Women's Sexism-Related Coping Support from Male Romantic Partners

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Abstract

Women who cope with sexism via social support tend to experience positive psychological outcomes. The present research examines sexism coping support and relationship satisfaction within mixed-gender romantic relationships. In Study 1, women ($n=208$) reported desiring and receiving emotional support, distraction, and active planning coping support behaviors from their male romantic partners after experiencing sexism. Sexism coping support predicted women's relationship satisfaction while accounting for important related factors (e.g., partner sexism, sexism frequency). In Study 2, men ($n=218$) reported providing and believing their female partners most desired emotional support, distraction, and active planning coping support following disclosures of experiences of sexism. Men's own hostile and benevolent sexism and engagement in coping support behaviors related to the perceived satisfaction of their female partners. This research highlights the sexism coping support behaviors that are desired and engaged in most frequently, as both women and men report the importance of emotional support, active planning, and distraction coping support behaviors in response to women's disclosures of their experiences with sexism. These findings are discussed in relation to existing literature on coping support and sexism and romantic relationships.

Keywords Sexism · Romantic relationships · Coping support · Relationship satisfaction · Allyship

Many women experience sexism regularly in their daily lives [1]. In a recent study, approximately 74% of women reported experiencing street harassment from strang-

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ers (e.g., whistling, catcalling) on a monthly basis, and over 40% reported being subject to sexist remarks, jokes, and verbal harassment at least once per month [2]. In 2017, approximately 42% of women reported experiencing gender discrimination in their work environment, such as being paid less than men for the same job, being treated as if they were incompetent, or being passed over for promotions and important assignments [3]. Moreover, sexism negatively impacts women's well-being [2, 4, 5]. Yet, women who receive sexism-related social support report more empowerment, less helplessness, and less psychological distress than women without such support [6, 7].

While romantic partners can support their partners when facing a variety of stressors [8–15], sexism coping research has not examined how romantic partners provide sexism-related coping support. Thus, we developed two correlational studies to examine how male romantic partners can best help their female partners cope with sexism and maintain positive relationship outcomes. In Study 1, we asked women in mixed-gender relationships to self-report the coping support they desire and receive from their male partners when dealing with sexism. In Study 2, we asked men in mixed-gender relationships to consider how they provide coping support to their female partners and what coping support behaviors they believe their female partners want from them when dealing with sexism. We focused on mixed-gender relationships because so little research has examined male partners' coping support of female partners who are experiencing sexism. In addition, men can act as powerful allies against sexism [16–21].

Experiences of Sexism and Coping Processes

Lazarus and Folkman's [11, 22] stress and coping model suggests that people can cope with stressors in a problem-focused manner by dealing with the stressful situation directly, and in an emotion-focused manner by managing emotional responses to the stressful situation. The stress and coping model has been applied to women's experiences of coping with sexism 5, 6, 23, 24, 25. As humans have an inherent need for belonging [26], social support is beneficial for coping with stressors [6, 11, 22, 24]. For example, social support in romantic relationships is associated with greater relationship quality and satisfaction 14, 27, 28, 29. Several types of social support have been identified in the literature (e.g., emotional, instrumental, appraisal, informational) [30–32].

Carver et al. [33] proposed that there are several problem- and emotion-focused coping subtypes (e.g., planning, seeking emotional support), and developed the COPE and brief COPE measures to account for these styles of coping. For our research, we adapted the COPE to examine coping support styles that women want and report receiving from their male romantic partners after experiencing sexism. Rather than focusing on overall sexism support [9], this research expands the literature by identifying specific coping support behaviors women wanted from their partners after sexism experiences.

Currently, there is limited research focused on how people in relationships support one another in response to discrimination. Donnelly et al. [9] found that greater

spousal support can buffer the impact of discrimination on depressive symptoms among both same-gender and mixed-gender couples. Additionally, men and women in same-gender relationships reported more spousal support from their partner than did men and women in mixed-gender relationships [9]. The literature to date has mainly focused on how gay and lesbian couples cope with sexual prejudice, finding that engaging in more emotion- and problem-focused dyadic coping behaviors reduced the negative impact of minority stress on relationship satisfaction [34], anxiety [35], and depressive symptoms [36]. This work can inform some expectations about coping support practices among mixed-gender couples. However, it is important to acknowledge that cisgender men and women in same-gender relationships both experience sexual orientation discrimination, whereas cisgender men in mixed-gender relationships do not experience gender-based prejudice to the same extent as women experience sexism [1]. Indeed, cisgender men are viewed as prototypical perpetrators of sexism toward women [37, 38]. To date, no literature that we know of has examined women's sexism coping support needs from their male partners.

The Role of Men as Allies against Sexism

Men can be effective allies against sexism. Men are less likely than women to recognize sexism in social environments, but can be instrumental in getting others to take sexism more seriously [18]. For example, when men acknowledged that female participants experienced sexism in an interview, female participants reported feeling less self-handicapping, less self-stereotyping, and higher self-esteem than when women acknowledged female participants' experience with sexism [17]. Men's confrontations of sexism in interpersonal interactions and workplace settings are also taken more seriously than women's confrontations [39, 40]. When asked to imagine being confronted for making sexist statements, men and women indicated feeling more self-critical and guilty when confronted by a man than when confronted by a woman [39]. While is it indeed concerning that sexism is taken more seriously when it is pointed out by men than by women, this research does demonstrate that there are benefits to men's acknowledgement and confrontation of sexism.

Men can be effective allies against sexism by engaging in advocacy for women and by providing women with instrumental and emotional support [16, 20]. For example, women reported that men can be effective allies when they vouch for women's abilities and strengths, backup and credit women for their ideas, create and support policies benefitting women, and provide help and social support [16, 20]. As supportiveness is effective for men's allyship with women, in our research, we expected that women would indicate wanting their male romantic partners to provide them with both problem-focused (e.g., active planning) and emotion-focused support after experiencing sexism. Moreover, we expected these same coping support behaviors to relate to greater overall relationship satisfaction.

Ambivalent Sexism and Relationship Outcomes

One major barrier to men's allyship with women is when men themselves endorse sexist attitudes toward women. Men's endorsement of benevolent and hostile sexism can impact their female relationship partners [41–45]. Benevolent sexism is characterized by behaviors and stereotypical perceptions of women that seem positive (e.g., that women are pure and need protection), while hostile sexism is characterized by negative behaviors and stereotypical perceptions of women (e.g., that women are incompetent and man-hating) [46].

Men who are high in hostile sexism often behave negatively toward their female partners [42, 43, 45, 47]. Women report lower relationship satisfaction when their male partners endorse hostile sexism [43]. Men who are high in benevolent sexism commonly provide their partners with dependency-oriented support by doing things *for* their female partners, which consequently makes women feel less competent and less supported [48]. Additionally, women can experience low or unstable relationship satisfaction and prioritize relationship success over their personal and professional goals when their male partners are high in benevolent sexism [41]. In our research, we examined women's perceptions of their male partner's sexism and men's self-reported hostile and benevolent sexism as correlates of relationship satisfaction.

