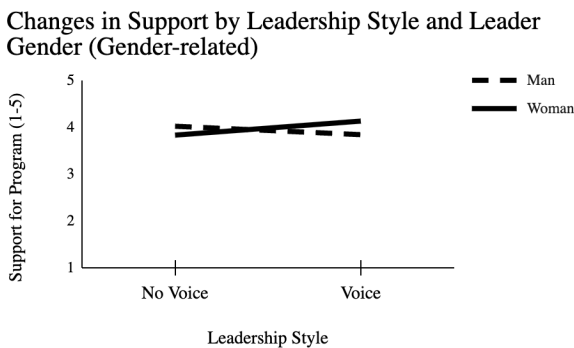
Figure 10. The interaction between leader gender and voice, in the gender-related condition, for Democratic participants.

However, this interpretation should be considered with caution as political identification is the best available proxy for overcorrection within my dataset but may not be the most valid option. Future research would benefit from investigating other psychological mechanisms, such as those captured by the "internal and external motivation to respond without sexism" scale (Klonis et al., 2005). Moreover, I caution against interpreting these findings as suggesting a bias in favor of women leaders of gender equality. Even if men are overcorrecting their attitudes to appear non-sexist to women leaders, this would ***not*** automatically mean that they would act to support the women's gender equality effort. It is possible that women leaders providing voice to Democratic-identified men appear to get more attitudinal buy-in but fail to get substantive support.

Exploratory Leader Perceptions. There were no significant 3-way or 2-way interactions on any of the leader perception variables. Outcomes with significant main effects will be discussed below.

There was a main effect of content type ($F = 4.13$, $p = .043$) on how competent a leader is perceived to be. Leaders of neutral efforts ($M = 3.92$, $SD = .791$) were seen as more competent than leaders of gender-related efforts ($M = 3.80$, $SD = .826$).

There was a main effect of leadership style ($F = 17.91$, $p < .001$) on how warm a leader is perceived to be. Leaders who use the relational leadership style of providing voice ($M = 3.72$, $SD = .826$) were seen as warmer than leaders who did not ($M = 3.46$, $SD = .793$).

There was a main effect of leadership style ($F = 5.43$, $p = .021$) and content ($F = 4.75$, $p = .030$) on how trustworthy a leader is perceived to be. Leaders are seen as more trustworthy when they provide voice ($M = 3.74$, $SD = .900$) vs. not provide voice ($M = 3.60$, $SD = .900$).

Additionally, leaders were seen as more trustworthy when they lead a neutral effort ($M = 3.74$, $SD = .835$) versus a gender-related effort ($M = 3.60$, $SD = .960$).

Lastly, there was a main effect of content ($F = 4.93$, $p = .027$) on how knowledgeable a leader is perceived to be. Leaders are seen as more knowledgeable when they lead a neutral effort ($M = 3.87$, $SD = .838$) versus a gender-related effort ($M = 3.74$, $SD = .874$).

Limitations. It is important to note the possibility of a ceiling effect on the support outcome, such that a majority of participants appear to endorse the maximum response option. Specifically, a substantial portion (approx. 30 percent) of the participants selected the response option 5/"strongly agree" in support of the proposed workplace training programs. Furthermore, an overwhelming majority (approx. 72 percent) of participants scored above the midpoint on the scale. A pattern of nature suggests a saturation point at which it is more difficult to compare group differences in support.

This ceiling effect may have occurred because the hypothetical scenarios were not tangible enough to evoke strong attitudinal reactions. It may be simply too easy for participants to support efforts when they are hypothetical and pose no real stakes (time, resources, etc.). Future research could address this limitation by intentionally refining the manipulation to elicit a greater variety of responses. For example, future research could lead participants to believe that they will actually be undergoing the hypothetical trainings outlined in the scenarios. If participants believe that they will actually have to engage with the content of the training, this may make the scenario more personally relevant and evoke a greater variety of measurable reactions.

General Discussion

Overall, this program of research aimed to address two research goals: 1) identifying contexts where men leaders lose an advantage over women leaders when advocating for gender equality and 2) understanding how leadership styles interact with leader gender to predict men's support for gender equality efforts. First, I collected real-world archival information to examine the contexts in which men leaders get more or less support than women leaders when talking about gender equality online. I followed this up with an experiment to test whether men lose their advantage in garnering support when they are leading efforts that drastically threaten the gender hierarchy. Finally, I explored whether men's advantage might be exacerbated when using relational leadership styles.

The initial two studies present a combination of real-world examples and experimental findings highlighting the substantial advantages that male leaders possess compared to female leaders when advocating for gender equality. In Study 1, it was observed that the men leaders often got more favorable responses than comparable women when posting about gender equality online. However, it was specifically the male leaders who were perceived as *less* threatening who saw the most consistent advantages. In Study 2, it was discovered that male leaders consistently garnered more support for their gender equality efforts in comparison to female leaders. This advantage remained consistent regardless of the type of threat posed by the efforts, whether symbolic or realistic. Although Study 3 did not find compelling support for the idea that men leaders are especially able to utilize relational leadership styles within gender-related contexts, the follow-up analysis indicated that men's political affiliations may play an important role in shaping how effect voice is for men and women leaders of gender equality.

