

Man or Woman: Would It Make a Difference

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Abstract

Men and women can both find themselves in a situation where gender prejudice is present, so we wanted to see how the participants would respond when either a man or a woman was the victim in a scenario where gender prejudice was present. With a lack of research in men's experiences, and a lot of background research on women's experiences, we wanted to include both genders to see how the participants would respond in scenarios when both genders were the victims of gender prejudice. We predicted that bystanders would be more likely to help the victim of gender prejudice if they were the same gender as the bystander, more specifically men would be more likely to help men and women would be more likely to help women. Through various scenarios, we examined how likely or unlikely the bystander, who was the participant, would be to intervene in a situation where gender prejudice was present based on the gender of the victim. We found that most participants were inclined to help women when they were the victims of gender prejudice when compared to men, but the relationship between the gender of the victim and bystander was found to not be significant. Future research should aim to examine men's experiences of gender prejudice, since there is not much information regarding their experiences.

Who Will Intervene in Situations Where Gender Prejudice is Present?

Gender prejudice is an issue that many individuals face on a daily basis or have faced at least once in their life. Name calling, expecting genders to portray their designated gender role, and stereotypes are just a few examples of what both men and women experience when they are victims of gender prejudice. This is an important topic to discuss because gender prejudice can eventually progress into discrimination against women and men. Confronting perpetrators is one step to take in hopes of decreasing the amount of people affected by gender prejudice, but there are many factors that can influence one's decisions to intervene or not. For example, bystanders often weigh the costs and benefits of a situation where gender prejudice is present. Will intervening make the situation better and put an end to the discrimination? Or, will intervening make the situation worse and put the bystander and victim in more danger? Bystander intervention is one way individuals can get involved to reduce incidents of gender prejudice, but there are many other factors that can affect one's willingness to intervene such as the gender of the perpetrator, and social norms.

To demonstrate, one study focused on both college men and women's responses to a woman being a victim of gender prejudice (Brinkman, Dean, Simpson, McGinley, & Rosén, 2015). They focused on four factors which included, social norms, cost-effectiveness, distress, and feminist activism, to see if any of these factors influenced how one would respond to an act of gender prejudice. The researchers came up with three different hypotheses. They hypothesized that female bystanders would report greater amounts of distress compared to male bystanders during acts of gender prejudice. They also hypothesized that concerns about social norms and the cost-effectiveness of a situation would result in the bystander having a desire to utilize a confrontational response, but not actually going through with it. The last hypothesis was that

increased concerns about social norms and cost-effectiveness would result in less confrontational responses while higher distress levels and greater endorsement of feminist activism would result in a bystander more likely using a confrontational response. They investigated their predictions by having the participants take online surveys where they were asked to recall a time where they were a bystander who witnessed a woman being a victim of gender prejudice. The participants were then asked to choose the type of gender prejudice the woman experienced. The choices included, a hostile/negative comment about women, a comment that women need to act a certain way, or an unwanted sexual comment/advance. The participants were then asked to answer how they actually responded during that particular situation and how they desired to respond during that particular situation. The participants' distress levels and activism stances were also examined. Results indicated that there were no significant gender differences in distress level, feminist activism, or concerns about social norms when deciding how to respond. They also found that female bystanders who questioned the cost-effectiveness of the situation and concern about social norms were more likely to state they wanted to use a confrontational response while male bystanders concerns about social norms and cost-effectiveness of the situation did not significantly predict the likelihood of wanting to use a confrontational response. Finally, the results showed that feminist activism was a significant predictor for female bystanders; therefore, female bystanders reported a greater use of a confrontational response as their commitment to feminist activism increased. Alternatively, male bystanders reported a greater use of a confrontational response as concerns about social norms, levels of distress, and endorsement of feminist activism increased, but none of these individual variables were significant.

Other researchers further looked at the topic of how bystanders intervene versus how they desired to intervene, particularly women bystanders and their reasons for utilizing or not utilizing

a certain response (Brinkman, Garcia, & Rickard, 2011). They studied the discrepancies between what college women wanted to do in response to gender prejudice and what they actually did in response to gender prejudice. They hypothesized that college women would report wanting to use a confrontational response more than actually using one. They also hypothesized that college women who wanted to use a confrontational response, but instead used a different style of response would report higher levels of distress when compared to college women who wanted to use a confrontational response but did nothing at all. They utilized a daily online diary where women recounted events of gender prejudice they experienced that day. The diary was in a checklist form where participants had an available 18 options to choose from regarding the types of gender prejudice experienced, followed by a set of open-ended questions where the participants were able to state how they actually responded to the event and how they desired to respond to the event. Levels of distress were also assessed in this study. The results showed that there were more incidents where women had a desire to use a confrontational response when they did not actually use one. They also found that women who had a desire to use a confrontational response but did nothing, showed lower distress levels when compared to women who had a desire to use a confrontational response, but used a different type of response instead.