Discrepancies

Within romantic relationships, discrepancies between what people desire and receive from their partners can influence relationship outcomes. Researchers have found that larger differences, or disparities, between what people want from their romantic partners and what they perceive they are getting from their partners tend to relate to lower relationship satisfaction [49–53]. For example, providing too much or too little social support to one's spouse (in contrast with the spouse's desired level of support) is associated with lower marital satisfaction [54]. Greater discrepancies in sexual desire have been found to relate to lower levels of relationship satisfaction for men and women [51, 55, 56]. Similarly, greater discrepancies between ideal standards for one's partner and perceptions of one's actual partner relate to worse relationship outcomes [49, 50, 57]. In our research, we examined whether coping support behaviors and discrepancies in coping support relate to women's relationship outcomes and men's perceptions of their partners' relationship satisfaction.

The Present Research

In this work, we examined different ways that male romantic partners support their female partners in coping with experiences of sexism. This research aimed to illuminate the link between relationship outcomes and coping support behaviors men engage in following their female partners' disclosures of their experiences with sexism. In Study 1, we identified sexism coping support behaviors that women want from their male partners. We assessed the extent to which women reported receiving

their desired coping support and the links between sexism coping support and relationship satisfaction. We explored discrepancies between the coping support women desire and the support they report receiving from their male partners. We examined whether discrepancies in support relate to women's relationship satisfaction. We also assessed the frequency of women's experiences with sexism. To gain a fuller perspective of dynamics in mixed-gender relationships, Study 2 examined the sexism coping support behaviors men report engaging in and believing their female partners' desire. We examined whether men's behaviors are linked to their perceptions of their female partners' relationship satisfaction. These studies focus on men and women residing in the United States.

Given past work on coping support in romantic relationships [9, 35, 36], we predicted that women in Study 1 would desire problem- and emotion-focused coping support styles (i.e., active planning and emotional support) from their male partners following experiences with sexism more than other coping support behaviors. We predicted that these support behaviors would relate to relationship satisfaction. While we did not have specific predictions regarding the size of discrepancies between the coping support that women desire and report receiving from their male partners, we hypothesized that greater self-reported discrepancies in coping support would relate to lower relationship satisfaction. Given past research on the link between partner sexism and women's relationship satisfaction and the possibility that partner support would be limited by their own sexist attitudes [41, 43, 47], we include male partner sexism (perceived in Study 1 and actual in Study 2) as a predictor of relationship satisfaction for both studies. Supplemental material, data, syntax, and materials for both studies can be found on OSF: https://osf.io/2b87f/?view_only=0a383d3134d14 045ba352aad8a034ddb.

Study 1

Method

Participants and Procedure

We recruited female undergraduate students at Rutgers University ($N=237$) to participate in an online survey during the Spring 2018 and Fall 2018 semesters for course credit. This study was approved by the university's institutional review board. Participants were screened through an initial questionnaire to determine eligibility. Only women who had been in a relationship with a man for six months or longer and who had experienced sexism within the last six months were able to complete the study. We conducted an a priori power analysis with G*Power for regression using 80% power for a small-to-medium effect size ($f^2=0.11$) to determine sample size, which indicated a need for 199 participants [58]. We excluded participants from analyses for completing less than half of the study ($n=15$) and for failing more than one attention check ($n=14$). The final sample included 208 women (M_{age} = 19.31 years old, SD_{age} = 2.39 years; 90.9% heterosexual; 37.5% Asian, 35.6% White/Caucasian, 13.0% Hispanic/Latinx, 11.1% African American/Black, 4.8% Multiracial, 3.4% Middle East-

ern, 1.0% Native American). All participants provided informed consent and then

Table 1 Desired and Perceived Coping Support Subscale Items in Study 1

[*Desired*/Perceived] **Active Planning**

[*I want my partner to help*/My partner helps] me focus my efforts on doing something about the situation I'm in

[*I want my partner to encourage*/My partner encourages] me to take action to try to make the situation better

[*I want my partner to help*/My partner helps] me to come up with a strategy about what to do

[*I want my partner to help*/My partner helps] me to think hard about what steps to take

[*I want my partner to give*/My partner gives] me advice about what to do

[*Desired*/Perceived] **Humor**

[*I want my partner to make*/My partner makes] jokes about the situation

[*I want my partner to make*/My partner makes] fun of the situation

[*I want my partner to point out*/My partner points out] something humorous about the situation

[*Desired*/Perceived] **Emotional Support**

[*I want my partner to give*/My partner gives] me emotional support

[*I want my partner to provide*/My partner provides] me with comfort and understanding

[*I want my partner to talk*/My partner talks] with me about my feelings

[*I want to let out*/I let out] all of my unpleasant feelings in conversation with my partner

[*I want to express*/I express] my negative feelings about the situation to my partner

[*Desired*/Perceived] **Positive Reframing**

[*I want my partner to help*/My partner helps] me to see my experience in a different light, to make it seem more positive

[*I want my partner to point out*/My partner points out] something good in what has happened

[*I want my partner to point out*/My partner points out] what I could learn from what has happened

[*Desired*/Perceived] **Encouraged Acceptance**

[*I want my partner to help*/My partner helps] me to accept the reality of what has happened

[*I want my partner to help*/My partner helps] me figure out how to live with it

[*I want my partner to help*/My partner helps] me accept I cannot change what has happened

[*Desired*/Perceived] **Distraction**

[*I want my partner to help*/My partner helps] to take my mind off things

[*I want my partner to do*/My partner does] things with me to make me think about it less, such as going to movies, watching TV, reading together, sleeping, or shopping

[*I want my partner to suggest*/My partner suggests] that I focus my energy on something else in my life

[*Desired*/Perceived] **Disengagement**

[*I want my partner to let*/My partner lets] me deal with what has happened by myself

[*I want my partner to STOP*/My partner STOPS] helping me try to cope with my experience

[*I want my partner to STOP*/My partner STOPS] trying to do something about what has happened

[*I want my partner to NOT*/My partner does NOT] give me advice about what to do

[*Desired*/Perceived] **Self-Blame**

[*I want my partner to blame*/My partner blames] himself for what happened to me

[*I want my partner to criticize*/My partner criticizes] himself for what happened

[*I want my partner to be*/My partner becomes] frustrated that he couldn't prevent what happened

[a] Desired and perceived coping support behaviors differ at the beginning of each item and are in brackets. The beginning of each "desired" coping support behavior is italicized, while the beginning of each "perceived" coping support behavior is not italicized.

began the study, wherein they learned that they would answer questions about their partner and relationships, their experiences with prejudice, and their desires.

Measures

For each measure, we reverse-coded items as needed and averaged all scale items to create a single measure of each construct where higher values indicate more frequent experience with or greater endorsement of the construct.

Sexism Experience Frequency

Participants responded to a modified, 13-item version of the Schedule of Sexist Events [59] on a scale from 1 (*Never*) to 7 (*Almost all of the time [more than 70% of the time]*). Participants indicated how frequently they experienced different types of sexist events <u>in the last six months</u> (e.g., "how many times have you been treated unfairly by strangers because you are a woman"; $\alpha=0.86$).