Future Directions. Firstly, more research needs to be done to identify the contexts in which men lose in advantage when advocating for gender equality (Goal 1). The fact that we see promising indications of a black sheep effect in the way that people respond to higher-threat men leaders (Study 1), but not in the way that people are responding to leaders of higher-threat (realistic) efforts (Study 2), could mean that black sheep processes are most relevant for men leaders who have an established history of disrupting hierarchy (e.g, progressive politicians). In essence, the findings suggest that simply being the "face" of a gender equality effort may not be sufficient for a man to experience black sheep effects. Perhaps a comprehensive perception of the male leader challenging social hierarchies is necessary for such effects to occur. Future research could test in interpretation with experiments where men political leaders are depicted as having a very strong or very weak track record regarding disrupting the gender hierarchy.

Another way that future research can explore whether certain types of men are more susceptible to black sheep processes explore differences in reactions to white vs. non-white men. This is important because the category of men is not a monolithic group, and some men are higher status or more prototypical members of the "men in male-dominated fields" group. Perhaps the results would be different if the leaders of gender equality efforts were non-white. Previously, scholars have stipulated that racial minority men may be more likely than other men to confront gender inequality because holding a marginalized racial identity may make them more attuned to social inequities (Drury & Kaiser, 2014). However, it is unknown whether the racial minority men leaders who act against this gender inequality go on to get the same types of responses that white men do. Perhaps racial minority men leaders may be viewed by subordinate men as "acting against the group" more easily than white men leaders of gender equality efforts.

Lastly, as part of future research endeavors, it is essential to continue investigating how leadership styles influence reactions to leaders advocating for gender equality (Goal 2). One potential avenue for investigation is for future research to utilize qualitative methods, such as interviews or focus groups, that can help clarify participants' attitudes and motivations. This methodology would allow participants to express their thoughts and beliefs in their own words, hopefully enabling researchers to capture nuanced responses. Similarly, future research may want to incorporate implicit measures of men's support for gender equality efforts, as implicit measures would be more robust to social desirability and overcorrecting.

Conclusion

Gender equality efforts are not only increasingly common but also pose significant challenges for leaders to implement (Kalev et al., 2006; McKinsey & Company, 2021). Therefore, understanding the intricate psychological processes that influence individuals' support for leaders' gender equality efforts, particularly men's support, holds immense theoretical and practical significance. The findings presented in this research shed light on the dynamics at play and can serve as a valuable resource for institutional stakeholders seeking to comprehend the added burdens faced by women leaders and the privileges bestowed upon men when leading gender equality initiatives. Importantly, these findings highlight that men leaders often enjoy greater ease in garnering support from other men for gender equality-related agendas, representing a privileged position that can be harnessed to confront resistance against gender equality efforts (Flood et al., 2021). Moreover, given that men typically hold the highest positions of power in most organizations (Prime & Moss-Racusin, 2009), increasing men's support for gender equality efforts has the potential to yield profound implications for the effectiveness and long-term sustainability of such efforts in the workplace. By recognizing and

leveraging these dynamics, leaders and organizations can drive substantial progress toward

achieving gender equality and fostering inclusive environments.

Appendix A

Appendix A: Tweets from Leaders

Leader	Tweet topic	Year Posted
1) Barack Obama	Wage Gap	1.29.2022
1) Kamala Harris	Wage Gap	3.16.2022
2) Eric Swalwell	Equal Pay	4.15.2021
2) Katie Porter	Equal Pay	3.24.2021
3) Bernie Sanders	#EqualPayDay	3.15.2022
3) Elizabeth Warren	#EqualPayDay	3.15.2022

Study 2 filler article:

Environmental Activist, S.M. Edward, Calls for signposts to discourage littering on beaches

Trash left on one beach in LA

LOS ANGELES- Nearly 2.6 million pounds of trash were collected along 34,099 kilometers of the U.S. coastline, according to the *Beyond Plastics Report*. A former Environmental Protection Agency regional administrator and now president of Beyond Plastics, S.M. Edward suggested ways to reduce littering on beaches. Recently, Edward encouraged the use of proper signage near designated garbage cans that can be found across all public beaches and pick up any additional waste that they see as well. "It's so important to focus on reminding ourselves that trash on the beach ends up in the ocean," Edward said, "and our individual changes can add up."

"It is time to invest in proper signage on beaches to protect the environment," S.M. Edward.

Edward stated, "if we could encourage proper signage across all beaches we participate in zero-waste activities, minimizing pollution and taking a step toward a cleaner environment."

