Gender Roles and Confrontation

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Abstract. Gender role is known to influence male and female behaviors across cultures and social environments. Yet women are less likely to confront in terms of gender roles and identifies potential covariates that influence the subjects' likelihood to confront. We conducted online research with 52 participants from various backgrounds in the United States. The results reveal that the sex of the participants indeed significantly predicts their likelihood to confront, such that women are less likely to confront under most conditions. Besides, the participants verbally insulted by the aggressor are more likely to confront than those nonverbally mistreated. Their views on benevolent sexism and the presence of a companion influence the likelihood to confront. Our findings may benefit sex and gender education at school; promote feminist movements for equality between two sexes in incomes and occupations.

Keywords: gender role · social confrontation · benevolent sexism · hostile sexism

1 Introduction

Along with the social trend of controversies about similarities and differences between sexes, the media and public are captivated by the idea that men are from mars, women are from venus. Thus research arose to suggest gender roles as a prominent contributor to the issue. Eagly and Wood (2012) [1] proposed how the societal stereotype of gender influenced the behavior of men and women. Through social and biosocial approaches, they revealed that people acted under enacted social roles, self-regulation, and others' expectations of gender role standards. For example, women are assumed to be patient, sentimental, and caring, attributing to reproductive activities and domestic tasks of childcare and nursing. Men, in contrast, are expected to be robust, competent, and active to play the provider and protector of the family. The gender role lies in the physical difference between males and females-men's strength and size and women's fertility in particular. Eagly and Wood acquired and reanalyzed data of 37 cultures from Buss's study (Buss, 1989) [2]. They discovered a strong division of labor between male providers and female homemakers. Consequently, the role concepts are not only determinants of male and female behavior but also fall into the bigger picture of social environment and cultures. They also applied their findings to social issues. As more women entered the workplace and male-dominated occupations, gender roles could be altered over time.

Besides, Shek and Yeung (1989) [3] investigated 114 women on the perceptions of themselves, their husbands, males and females in general via Repertory Grid techniques. They found that although women promoted their civil rights and status profoundly during the era, they persisted in the traditional gender role: they remained less politically conscious and powerful and considered family the priority. Shek and Yeung validated the sustaining influence of gender roles in life situations. Other researchers (Cheung et al., 1997) [4] translated the Sex stereotype Measure II, the 30-nation cross-cultural study of William and Best (1982) [5]. He found the concept of gender roles had formed among primary students and enhanced with age, which inspired us to wonder if older people are more ingrained with the idea of gender roles. Furthermore, a series of research on high school adolescents in Hong Kong from Au (1993) [6] and Yau and Luk (1988) [7] implied that gender roles were correlated with the values of the subjects. In our research, we also considered ambivalent sexism as covariates. Ambivalent sexism (Glick and Fiske, 1996) [8] is discrimination against women in both dimensions of hostility and protection. Both intend to maintain patriarchal control and traditional gender roles. People who endorse hostile sexism have negative views toward women violating gender roles. Others support benevolent sexism has positive views toward women following conventional gender roles.

Although these studies above probed into the demonstrations of gender roles on male and female behaviors, they did not cover or examine the influence of the idea on the two genders' decisions and actions within a specific situation of interaction-confrontation. Confrontation refers to a hostile and argumentative situation between the opposing parties. In this study, we design hypothetical scenarios for the participants to imagine themselves as customers in a restaurant, engaging in a conflict with the server. We aim to address whether women are less likely to confront. Under randomly-assigned scenarios of confrontation from Table 1, we hypothesize that in terms of gender roles, women tend to avoid conflicts and resolve the problems low-key rather than voice their concerns. In comparison, we infer men to point out the issue frankly and speak up for themselves. In addition, we manipulate the confrontation type and the gender of the aggressor. Confrontations are categorized into verbal and nonverbal conditions; the aggressor is a waiter or waitress. We measure the participants' demographic information like political stance, age, and hostile and benevolent sexism as potential moderators. The presence of different companions also predicts the eventual outcome- how likely the participants will confront the waiter/waitress.

2 Method

2.1 Participants

We recruited fifty-two participants ($N = 52$) on Amazon Mechanical Turk to complete an internet-based survey, which was edited and published via Qualtrics. The participants were rewarded \$.40 per survey. Their age ranged from 25 to 70 ($M = 44.71$, $SD = 10.05$). 59.6% of the participants were men ($N_{\text{men}} = 30$), slightly outnumbered women. 88.5% of the participants identified themselves as white or caucasian ($N_{\text{white}} = 46$), others reported their ethnicity as African American, Hispanic, and Asian. Education-wise, 84.6% of the participants ($N_{\text{college}} = 46$) acquired some college credits. Their

political orientation was slightly left-winged ($M = 44.35$) but varied greatly ($SD = 28.45$).