COPE and Brief COPE Subscales

All of the desired and perceived coping support behaviors were modified from sub-scales of the COPE [33] and Brief COPE [8] and measured on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (*Never*) to 7 (*Always*). We used the COPE because it includes a variety of subscales for different problem-focused, emotion-focused, and alternative coping behaviors, and is one of the most commonly used coping measures in the literature [60]. For the desired coping subscales, participants were asked to think about how frequently they want their partner to engage in the listed coping support behaviors after the participant disclosed to their partner that they experienced sexism. For the perceived coping subscales, participants were asked to think about how frequently their partner does engage in the listed coping support behaviors following a disclosure of a sexism experience.

The coping support subscales include *desired active planning* ($\alpha=0.95$), *perceived active planning* ($\alpha=0.94$), *desired humor* ($\alpha=0.88$), *perceived humor* ($\alpha=0.94$), *desired emotional support* ($\alpha=0.91$), *perceived emotional support* ($\alpha=0.93$), *desired positive reframing* ($\alpha=0.90$), *perceived positive reframing* ($\alpha=0.91$), *desired encouraged acceptance* ($\alpha=0.89$), *perceived encouraged acceptance* ($\alpha=0.90$), *desired distraction* ($\alpha=0.76$), *perceived distraction* ($\alpha=0.76$), *desired disengagement* ($\alpha=0.78$), *perceived disengagement* ($\alpha=0.84$), *desired self-blame* ($\alpha=0.64$), and *perceived self-blame* ($\alpha=0.82$). Each subscale had between three and five items. See Table 1 for exact wording of the coping support items for each subscale.

For *desired active planning*, participants indicated the active coping and planning behaviors they desire from their partners after experiencing sexism with five items. Although these items typically fall on two subscales, the items were highly correlated, $rs>0.74$, so we conducted an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) using principal components analysis with promax (oblique) rotation on the five items (see the supplemental materials on OSF for factor loadings). All five items were retained on a single factor accounting for 82.91% of the variance, as the eigenvalue exceeded

1, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy met the recommended value of 0.6 or higher, and the Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant [61]. For *perceived active planning*, participants responded to modified versions of the five desired active planning items. These five items were highly correlated, $rs > 0.75$, so we conducted another EFA with the same parameters. The five items were retained on a single factor accounting for 86.07% of the variance, as they met the criteria previously detailed.

Relationship Satisfaction

Participants reported their level of agreement with seven statements (e.g., "In general, I am satisfied with my relationship"; $\alpha = 0.91$) modified from the Relationship Assessment Scale [62] on a seven-point scale from 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly agree*).

Partner Sexist Tendencies

On a scale from 1 (*Never*) to 7 (*Always*), participants indicated how frequently their male romantic partners behave in ways that could be perceived as sexist with three items, including "How often does your partner say or do things that seem sexist," "How frequently does your partner make jokes or comments that are or could be sexist," and "How often does your partner behave in a way that could be considered sexist" ($\alpha = 0.85$).

Demographics

Participants completed a series of demographic questions pertaining to their gender, age, race, sexual orientation, relationship length, and partner sexual orientation.

Additional Measures

Additional measures included in the present study that were not central to this research can be found in the supplemental materials on OSF.

Order of Measures

Participants first reported how frequently they experienced sexism in the last six months and were subsequently asked to think about their own experiences with sexism and the ways their male partner responded when informed about those experiences. Participants indicated how frequently they *want* their male partner to engage in certain behaviors, and how frequently they perceived that their male partner *does* engage in certain behaviors following participants' experiences with sexism. Participants then completed the remaining measures (e.g., relationship satisfaction and partner sexism) in a randomized order. Finally, participants reported their demographics and were debriefed, thanked, and awarded credit for their participation.

Results and Discussion

Table 2 Bivariate correlations among variables in Study 1

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Sexism Experience Frequency	--										
2. Partner Sexist Tendencies	0.22**	--									
3. Relationship Satisfaction	−0.001	−0.40**	--								
4. Perceived Emotional Support	0.09	−0.33**	0.55**	--							
5. Perceived Disengagement	0.04	0.17*	−0.43**	−0.47**	--						
6. Perceived Active Planning	0.12	−0.18**	0.33**	0.51**	−0.46**	--					
7. Perceived Distraction	0.03	−0.11	0.38**	0.53**	−0.34**	0.58**	--				
8. Perceived Reframing	0.03	−0.002	0.16*	0.29**	−0.31**	0.62**	0.40**	--			
9. Perceived Self-Blame	−0.01	−0.12	0.05	0.10	−0.12	0.32**	0.21**	0.21**	--		
10. Perceived Encouraged Acceptance	−0.03	−0.09	0.23**	0.28**	−0.22**	0.54**	0.51**	0.38**	0.14*	--	
11. Perceived Humor	−0.05	0.25**	−0.12	−0.09	0.13	−0.01	0.01	0.21**	0.05	0.05	--

*$p<.05$ ** $p<.01$

We conducted analyses using SPSS version 26.0. We conducted bivariate correlations between measures of interest, which are presented in Table 2. We included sexism experience frequency and partner sexist tendencies as predictors in a regression analysis (reported below) given their significant correlations with relationship satisfaction.

Experiences of Sexism and Partner Coping Support

We first examined descriptive statistics of women's recent experiences with sexism and their partners' sexist tendencies. On average, women reported experiencing sexism infrequently within the six months before the study (i.e., less than 25% of the time; $M = 2.57$, $SD = 0.73$). Women also reported, on average, that their male romantic partners rarely exhibited sexist behaviors ($M = 2.04$, $SD = 0.89$).

We conducted a within-subjects ANOVA using the Greenhouse-Geisser correction due to violations of sphericity and pairwise comparisons with Bonferroni adjustments (to correct for multiple comparisons) to compare the different types of coping support women desired (see Table 3). There were significant differences in the coping support behaviors women desired from their partners, $F(4.84, 1002.79) = 299.02$, $p < .001$. Women indicated that after telling their partners that they experienced sexism, they

Table 3 Mean Differences in Coping Support: Discrepancies in Perceived and Desired Coping Support in Study 1

Type of Coping Support	Desired Coping Support	Perceived Coping Support	Mean Difference[g]	t
Active Planning	4.77[a] (1.62)	4.46[a] (1.68)	0.31	2.96**
Reframing	4.05[b] (1.85)	3.73[b] (1.79)	0.33	2.94**
Emotional Support	5.92[c] (1.25)	5.70[c] (1.36)	0.23	2.58*
Distraction	4.80[a] (1.46)	4.92[d] (1.39)	-0.12	1.27
Partner Self-Blame	1.58[d] (0.93)	2.63[e] (1.42)	-1.05	9.65**
Humor	1.88[d] (1.16)	2.11[f] (1.40)	-0.23	2.93**
Disengagement	2.47[e] (1.10)	2.34[e,f] (1.21)	0.13	1.70
Encouraged Acceptance	4.09[b] (1.71)	4.01[b] (1.62)	0.08	0.76

[a–f]In each column, we have indicated by superscript which coping behaviors in the ANOVA pairwise comparisons were significantly different from one another. Means with the same superscript in the column do not significantly differ from each other.