Although most research studies regarding gender prejudice and bystander intervention focus solely on women and their experiences, one study focused on college men's everyday experiences of gender prejudice. The researchers were interested in how college men responded to gender prejudice events and the factors that influenced their responses (Brinkman, Isacco, & Rosén, 2016). The researchers predicted that men would report more gender-role stereotype events experienced than any other types, which included name-calling and sexual advances. They also predicted that men would report more experiences with men as the perpetrators of

gender prejudice than women, and that men would report more gender prejudice experiences perpetrated by friends than strangers. The last hypothesis predicted that college men who reported higher levels of distress during the gender prejudice event would be more likely to respond with a confrontational response. The male participants completed an online survey where they were asked to recall the last time they experienced a form of gender prejudice. Then, participants were asked to indicate what form of gender prejudice they experienced (e.g. a sexual comment or a comment that men should act in a certain way). Participants were then asked about the perpetrator's characteristics, such as gender and if they were acquainted or strangers with the perpetrator. Levels of distress, responses, and desired responses were also assessed in this study. The results showed that most participants experienced a hostile/negative comment about their gender, and that women were more often than not the instigators of the gender prejudice. Results also indicated that experiences of gender prejudice were often perpetrated by friends of the victim, and that distress level was a significant predictor of using a confrontational response.

College campuses are an example of one place where both men and women may find themselves in situations of being a victim of gender prejudice or in situations where they are the bystander. In our study, we are interested in observing how college men and women would respond in a situation where they are the bystander of gender prejudice. Our study is similar to the studies mentioned because we have incorporated both college men's and women's experiences of gender prejudice and used topics discussed such as gender norms to see how it would influence the participants' response in a scenario where gender prejudice is present. Instead of solely focusing on one specific gender, we are interested to see how the participant would respond when the victim is either a woman or a man. To emphasize, we are interested in whether the gender of the victim may influence the bystander's willingness to intervene. We

hypothesized that college students will state they are more likely to intervene in a situation where gender prejudice is present when someone of the same gender is the victim, and less likely to intervene when someone of the opposite gender is the victim of gender prejudice. In other words, women will be more likely to state they will help victims who are women, and men will be more likely to state they will help victims who are men.

Method

Participants

All participants were recruited from students enrolled in psychology courses at a southern university in the United States via sona systems recruitment software. These students received credit in their psychology courses for their participation in the study. The total number of students who participated in the study was 28, with the sample men (14.3%) and women (85.7%). The sample reported being Native American or American Indian (3.6%), Asian/Pacific Islander (3.6%), Black or African American (3.6%), White or Caucasian (42.9%), Hispanic or Latinx (35.7%), Biracial (7.1%), and other (3.6%). Ages of the participants ranged from 18 to 21 ($M = 19.07$, $SD = .94$).

Design

The design of this study is quasi-experimental because we tested for cause and effect without using random assignment due to gender being our subject variable. We examined whether the gender of the victim in a scenario where gender prejudice is present would influence the way the bystander would respond. The design of this study is a within-subject design, because all of the participants were exposed to the same scenarios and were exposed to both men and women victims of gender prejudice. We then compared the responses to each scenario with one another to test our hypothesis.

Stimuli

For this experiment, we used written stimuli, more specifically various scenarios where gender prejudice is depicted. The scenarios were created by the principal investigators through their own experiences with gender prejudice. Each scenario ranged from 3-5 sentences in length. The scenarios depicted situations where either a man or a woman was the victim of gender prejudice and the participant reading the scenario was the bystander in each of the scenarios. The scenarios were phrased to make it seem like the participant was the spectator in each of these situations where gender prejudice was present.

Dependent Measures

The questionnaires in this study were designed to measure how the participant would respond in a situation where gender prejudice was present; they helped to identify if the participant would be more likely to intervene or less likely to intervene in each of our scenarios. We used a Likert scale from 1 indicating “not at all likely” to 7 indicating “extremely likely” to measure how participants would respond to a situation where gender prejudice was present. We had to reverse code one of the questions, because the question was negatively worded and it would have messed up our data. Samples of questions that were used in the study include, *how likely are you to intervene?* and *how likely are you to ignore the situation?* The demographic information questionnaire used in our study asked participants to indicate age, gender, and race/ethnicity. The reason why we collected demographic data is because we were interested in the gender of the participant. More specifically, the demographics helped us determine if there was a relationship between the gender of the participant, and the gender of the person being a victim of gender prejudice.

Procedure

Participants signed up on the Sona Systems website. They were informed ahead of time that they would receive credit for participating in the study. Upon entering the classroom, the participants were greeted, took a seat, and waited for further instruction from the principal investigator. After all the participants arrived, we began the study by asking them to silence their cell phones and told the participants what we would be asking of them to do for the study, and what was included in the study. Next, we distributed the consent forms and waited for the participants to read through it and sign it. After we collected the consent forms, participants were given a packet that included eight scenarios and eight questions for each scenario which measured on a Likert scale. Participants were asked to read through each scenario carefully and then asked to answer the questions that followed each scenario by circling the number that best reflected their beliefs. During this time, the participants were also asked to not place any identifiers such as, names and campus ID numbers, so that their identity was not connected to their survey. After we explained this information, the participants were told to continue on with the questionnaire. Once the participant finished his or her packet, the participant was asked to place their packet in an envelope in order to keep their answers anonymous. After everyone finished, we handed out debriefing forms and went over them with the participants. Once the debriefing form was reviewed, we thanked the participants for their participation in our study.