Appendix C

Study 2 experimental article depicting a <u>symbolic</u> threat from a <u>man</u> leader:

Business Mogul, Christopher Clark, Calls for company websites to include images of not just men but also of women.

Christopher Clark recommends that companies include images of women on their organization's webpage.

NEW YORK CITY- The effort to send inclusive signals in business has a new high profile champion: public figure and former CEO of multiple fortune 500 companies, Christopher Clark. In a recent press conference, Clark states that companies should include at least one image of a woman on their website.

"This policy will send a signal to women in our company that we value them," Christopher Clark.

"Starting now," he added, "I ask that companies include images of both women and men. If that sentiment is not evident in the people pictured on your webpage, I challenge other corporate leaders across the nation to address this."

As one of the largest and most influential business leaders, globally, Clark's decision has gained traction in corporate America. Major companies like Amazon, Meta, Alphabet (Google), and NVIDIA Corp currently implement similar policies in their organizations.

Study 2 experimental article depicting a <u>realistic</u> threat from a <u>man</u> leader:

Business Mogul, Christopher Clark, Calls for More Women and Fewer Men in Boardrooms

Christopher Clark requires his companies to set a plan to have more women and fewer men in the boardrooms.

NEW YORK CITY- The effort to give women more power in business has a new high profile champion: public figure, and CEO of multiple Fortune 500 companies, Christopher Clark. In a recent press conference, Clark states that he would reorganize the boardrooms in each of his companies and prioritize new appointments of women over men.

"This policy will give women the power to change the company from the top down," Christopher Clark.

"Starting now," he added, "when making appointments to our board of directors, I will expect a level playing field, where boardrooms have a balanced number of women and men. I challenge other CEOs across the nation to do the same."

As one of the largest and most influential business leaders, globally, Clark's decision is already gaining traction in corporate America. Major companies like Amazon, Meta, Alphabet (Google), and NVIDIA Corp have met with Clark to implement similar policies in their organizations.

Study 2 experimental article depicting a <u>symbolic</u> threat from a <u>woman</u> leader:

Business Mogul, Christine Clark, Calls for company websites to include images of not just men but also of women.

Christine Clark recommends that companies include images of women on their organization's webpage.

NEW YORK CITY- The effort to send inclusive signals in business has a new high profile champion: public figure and former CEO of multiple fortune 500 companies, Christine Clark. In a recent press conference, Clark states that companies should include at least one image of a woman on their website.

"This policy will send a signal to women in our company that we value them," Christine Clark.

"Starting now," she added, "I ask that companies include images of both women and men. If that sentiment is not evident in the people pictured on your webpage, I will recommend revisions. I challenge other corporate leaders across the nation to do the same."

As one of the largest and most influential business leaders, globally, Clark's decision has gained traction in corporate America. Major companies like Amazon, Meta, Alphabet (Google), and NVIDIA Corp currently implement similar policies in their organizations.

Study 2 experimental article depicting a <u>symbolic</u> threat from a <u>woman</u> leader:

Business Mogul, Christine Clark, Calls for More Women and Fewer Men in Boardrooms

Christine Clark requires his companies to set a plan to have more women and fewer men in the boardrooms.

NEW YORK CITY- The effort to give women more power in business has a new high profile champion: public figure, and CEO of multiple Fortune 500 companies, Christine Clark. In a recent press conference, Clark states that she would reorganize the boardrooms in each of her companies; replacing many of the men with women on the board of directors.

"This policy will give women the power to change the company from the top down," Christine Clark.

"Starting now," she added, "when making appointments to our board of directors, I will expect a level playing field, where boardrooms have a balanced number of women and men. I challenge other CEOs across the nation to do the same."

As one of the largest and most influential business leaders, globally, Clark's decision is already gaining traction in corporate America. Major companies like Amazon, Meta, China National Petroleum, Alphabet (Google), and NVIDIA Corp have met with Clark to implement similar policies in their organizations.

Appendix D

Experimental stimuli for participants with a male leader, who is providing voice, about a neutral

workplace training program:

Employees must complete a training program developed by the National Labor Institute which will **help our company ensure workplace safety** and its procedures in the workplace:

"Workplace Safety in Organizations and Workplaces"

"*The workplace safety training program is a new requirement. It will improve your work experience.*

Because this is a new addition to the department, I would really like to hear what you think about it. Please use the text box below to let me know how you feel about this new requirement and any concerns you may have. Please do not write your name to keep the feedback anonymous." -John

Experimental stimuli for participants with a male leader, who is providing voice, about a gender-

related workplace training program:

Employees must complete a training program developed by the National Labor Institute to **prevent and respond to gender bias** in the workplace:

"Gender Diversity in Organizations and Workplaces"

"*The gender diversity training program is a new requirement. It will improve your work experience.*

Because this is a new addition to the department, I would really like to hear what you think about it. Please use the text box below to let me know how you feel about this new requirement and any concerns you may have. Please do not write your name to keep the feedback anonymous." -John

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