[g]In each row, positive mean differences indicate the coping support occurs less frequently than desired, while negative mean differences indicate the behavior occurs more frequently than desired.

*$p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

wanted their partners to provide emotional support ($M=5.92$, $SD=1.25$) significantly more than any other coping support, $ps<0.001$. The next most desired coping support styles were distraction ($M=4.80$, $SD=1.46$) and active planning ($M=4.77$, $SD=1.62$), which were significantly more desirable than the remaining support behaviors, $ps<0.001$. Consistent with our hypothesis, two of the most desired sexism coping support behaviors were active planning and emotional support.

To assess differences in the styles of coping support women report receiving from their partners, we conducted a within-subjects ANOVA with the same parameters that we used for assessing differences in desired coping support (see Table 3). There were significant differences in the types of support women reported receiving from their male partners following sexist experiences, $F(4.92, 1018.06)=187.49$, $p<.001$. Women indicated that following disclosures of their experiences of sexism, they received emotional support ($M=5.70$, $SD=1.36$) from their male partners more than any other coping support, $ps<0.001$. The second and third most reported coping support behaviors were distraction ($M=4.92$, $SD=1.39$) and active planning ($M=4.46$, $SD=1.68$), which occurred more often than the remaining coping support behaviors, $ps<0.001$, other than emotional support. These results demonstrate that women both desire and report receiving emotional support, active planning, and distraction from their partners after disclosing that they experienced sexism.

Next, we examined discrepancies between women's desired and perceived partner coping support at the individual level using a series of t-tests (see Table 3). Women perceived that their male partners engaged in self-blame $t(207)=9.65$, $p<.001$, and responded with humor, $t(207)=2.93$, $p=.004$, following experiences of sexism more often than women desired. Women desired more emotional support, reframing, and active planning support behaviors from their male partners than they reported receiving, $ts(207)>2.58$, $ps<0.012$. There were no significant discrepancies between perceived and desired disengagement, distraction, and encouraged acceptance coping support, $ts(207)<1.70$ $ps>0.09$. Among the coping support behaviors women desire most from their male partners after experiencing sexism, women report receiving less emotional support and active planning coping support than desired.

Perceived Partner Support and Relationship Outcomes

We next examined whether perceived coping support behaviors and discrepancies between perceived and desired sexism coping support would relate to women's relationship satisfaction using a three-step hierarchical regression analysis. We mean centered the perceived coping support behaviors, partner sexist tendencies, and sexism experience frequency variables included in the model for ease of interpretation. We calculated coping support discrepancies by taking the absolute value of the difference between each type of perceived and desired coping support behavior. We calculated discrepancies in this manner given research findings that lower marital satisfaction was associated with any discrepancy between perceived and desired partner support (i.e., too much or too little support) [54]. Given the multiple predictors in this model, we used variance inflation factors to screen for multicollinearity. Akinwande et al. [63] propose that acceptable values of VIF should be below 5. In the present

models, the VIF values for predictors fell below 3.52, suggesting no problems with multicollinearity.

Table 4 presents the results of the hierarchical regression predicting relationship satisfaction. At Step 1, the model including women's sexism experience frequency and partner sexist tendencies significantly predicted relationship satisfaction, $F(2, 205) = 20.11$, $p < .001$, explaining 16.4% of the variance in relationship satisfaction. We entered perceived partner support subscales at Step 2 of the model, which explained an additional 24.4% of the variance in relationship satisfaction, $\Delta F(8, 197) = 10.15$, $p < .001$. We next entered partner coping support discrepancies on Step 3 of the model, which predicted an additional 5.4% of the variance in relationship satisfaction, $\Delta F(8, 189) = 2.37$, $p = .019$.

In sum, following experiences of sexism, women reported desiring and receiving emotional support, distraction, and active planning coping support behaviors from their male romantic partners, though they indicated receiving less active planning and emotional support than desired. Providing partial support for our hypothesis on discrepancies and relationship outcomes, we found that smaller discrepancies in emotional support and encouraged acceptance were associated with greater relationship satisfaction. Additionally, greater emotional support, distraction, and engagement coping support from women's male partners related to higher relationship satisfaction. Women who perceived their partner to have greater sexist tendencies reported lower relationship satisfaction. This study focused on women's experiences and desires of sexism coping support from their male romantic partners, but it remains unclear what coping support behaviors men report engaging in and whether men's self-reported coping support behaviors differ from the support that women report desiring following experiences of sexism. As such, in Study 2, men shared their perspectives on coping support, sexism, and partner relationship outcomes.

Study 2

In Study 2, men reported the coping support they provide when their female romantic partners disclose their experiences with sexism and the coping support they believe their partner desires. Men also indicated their own endorsement of hostile and benevolent sexism and their perceptions of their partners' relationship satisfaction. Given that emotional support, active planning, and distraction were desired most by women in Study 1, we explored men's reported engagement in these coping support behaviors. We also examined discrepancies between the sexism coping support men reported providing their female partners and the coping support they believe their partners desire. Additionally, we were interested in examining the relationships between men's problem- and emotion-focused coping support behaviors, discrepancies in coping support, and perceptions of their partners' relationship satisfaction. We predicted that men's reported engagement in problem- and emotion-focused coping support behaviors (i.e., active planning, emotional support) would relate to greater perceived satisfaction of their female partners. Given past research on the link between partner sexism and women's relationship outcomes [41, 43], we included

Table 4 Summary of Hierarchical Regression Predicting Women's Relationship Satisfaction in Study 1

Predictor	Model 1 B(SE)	β	t	Model 2 B(SE)	β	t	Model 3 B(SE)	β	t
Sexism Experience Frequency	0.14(0.10)	0.09	1.38	0.07(0.09)	0.05	0.80	0.06(0.09)	0.04	0.64
Partner Sexist Tendencies	−0.53(0.08)	−0.42	−6.34***	−0.34(0.08)	−0.27	−4.25***	−0.28(0.08)	−0.22	−3.51***
Perceived Disengagement				−0.21(0.06)	−0.23	−3.45***	−0.19(0.06)	−0.21	−3.10**
Perceived Emotional Support				0.26(0.06)	0.31	4.09***	0.20(0.07)	0.23	2.93**
Perceived Distraction				0.12(0.06)	0.14	1.90	0.14(0.06)	0.17	2.27*
Perceived Humor				0.01(0.05)	0.02	0.26	0.03(0.06)	0.04	0.60
Perceived Active Planning				−0.05(0.06)	−0.07	−0.73	−0.06(0.06)	−0.08	−0.89
Perceived Reframing				−0.02(0.05)	−0.03	−0.44	−0.04(0.05)	−0.06	−0.84
Perceived Encouraged Acceptance				0.04(0.05)	0.06	0.80	0.03(0.05)	0.04	0.54
Perceived Self-Blame				−0.04(0.05)	−0.05	−0.82	−0.15(0.08)	−0.19	−1.86
Emotional Support Discrepancy							−0.20(0.08)	−0.17	−2.72**
Encouraged Acceptance Discrepancy							−0.14(0.06)	−0.12	−2.13*
Active Planning Discrepancy							−0.05(0.07)	−0.04	−0.68
Reframing Discrepancy							0.06(0.06)	0.06	1.00
Humor Discrepancy							−0.11(0.09)	−0.09	−1.27
Distraction Discrepancy							−0.01(0.07)	−0.01	−0.20
Disengagement Discrepancy							−0.01(0.08)	−0.004	−0.06
Self-Blame Discrepancy							0.16(0.09)	0.19	1.87
R^2	0.16**			0.41**			0.46**		
ΔR^2				0.24**			0.05*		