2.2 Procedures

On Amazon Mechanical Turk, a survey platform where requesters post work as human intelligence tasks, we set criteria for Master accounts in the United States exclusively. A Master worker has successfully completed a wide range of tasks across abundant requesters. Within seven days, the batch of qualified participants accessed our survey by clicking the Qualtrics link. Once they consented to complete the survey, they initially provided their demographic information. Then they moved on to respond to questions based on hypothetical scenarios- they imagined themselves as customers confronted by the waiter or waitress in a restaurant verbally or nonverbally. We manipulated the confrontation type and the server's gender. There were four scenarios in total. (1) The participant was verbally insulted by a waiter. (2) The participant was nonverbally mistreated by a waiter. (3) The participant was verbally insulted by a waitress. (4) The participants were nonverbally mistreated by a waitress. One of the four scenarios was randomly assigned to the participants to answer the related questions. At the end of the

Table 1. Four scenarios of confrontation (Self-made table)

Independent Variables	Waiter	Waitress
Verbal Confrontation	Over the weekend, you visited a restaurant down the neighborhood. No one greeted you at the front desk, so you made yourself comfortable at a spot by the window. The waiter came over after a few minutes. You ordered a medium-rare cheeseburger with fries. However, it seemed like the waiter barely paid attention to your request. He ended up serving you a burger with pickles and blue cheese sides. You checked the beef patty under the bun: it was still raw-pink and uncooked. You pointed out the mistake. But the waiter was irritated and *refused to modify your order. Instead, he lost patience and verbally insulted you when you required to talk to his manager.*	Over the weekend, you visited a restaurant down the neighborhood. No one greeted you at the front desk, so you made yourself comfortable at a spot by the window. The waiter came over after a few minutes. You ordered a medium-rare cheeseburger with fries. However, it seemed like the waiter barely paid attention to your request. He ended up serving you a burger with pickles and blue cheese sides. You checked the beef patty under the bun: it was still raw-pink and uncooked. You pointed out the mistake, but the waitress was irritated and *refused to modify your order. Instead, she lost patience and verbally insulted you when you required to talk to her manager.*

(continued)

Table 1. (*continued*)

Independent Variables	Waiter	Waitress
Nonverbal Confrontation	Over the weekend, you visited a restaurant down the neighborhood. No one greeted you at the front desk, so you made yourself comfortable at a spot by the window. The waiter came over after a few minutes. You ordered a medium-rare cheeseburger with fries. However, it seemed like the waiter barely paid attention to your request. He ended up serving you a burger with pickles and blue cheese sides. You checked the beef patty under the bun: it was still raw-pink and uncooked. You pointed out the mistake, and the waiter looked irritated. *He changed your order eventually, but refused to look you in the eyes. Later, he just rudely left the cheeseburger in front of you and walked away.*	Over the weekend, you visited a restaurant down the neighborhood. No one greeted you at the front desk, so you made yourself comfortable at a spot by the window. The waiter came over after a few minutes. You ordered a medium-rare cheeseburger with fries. However, it seemed like the waiter barely paid attention to your request. He ended up serving you a burger with pickles and blue cheese sides. You checked the beef patty under the bun: it was still raw-pink and uncooked. You pointed out the mistake, and the waitress looked irritated. *She changed your order eventually, but refused to look you in the eyes. Later, she just rudely left the cheeseburger in front of you and walked away.*

survey, they identified their likelihood to confront across conditions. Then they entered their completion code on Amazon Mechanical Turk to claim their payment.

2.3 Measurement

Hostile and benevolent sexism were measured with the 6-item Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (Glick and Fiske, 1996) [8] on a 5-point Likert scale. The ASI is composed of two 3-item subscales that tap hostile sexism and benevolent sexism. Items are "Most women fail to appreciate all that men do for them", "Women seek to gain power by getting control over men", "Most women interpret innocent remarks or acts as being sexist", "Women should be cherished and protected by men", "Many women have a quality of purity that few men possess", "A good woman ought to be set on a pedestal by her man". The participants were asked to indicate the degree to agree upon the 6 statements from 1 strongly disagree to 5 strongly agree.

The likelihood of confrontation was measured by ten multiple-choice questions. The multiple-choice questions are modified based on the experimental conditions participants are assigned. The participants answered the questions corresponding to their scenarios and indicated their degree of agreement on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 strongly disagree to 5 strongly agree.

3 Results

3.1 Covariates

Besides the fixed factors, we included and analyzed the covariates of the model- the participants' gender, political orientation, and benevolent and hostile sexism. Men and women followed separate gender roles. Left-winged participants were anticipated to promote freedom and progress between the two sexes. In contrast, right-winged participants were deduced to advocate traditional gender roles from their notions of hierarchy and order. Similarly, participants possessed benevolent and hostile sexism viewed women as the secondary sex. Sexism manifested the participants' perceptions of themselves and the possible female aggressor. Hence these covariates tended to effect the participants' likelihood to confront.