Results

We were interested in whether the gender of the victim may influence the bystander's willingness to intervene. More specifically, the hypothesis that we tested in this study was that women will be more likely to state they will help victims who are women, and men will be more likely to state they will help victims who are men.

First, we conducted a scale reliability test to see if our questions were correctly measuring the likelihood of the participant to intervene in a situation where gender prejudice was present. The results of the reliability analysis test showed the Cronbach's alpha to be at .90, which means there was confidence in our survey and that the questions were reliable in correctly measuring one's likelihood to intervene in the presented scenarios.

Next, a series of t-tests were used to test our hypothesis. First, we conducted a paired samples t-test to see if there was a significant difference in the likelihood to help victims who were men compared to women; here we were just focused on the gender of the targeted individual. A paired-samples t-test indicated that scores were significantly higher when women were the targeted individual ($M = 4.14, SD = .76$) than when men were the targeted individual ($M = 3.84, SD = .83$), $t(27) = -3.20, p = .003, d = -.60$. This indicates that bystanders were more likely to help a woman target of gender prejudice than a man target of gender prejudice. Secondly, we conducted an independent samples t-test to test our hypothesis that bystanders who were women would be more likely to help victims who were women, and that bystanders who were men would be more likely to help victims who were men. When a man was the targeted victim, an independent samples t-test indicated that scores were not significantly higher for women ($M = 3.87, SD = .83$) than for men ($M = 3.67, SD = 1.00$), $t(26) = .45, p = .655$. This shows that there was no significant difference between the genders of the participant when the target was a man. When a woman was the targeted victim, an independent samples t-test indicated that scores were not significantly higher for women ($M = 4.12, SD = .79$) than for men ($M = 4.28, SD = .58$), $t(26) = -.37, p = .713$. This shows that there was no significant difference between the genders of the participant when the target was a woman. Therefore, we cannot

conclude that women would be more likely to help women and that men would be more likely to help men. Thus, the statistics did not support our hypothesis.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to see how likely or unlikely someone would intervene in a situation where gender prejudice was present based on the gender of the victim. We predicted that college students would state that they were more likely to intervene in a situation where gender prejudice was present when someone of the same gender was the victim, and less likely when someone of the opposite gender was the victim. More specifically, women will more likely state they will help victims who are women and men will be more likely to state they will help victims who are men. With regards to past research, most studies focused solely on women's experiences when it came to gender prejudice, so we included men's experiences too, since their experience with gender prejudice has little to no research examining their experiences.

Our findings suggest that bystanders were more likely to help women who were the targeted victims compared to when men were the targeted victims, but there was no significant difference between the genders of the participant and the gender of the victim. These results did not support our hypothesis; therefore, we could not conclude that women would be more likely to help women and that men would be more likely to help men. The reason why we believed that men would be more inclined to help men is due to the "guycode theory." This theory suggests that there is a "guycode" amongst college-aged men that influences their behavior and how they present themselves in their masculinity, and how they view other men's masculinity (Brinkman et al., 2016). We believed through this phenomenon that men would want to help men when they are being victims of gender prejudice in order to help maintain that masculinity amongst them. The reason why we believed women would be more inclined to help women was due to feminist

activism. Individuals who endorse feminism are more oriented to help women when they are being victims of gender prejudice, because these individuals feel like it is their duty to help one way or another in that kind of situation (Brinkman et al., 2015). Some probable reasons as to why our hypothesis was not supported could be due to the sample size, the male to female ratio of our participants, or that participants simply do not care about the gender of the victim, more so the type of situation or setting.

Some limitations to our study include sample size. We only had a total of 28 participants, and that is nowhere near enough to represent a majority of the population. Another limitation to our study was the male to female ratio of our participants. In total, we had 24 participants who were women and four participants who were men. This low sample size of men cannot represent a whole population because one person's answer can cause the data to be greatly skewed and varied. If we were to do this study again, we would aim for more participants, especially male participants because there is not much research on their experiences with gender prejudice. Our research gives a glimpse of how some men may respond to gender prejudice when men are the victims and when women are the victims. Future researchers should include men's experience in their studies of gender prejudice due to the lack of research on how they react and respond in these situations. Men's experience with gender prejudice is just as important as women's experience with gender prejudice, so hopefully in the future more researchers will be interested to see how gender prejudice may influence the lives of men.

There is still so much research that needs to be done to see how men react to situations where gender prejudice is present. Future research should aim to include men in their studies due to the lack of knowledge regarding men's experiences.

References

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