$*p \leq .05$ $**p \leq .01$

men's self-reported hostile and benevolent sexism as correlates of their perceptions of their partners' relationship satisfaction in this study.

Method

Participants and Procedure

Given the limited number of male respondents in the human subject pool at Rutgers University (where Study 1 was conducted), we recruited male respondents from Amazon MTurk ($N=243$) to participate in the online survey during spring 2019 for $0.50. This study was approved by the university's institutional review board. Participants were screened for eligibility through a brief initial questionnaire. Only men who were in a relationship with a woman for six months or longer and who indicated their partner had experienced sexism within the last six months were eligible for the study. To determine sample size, we conducted an a priori power analysis for regression in G*Power for a small-to-medium effect size ($f^2=0.11$) and 80% power, which indicated a need for 199 participants [58]. We excluded participants who were not residing in the U.S. ($n=6$), completed less than half of the study ($n=6$), failed both attention checks ($n=3$), and provided incomprehensible open response replies ($n=10$). The final sample included 218 men (M_{age} = 35.8 years old, SD_{age} = 10.7 years; 90.4% heterosexual; 65.6% White, 13.8% Hispanic/Latinx, 10.1% Asian, 9.2% Black, 2.3% Multiracial, 0.9% Native American, 0.9% Middle Eastern). All participants provided informed consent prior to beginning the survey. Participants learned that they would answer a series of questions about their partner and relationships, their helping and supportive behaviors, and their attitudes.

Measures

For each measure, we reverse-coded items when needed and averaged all scale items to create a single measure of each construct in which higher values indicate more frequent experience with or greater endorsement of the construct.

COPE and brief COPE Subscales

As in Study 1, we adapted items from the subscales of the COPE [33] and Brief COPE [8] to create the desired and perceived coping support behaviors and measured them on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (*Never*) to 7 (*Always*). For the perceived desired coping support subscales, we modified each subscale to reflect men's expectations of their female partners' desire for a specific coping support behavior following the disclosure of a sexism experience. For the reported coping support behaviors, we modified each subscale to reflect the frequency that men engage in each coping support behavior following their female partners' disclosures of experiences with sexism.

The coping support subscales include *perceived desired active planning* ($\alpha=0.92$), *active planning* ($\alpha=0.92$), *perceived desired humor* ($\alpha=0.94$), *humor* ($\alpha=0.94$), *perceived desired emotional support* ($\alpha=0.93$), *emotional support* ($\alpha=0.90$), *perceived desired positive reframing* ($\alpha=0.92$), *positive reframing* ($\alpha=0.91$), *perceived desired*

Table 5 Reported and Perceived Desired Coping Support Subscale Items in Study 2

[*Reported*/Perceived Desired] **Active Planning**

[*I help my partner*/My partner wants me to help her] focus her efforts on doing something about the situation she is in

[*I encourage my partner*/My partner wants me to encourage her] to take action to try to make the situation better

[*I help my partner*/My partner wants me to help her] to come up with a strategy about what to do

[*I help my partner*/My partner wants me to help her] to think hard about what steps to take

[*I give my partner*/My partner wants me to give her] advice about what to do

[*Reported*/Perceived Desired] **Humor**

[*I make*/My partner wants me to make] jokes about the situation

[*I make*/ My partner wants me to make] fun of the situation

[*I point out*/My partner wants me to point out] something humorous about the situation

[*Reported*/Perceived Desired] **Emotional Support**

[*I give my partner*/My partner wants me to give her] emotional support

[*I provide my partner*/My partner wants me to provide her] with comfort and understanding

[*I talk with my partner*/My partner wants me to talk with her] about her feelings

[*My partner*/My partner wants me to listen as she] lets out all of her unpleasant feelings in conversations we have

[*My partner*/My partner wants me to listen as she] expresses her negative feelings about the situation to me

[*Reported*/Perceived Desired] **Positive Reframing**

[*I help my partner*/My partner wants me to help her to] see her experience in a different light, to make it seem more positive

[*I point out*/My partner wants me to point out] something good in what has happened

[*I point out*/My partner wants me to point out] what she could learn from what has happened

[*Reported*/Perceived Desired] **Encouraged Acceptance**

[*I help my partner*/My partner wants me to help her to] accept the reality of what has happened

[*I help my partner* /My partner wants me to help her] figure out how to live with it

[*I help my partner*/My partner wants me to help her] accept she cannot change what has happened

[*Reported*/Perceived Desired] **Distraction**

[*I help to take my partner's*/My partner wants me to help take her] mind off things

[*I do things with my partner*/My partner wants me to do things with her] to make her think about it less, such as going to movies, watching TV, reading together, sleeping, or shopping

[*I suggest that my partner*/ My partner wants me to suggest that she] focus her energy on something else in her life

[*Reported*/Perceived Desired] **Disengagement**

[*I let my partner deal*/My partner wants me to let her deal] with what has happened by herself

[*I do NOT help my partner*/My partner does NOT want me to help her] try to cope with her experience

[*I do NOT try to*/My partner does NOT want me to] do something about what has happened

[*I do NOT give my partner*/My partner does NOT want me to give her] advice about what to do

[*Reported*/Perceived Desired] **Self-Blame**

[*I blame*/My partner wants me to blame] myself for what happened to [*my partner/*her]

[*I criticize*/My partner wants me to criticize] myself for what happened

[*I become*/My partner wants me to be] frustrated that I couldn't prevent what happened

[a]Reported and perceived desired coping support behaviors differ at the beginning of each item and are in brackets. The beginning of each "reported" coping support behavior is italicized, while the beginning of each "perceived desired" coping support behavior is not italicized

encouraged acceptance (α=0.90), *encouraged acceptance* (α=0.85), *perceived desired distraction* (α=0.85), *distraction* (α=0.81), *perceived desired disengagement* (α=0.85), *disengagement* (α=0.86), *perceived desired self-blame* (α=0.95), and *self-blame* (α=0.84). Each subscale had between three and five items. See Table 5 for the exact wording of the coping support items.