3.2 Regression Analysis

We ran the regression model through Microsoft SPSS: server's gender and the confrontation type as the predictor of the participants' likelihood to confront. When the participants were alone in the restaurant, Tables 2 and 3 shows that confrontation type significantly predicts participants' likelihood to confront, such that participants in the verbal condition (M = 4.43, SE = .25) are significantly more likely to confront the waiter/waitress than participants in the nonverbal condition (M = 2.95, SE = .23), B = -1.24, SE = .51, p < .001, $\eta p2$ = .12. Analyses of covariates showed that men are more likely to confront across conditions than women, p = .02, $\eta p2$ = .12. Additionally, people with higher benevolent sexism are more likely to confront across conditions, p = .04, $\eta p2$ = .10.

  When the participants are with a male friend, confrontation type still predicts their likelihood to confront. Tables 2 and 3 shows that the participants in the verbal condition ($M = 4.43$, $SE = .26$) are significantly more likely to confront the waiter/waitress than participants in the nonverbal condition ($M = 3.31$, $SE = .23$), $B = -1.09$, $SE = .53$, $p < .001$, $\eta p^2 = .01$. While the sex of the participants is not significant, it remains marginally relevant, such that men are more likely to confront than women when male friend accompanies them. $p = .05$, $\eta p^2 = .08$. Besides, people with higher benevolent sexism are more likely to confront across conditions, $p = .04$, $\eta p^2 = .09$.

  When participants are with a female friend, confrontation type still predicts their likelihood to confront. Tables 2 and 3 shows that the participants in the verbal condition ($M = 4.30$, $SE = .27$) are significantly more likely to confront the waiter/waitress than participants in the nonverbal condition ($M = 2.97$, $SE = .24$), $B = -.89$, $SE = .55$, $p = .001$, $\eta p^2 = .06$. Analysis of covariates indicates that men are more likely to confront than women when accompanied by a female friend, $p = .03$, $\eta p^2 = .10$. Yet if the participants possess benevolent sexism was not significant any more, $p = .07$, $\eta p^2 = .07$.

  When the participants are with a family member, confrontation type still predicts their likelihood to confront. Tables 2 and 3 shows that the participants in the verbal condition ($M = 4.28$, $SE = .27$) are significantly more likely to confront the waiter/waitress than participants in the nonverbal condition ($M = 2.83$, $SE = .25$), $B = -1.11$, $SE = .56$, $p < .001$, $\eta p^2 = .08$. Analysis of covariates reveals that men are more likely to confront

Table 2. Summary of confrontation type and server's gender predicting likelihood to confront (Self-made table)

Likelihhod to Confront		B	SE	95%CI		p	$R^2/\eta p^2$	F
When Alone	Overall Model	–	–	–	–	.000	.547	7.600
	Constant	1.977	.792	.481	3.473	0″	.139	3.540
	Server's Gender	−.042	.492	−1.033	.949	.933	.000	.653
	Confrontation Type	−.477	.679	−2.273	−.211	<.001	.118	18.910
	Hostile	.266	.150	−.036	.569	.083		
	Benevolent	.297	.138	.020	.575	.036		
	Sex	.851	.342	.162	1.541	.017		
	Political Stance	−.002	−.006	−.015	.010	.713		
With a Male Friend	Overall Model	–	–	–	–	.000	.518	6.754
	Constant	2.423	.765	.881	3.965	.003	.036	5.633
	Server's Gender	−.294	.507	−1.316	.727	.565	.008	2.785
	Confrontation Type	−.606	.700	−2.150	−.024	<.001	.088	15.682
	Hostile	.198	.155	−.114	.509	.208		
	Benevolent	.300	.142	.014	.585	.040		
	Sex	.702	.353	−.009	1.413	.053		
	Political Stance	−.002	−.006	−.015	.011	.803		
With a Female Friend	Overall Model	–	–	–	–	.000	.457	5.290
	Constant	2.157	.796	.552	3.761	.010	.143	5.058
	Server's Gender	.132	.527	−.931	1.195	.803	.001	.672
	Confrontation Type	−.892	.549	−1.998	.214	.001	.057	13.252
	Hostile	.114	.161	−.180	.468	.376		
	Benevolent	.270	.148	−.027	.568	.074		
	Sex	.812	.367	.072	1.552	.032		

(*continued*)

Table 2. (*continued*)

Likelihhod to Confront		B	SE	95%CI		p	$R^2/\eta p^2$	F
	Political Stance	−.002	.007	−.016	.011	.720		
With a Family Member	Overall Model	–	–	–	–	.000	.460	5.356
	Constant	1.977	.819	.327	3.627	.020	.033	3.485
	Server's Gender	.156	.542	−.937	1.249	.774	.002	.233
	Confrontation Type	−1.109	.564	−2.246	.028	<.001	.081	14.907
	Hostile	.202	.165	−.132	.535	.229		
	Benevolent	.243	.152	−.063	.549	.116		
	Sex	.814	.378	.054	1.575	.037		
	Political Stance	.000	.007	−.014	.013	.947		