Perceived Partner Relationship Satisfaction

Participants completed the same seven-item measure of relationship satisfaction (α=0.89) as participants in Study 1 [62] from the perspective of their female partners on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (*she would strongly disagree*) to 7 (*she would strongly agree*).

Ambivalent Sexism Inventory

Participants reported their level of agreement with the 22 items from the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory [46] on a scale from 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly agree*). Half of the statements constitute the measure of *hostile sexism* (e.g., "Women seek to gain power by getting control over men"; α=0.87), while the other half constitute the measure of *benevolent sexism* (e.g., "Women should be cherished and protected by men"; α=0.82).

Demographics

Participants completed a series of demographic questions pertaining to their gender, age, race, sexual orientation, relationship length, and partner sexual orientation.

Additional Measures

Additional measures that were not central to this research can be found in the supplemental materials on OSF.

Order of Measures

Participants first thought about their female romantic partners' disclosures of experiences of sexism and their responses in those situations. Participants indicated how frequently they engage in coping support behaviors and how frequently they believed their partner *wants* them to engage in certain coping support behaviors. Participants then completed the remaining measures (e.g., perceived partner relationship satisfaction, hostile sexism, benevolent sexism) in a randomized order. Finally, participants reported their demographics and were debriefed, thanked for their participation, and compensated.

Results and Discussion

All analyses in Study 2 were conducted using SPSS version 26.0. We first computed bivariate correlations of the measures of interest (see Table 6).

Men's Coping Support Engagement and Sexism

As in Study 1, we conducted a within-subjects ANOVA with Greenhouse-Geisser corrections to examine differences in coping support behaviors (see Table 7). There were significant differences in the sexism-related coping support behaviors men reported providing their partners, $F(4.25, 918.19) = 183.28$, $p < .001$. Following their partners' disclosures of experiences with sexism, men reported providing emotional support ($M = 5.48$, $SD = 1.22$) significantly more frequently than any other type of coping support, $ps < 0.001$. Men also indicated providing coping support through distraction ($M = 4.79$, $SD = 1.30$) and active planning ($M = 4.79$, $SD = 1.31$), which did not significantly differ from each other, $p = 1.00$, but were provided significantly more frequently than most coping support behaviors, $ps < 0.001$, aside from emotional support, $ps < 0.001$. Men reported providing their female partners with the three coping support behaviors that were identified as most desirable among women in Study 1.

To assess differences in the types of coping support men perceived their female partners wanted following disclosures of experiences of sexism, we conducted a within-subjects ANOVA with the same parameters that we used for assessing differences in reported coping support (see Table 7). There were significant differences in the types of coping support men perceived their female partners wanted, $F(4.49, 970.14) = 129.68$, $p < .001$. Men believed that their female partners most wanted emotional support ($M = 5.50$, $SD = 1.31$) following sexism experience disclosures, $ps < 0.001$. Men also perceived their female partners wanted them to provide coping support through distraction ($M = 4.52$, $SD = 1.44$) and active planning ($M = 4.47$, $SD = 1.41$) more frequently than the other coping support behaviors, $ps < 0.001$, aside from emotional support. Thus, men reported providing their female partners with the sexism coping support behaviors that they expected were more desirable.

Using a series of t-tests, we examined discrepancies between men's reported coping support and the coping support behaviors they perceived their partners desire after disclosing their experiences with sexism (see Table 7). Men reported engaging in active planning, reframing, encouraged acceptance, distraction, and self-blame coping support behaviors more frequently than they believed their female partners preferred, $ts(217) > 2.73$, $ps < 0.007$. Additionally, men reported less frequent coping support disengagement than they believed their female partners preferred, $t(217) = 7.16$, $p < .001$. There were no significant discrepancies between reported and perceived desired humor and emotional support, $ts(217) < 0.48$ $ps > 0.63$. In sum, men primarily reported engaging in behaviors more frequently or as frequently as they believed their partners wanted.

Table 6 Bivariate correlations among variables in Study 2

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Perceived Partner Relationship Satisfaction	--										
2. Benevolent Sexism	0.12	--									
3. Hostile Sexism	−0.28**	0.32**	--								
4. Active Planning	0.37**	0.16*	−0.03	--							
5. Encouraged Acceptance	0.23**	0.17*	0.17*	0.42**	--						
6. Humor	−0.28**	0.13*	0.41**	0.04	0.24**	--					
7. Emotional Support	0.56**	0.12	−0.19**	0.56**	0.27**	−0.18**	--				
8. Distraction	0.40**	0.19**	0.06	0.57**	0.38**	0.08	0.55**	--			
9. Disengagement	−0.46**	−0.02	0.24**	−0.30**	−0.01	0.53**	−0.33**	−0.20**	--		
10. Self-Blame	−0.30**	0.14*	0.20**	0.11	0.07	0.47**	−0.10	0.10	0.39**	--	
11. Reframing	0.11	0.26**	0.29**	0.50**	0.57**	0.34**	0.15*	0.47**	0.08	0.20**	--

$*p \leq .05$ $**p \leq .01$

Table 7 Mean Differences in Coping Support: Discrepancies in Reported and Perceived Desired Coping Support in Study 2

Type of Coping Support	Reported Coping Support	Perceived Desired Coping Support	Mean Difference[f]	t
Active Planning	4.80[a] (1.31)	4.48[a] (1.41)	0.32	4.43**
Reframing	4.04[b] (1.71)	3.83[b] (1.64)	0.21	2.73**
Emotional Support	5.49[c] (1.22)	5.50[c] (1.31)	-0.01	0.15
Distraction	4.79[a] (1.30)	4.53[a] (1.44)	0.26	3.39**
Partner Self-Blame	2.85[d] (1.46)	2.20[d] (1.62)	0.65	6.98**
Humor	2.67[d] (1.56)	2.70[e] (1.58)	-0.03	0.48
Disengagement	2.34[e] (1.32)	2.84[e] (1.39)	-0.50	7.16**
Encouraged Acceptance	4.22[b] (1.46)	3.95[b] (1.58)	0.27	3.21**

[a-e]In each column, we have indicated by superscript which coping behaviors in the ANOVA pairwise comparisons were significantly different from one another. Means with the same superscript in the column do not significantly differ from each other.

[f]In each row, positive mean differences indicate the coping support behavior was reported to occur more frequently than men believed their partner desired, while negative mean differences indicate the behavior was reported to occur less frequently than men believed their partner desired.

*$p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

Coping Support, Sexism, and Perceived Relationship Satisfaction

To test our hypotheses on the relationships between men's sexism coping support behaviors and discrepancies, self-reported hostile and benevolent sexism, and perceptions of their partners' relationship satisfaction, we conducted a three-step hierarchical regression analysis. We mean centered the coping support behaviors and sexism scores included in the regression model for ease of interpretation and calculated coping support discrepancies by taking the absolute value of the difference between each type of coping support and perceived desired coping support behavior. We used variance inflation factors to test for multicollinearity in the models and found the VIF values all fell below 2.42. As acceptable VIF values should be below 5, these values suggest no problems with multicollinearity [63].

In the model predicting perceived partner relationship satisfaction (see Table 8), we entered hostile and benevolent sexism at Step 1 and found that the model was significant, $F(2, 211) = 15.04$, $p = .001$, explaining 12.5% of the variance in perceived partner relationship satisfaction. At Step 2, we entered the coping support behaviors, which explained an additional 36.3% of the variance in relationship satisfaction. This

change in R^2 was significant, $\Delta F(8, 203) = 17.97$, $p < .001$. We then entered discrepancies in coping support in Step 3 of the model, but the change in R^2 was not significant, $\Delta F(8, 195) = 0.29$, $p = .97$.

In sum, following their female partners' disclosures of experiences of sexism, men reported providing their partners with emotional support, active planning, and distraction most of all the sexism coping support behaviors. They also reported expecting their partners to desire those same three coping support behaviors more than all other coping support behaviors. We found that greater hostile sexism, disengagement, and self-blame were associated with lower perceived partner relationship satisfaction, while greater benevolent sexism, emotional support, and distraction were associated with greater perceived partner relationship satisfaction. These findings provide partial support for our hypotheses.

General Discussion

Across two studies, we examined coping support behaviors that women receive and desire from their male partners following experiences of sexism, and which men provide and perceive their female partners desire when coping with sexism. These studies provide insight into the sexism coping support behaviors that are desired and engaged in most frequently, with both men and women reporting the importance of emotional support, active planning, and distraction coping support behaviors in response to women's disclosures of their experiences with sexism. This research also highlights the importance of certain coping support behaviors, some discrepancies in coping support, and men's sexism for women's relationship satisfaction.

Sexism and Coping Support Behaviors

People cope with stressors in their lives, such as experiences of discrimination, in a myriad of ways [5, 6, 11, 22, 33]. While women reported that they experienced sexism infrequently in the six months before the study, they did report disclosing experiences of sexism to their partners frequently. Given these frequent disclosures, this research provides important insight in how sexism and responses to sexist experiences relate to women's romantic relationship outcomes.

In Study 1, we examined sexism coping support styles women desired and received from their male partners in mixed-gender relationships using modified versions of the COPE [33]. After telling their partner that they experienced sexism, women reported receiving and wanting emotional support, distraction, and active planning coping support from their male partners more than any other coping support behaviors. Emotional support is an emotion-focused coping support behavior, as it involves managing emotional responses to a stressor, while active planning is a type of problem-focused coping support, as it involves dealing directly with the stressor [22]. Distraction is considered a dysfunctional coping mechanism [33], but may be perceived positively when provided by a romantic partner, as it involves engaging in distracting activities together. These findings are consistent with our hypothesis that women would desire emotional support and active planning as types of problem- and emotion-focused sexism coping support behaviors from their male partners. Because

Table 8 Summary of Hierarchical Regression Predicting Men's Perception of their Partner's Satisfaction in Study 2

Predictor	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	B(SE)	β	t	B(SE)	β	t	B(SE)	β	t
Hostile Sexism	−0.37(0.07)	−0.35	−5.16***	−0.22(0.06)	−0.20	−3.41***	−0.23(0.07)	−0.22	−3.51***
Benevolent Sexism	0.28(0.08)	0.23	3.42***	0.15(0.07)	0.13	2.30**	0.17(0.07)	0.14	2.43*
Humor				0.02(0.05)	0.03	0.37	0.003(0.06)	0.004	0.05
Disengagement				−0.18(0.06)	−0.20	−2.94**	−0.18(0.07)	−0.19	−2.75**
Active Planning				−0.01(0.07)	−0.01	−0.13	−0.01(0.08)	−0.01	−0.09
Reframing				0.001(0.05)	0.002	0.02	0.004(0.06)	0.01	0.07
Encouraged Acceptance				0.08(0.05)	0.10	1.59	0.08(0.06)	0.10	1.52
Emotional Support				0.31(0.07)	0.32	4.42***	0.32(0.07)	0.32	4.34***
Distraction				0.15(0.07)	0.15	2.13*	0.14(0.07)	0.15	2.04*
Perceived Self-Blame				−0.18(0.05)	−0.21	−3.51***	−0.18(0.06)	−0.21	−2.93**
Active Planning Discrepancy							0.02(0.09)	0.01	0.20
Reframing Discrepancy							−0.11(0.09)	−0.08	−1.31
Distraction Discrepancy							0.04(0.09)	0.03	0.44
Emotional Support Discrepancy							0.06(0.10)	0.03	0.61
Encouraged Acceptance Discrepancy							−0.01(0.07)	−0.01	−0.20
Humor Discrepancy							0.05(0.09)	0.03	0.51
Disengagement Discrepancy							−0.002(0.08)	−0.001	−0.03
Self-Blame Discrepancy							−0.02(0.07)	−0.02	−0.31
R^2	0.13**			0.49**			0.49**		
ΔR^2				0.36**			<0.01		

*$p \leq .05$ ** $p \leq .01$

people are likely to seek support when coping with discrimination, it is important to identify coping support styles that are desirable and beneficial for their relationship satisfaction.

In Study 2, we examined the sexism coping support styles men engage in and think their partners want following disclosures of experiences of sexism. Men reported providing their partners with emotional support, distraction, and active planning coping support more than any other coping support behaviors after their partners disclosed that they experienced sexism. Men also believed that their female partners wanted emotional support, distraction, and active planning coping support from the male participants. Across two studies, both women and men indicated that emotional support, distraction, and active planning were the most desirable and most frequently provided sexism coping support behaviors. Among women, receiving these styles of coping support was related to greater relationship satisfaction. Among men, providing these styles of coping support was related to greater perceived partner satisfaction.

Women and men differed in their reports of discrepancies in sexism coping support behaviors. Women indicated receiving less active planning and emotional support behaviors from their male partners than they wanted and receiving a desirable amount of support via distraction. Women indicated their male partners engaged in some less desirable coping behaviors (i.e., humor, self-blame) more often than they preferred. For the remaining sexism coping support behaviors, women reported receiving either slightly less support than desired or an appropriate amount of sexism coping support. As emotional support and active planning are related to women's relationship satisfaction, these coping support discrepancies could have downstream consequences for the survival of their relationships.

For many of the sexism coping support behaviors, including distraction and active planning, men reported providing more coping support than they believed their partners desired. Men perceived that they provided their partners with a desirable amount of emotional support following sexism experience disclosures. Researchers have found that men in mixed-gender relationships provide their female partners with less spousal support than men and women provide in same-gender relationships [9]. Men in Study 2 may have exaggerated the support they provide their partners following their partners' disclosures of experiences with sexism due to a social desirability bias, as being a supportive partner is associated with positive affective and relational outcomes [9, 15, 27].

While men may have overestimated the amount of sexism coping support they provided to their partners or underestimated the amount of support their partners desired, we did not survey men's female partners and therefore cannot draw specific conclusions regarding discrepancies in coping support between members of the same couple. It is also an open question whether the male partners of women who report receiving less support than desired would themselves report providing more support than they believe their partner desires. Thus, it would be beneficial to examine desired and reported sexism coping support behaviors among couple dyads in future research. Given past research on discrepancies in partner support [54] and the present findings, it is advisable that mixed-gender couples communicate about the type and quantity of support they desire from their partner following experiences of discrimination.

While this research focuses specifically on sexism faced by women, it is critical to discuss that most women in Study 1 reported having a racial or ethnic minority identity. Racial and ethnic minority women encounter prejudice based on their gender, race, ethnicity, and the intersection of their multiple stigmatized identities [64, 65]. Individuals with multiple stigmatized identities report greater perceived discrimination and fear of being stereotyped than those with fewer stigmatized identities [66]. Racial and ethnic minority women experience significantly more discrimination than White women and racial and ethnic minority men [67] and adapt their coping practices to the type of prejudice they encounter [65]. In Study 1, women's reported experiences of sexism, received coping support, and desired coping support were likely influenced by their racial and ethnic identities. Gender discrimination is not experienced uniformly by all women. It is crucial for future research to focus on racial and ethnic minority women's experiences of and responses to stigmatization, and to examine how additional intersecting identities (e.g., sexual orientation, class) impact women's experiences with discrimination.

Relationship Satisfaction

We examined how sexism coping support, self-reported support discrepancies, and sexism related to relationship satisfaction. Women indicated greater satisfaction with their romantic relationship when their male partners provided them with greater emotional support following disclosures of sexist experiences. Greater perceived sexist tendencies and lower perceived engagement of women's partners in coping support related to lower relationship satisfaction. These findings are consistent with past work proposing that male romantic partners' sexism relates to lower or less stable relationship satisfaction among female partners [41].

Among women, greater self-reported discrepancies in emotional support and encouraged acceptance, both of which were reported as highly desirable sexism coping support behaviors, related to lower relationship satisfaction. This research builds on a growing literature linking behavioral discrepancies in romantic relationships to lower relationship satisfaction [51, 53, 55] and is the first to establish that sexism coping support and discrepancies in sexism coping support correspond to women's relationship satisfaction. Given these findings, it is advisable for men in relationships with women to provide their partners with the emotional support their partners desire following experiences of sexism. This emotional support can include listening to their partner recount their experience, discussing their partners' feelings, and providing their partner with comfort and understanding.

In Study 2, we replicated past work showing that ambivalent sexism relates to relationship satisfaction [41, 48]. We also extended this work to show that men's perceptions of their female partners' relationship satisfaction are linked to the coping support men report providing following disclosures of sexism. Providing partial support for our hypotheses, greater hostile sexism, coping support disengagement, and self-blame were associated with lower perceived partner relationship satisfaction, while greater emotional support and distraction were associated with higher perceived partner relationship satisfaction. These findings suggest that men's engage-

ment in desirable sexism coping support behaviors could benefit women in mixed-gender romantic relationships.

Higher benevolent sexism was also associated with higher perceived partner relationship satisfaction in Study 2. Hammond and Overall [41] proposed that, in mixed-gender relationships, men's endorsement of benevolent sexism can have negative consequences for their female partners' relationship satisfaction. One possible explanation for the positive relationship between men's benevolent sexism and perceived partner relationship satisfaction is that we asked men to estimate how satisfied female partners were in their relationship, rather than asking the female partners directly. It is possible that men who are high in benevolent sexism may inflate their partner's relationship satisfaction given the primary role that heterosexual romance plays in benevolent sexist beliefs [46]. Recent research suggests that many women do not recognize the harmful nature of men's benevolent sexism due to the association between benevolent sexism and warmth [44, 68]. Thus, future research should explore whether women in relationships with men are indeed happier when their partner is more benevolently sexist and should examine beliefs that could moderate such effects (e.g., feminist identification, women's own sexism).

Limitations and Future Directions

While this research has many strengths, there are several avenues for further research in this domain to address some of the present studies' limitations. The present research utilized cross-sectional sampling, retrospective reporting, and a correlational design. Longitudinal designs, experience-sampling methods, and laboratory experiments would address many of these limitations, and allow for observations of real-time reactions to sexism. Women participants in Study 1 were primarily college-aged, while the men participants in Study 2 were, on average, in their mid-30s. While it is likely that young adult women have experienced sexism for many years, they may have less experience with romantic relationships than men in their 30s, which could have an influence on the findings in this research. Despite these age differences, there was congruence in the sexism coping support behaviors that women and men reported as most desirable. Additionally, most women in Study 1 identified as members of racial and ethnic minority groups, while most men in Study 2 identified as White. Race and ethnicity can influence experiences and responses to sexism, and likely influenced how both women and men responded to measures of sexism experiences and sexism coping support in this research. Future research should examine sexism coping support among men and women of similar ages, women and men with similar ethnic and racial identities, and mixed-gender dyads.

Future research should also explore factors that could moderate coping support. For example, sexism severity influences intentions to confront sexism and reactions to perpetrators [69]. Thus, sexism severity may influence the coping support women desire and receive from their partners. Moreover, discrimination aimed at couples (e.g., interracial couples, LGBTQ+ couples) may yield different coping support needs. For example, couples who have congruent needs when coping with discrimination may experience greater relationship satisfaction than couples who have differing needs. It could also be beneficial to examine the links between coping sup-

port, discrepancies in support, and relationship satisfaction among romantic dyads, as having self-reports from *both* members of romantic couples would allow for a richer analysis of discrepancies. While the present studies expand the literature on discrimination coping support in couples to sexism coping support [9, 34, 35], future research should consider coping support in romantic relationships in dealing with other forms of discrimination (e.g., ageism, racism).

Conclusions

The present studies provide insight into the sexism coping support behaviors women want and receive from their male partners, and the sexism coping support behaviors men provide and believe their female partners want from them. They elucidate the relationships between sexism coping support, sexism, and relationship outcomes among men and women in mixed-gender relationships. Past research has emphasized the importance of spousal support and examined coping support behaviors among same-gender couples dealing with sexual orientation discrimination [34–36]. The present studies further our understanding of sexism coping support behaviors in mixed-gender relationships and demonstrate the importance of sexism coping support engagement for relationship outcomes. These studies reveal that emotional support, active planning, and distraction are the most desired, received, and provided sexism coping support behaviors among men and women in mixed-gender relationships. While this research focused on how men can engage in coping support following their female partners' disclosures of their experiences of sexism and the possible consequences of these behaviors, these findings may also provide insight into coping support behaviors among romantic partners dealing with other forms of discrimination as well.

It is important to consider effective coping support behaviors in romantic relationships when couple members experience outside stressors such as discrimination. Men can be effective allies against sexism, including within their romantic relationships. As women continue to face sexism regularly in their lives, it is important to understand how people around them, including their romantic partners, can support women when they experience sexism. The present studies highlight specific coping support behaviors that men in mixed-gender relationships can engage in to help their female partners cope with experiences of sexism and maintain satisfaction within their romantic relationships.

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