Note. $N = 52$, B = unstandardized coefficient. SE = standard error of the coefficient. Unless otherwise noted, higher values indicate a greater amount of the construct

Table 3. Estimated Marginal Means for likelihood to confront (Self-made table)

Likelihood to confront	Confrontation type	M	SE	95%CI	
When Alone	Verbal	4.434	.248	3.934	4.935
	Nonverbal	2.954	.226	2.497	3.410
With a Male Friend	Verbal	4.429	.256	3.913	4.945
	Nonverbal	3.309	.234	2.568	3.510
With a Female Friend	Verbal	4.297	.266	3.760	4.834
	Nonverbal	2.968	.243	2.478	3.457
With a Family member	Verbal	4.276	.274	3.724	4.828
	Nonverbal	2.826	.274	2.322	3.329

Note. $N = 52$, M = Estimated marginal means controlling for sex, political orientation, hostile sexism, and benevolent sexism. SE = standard error of the mean

than women when accompanied by a family member, $p = .04$, $\eta p^2 = .010$. Yet if the participants has benevolent sexism is not significant any more, $p = .12$, $\eta p^2 = .06$.

4   Discussions

The data above support our hypothesis that women are less likely to confront. As the aggressor's gender appears irrelevant to the participant's responses, confrontation type plays a significant predictor of the participants' likelihood of confrontation. The results imply when the female participants are alone or accompanied by a female friend or a family member, they are inclined to act aligning with their gender role, which is soft-spoken and kind, to withhold their concerns and compromise. Exceptions arise when a male friend is by their side: the sex of the participants is marginally relevant rather than significant. In this case, the female participants are notably more likely to confront than those in the other three conditions, even if men's likelihood to confront still surpasses the women. Men tended to confront the waiter or waitress straightforwardly under all conditions, corresponding with their gender roles- active and decisive. On the aspect of the confrontation type, the participants react more drastically against the verbal insults compared to the nonverbal, passive-aggressive treatment from the server. As expected, the participants hardly stand explicit demeaning and are irritated by the sudden verbal aggression. On the contrary, passive aggression is unpleasant but less discernable for the participants. Accordingly, their reaction tends to be milder, even overlooking the aggressor's offense. Besides, we presume once the participants are confronted, the gender of the aggressor has minimal influence on their judgment of the encounter.

After holistic analysis of covariates, we discovered participants with higher benevolent sexism are more likely to confront. Intuitively, we perceive the participants endorse benevolent sexism as advocators of traditional gender roles. Though benevolent sexism usually takes the form of well-intentioned compliments and approvals, its discrimination against women by nature. The perceivers affirm women are attributed to their place as dependents. Whereas, it's reasonable for these participants to underpin the belief of gender roles: men should be the ones to confront as a protector and leader. The effect of benevolent sexism is the most significant under the condition participants are alone. Inversely, the endorsement of hostile sexism and political orientation among the participants is not significant across conditions.

Besides, the participants' likelihood of confrontation varies with the presence of different companions. As mentioned above, female participants' likelihood to confront increases with the accompany of a male friend. Perhaps they feel more secure and confident to express themselves and report the issues to the manager when a physically stronger and assertive guy friend backs them up. In contrast, the female participants' likelihood of confrontation does not differ much from when they are alone, as the significance of the sex of the participants is quite similar between the two conditions. They might feel supported by the girlfriend and the advantage of numbers, but they aren't as assured of winning the combat as when a male friend stands their ground. The comparison is a remarkable demonstration of gender roles and masculine discourse. In addition, when the participants have a family member by their side, their reaction shares similarities with the condition they are alone. We presume people behave more carefree and relaxed around their family. They act and talk like themselves before their intimate ones. Hence they either feel supported by their family to confront or obliged to defend their loved ones.

Moreover, we deduce the participants' motivation to follow norms of gender roles is beyond self-regulation or others' expectations of male and female demeanors, but the fear of the consequences after violating gender roles. The male participants may doubt their masculinity if they don't fight back and make the statements; the female participants may risk losing their reputation or relationships with others for acting hostile and unforgiving in an open conflict. As a result, men are more likely to confront than women.

This research sheds deeper insights into the relationship between gender roles and confrontation. We encourage implementing our findings in the education system somehow. Nowadays, sex and gender have been hot-debated under the spotlight of society. Instructional materials like the gender unicorn are devised to identify gender identity, gender expression, and sexuality for transgender students. Similarly, the concept of gender roles could be widely discussed among public schools. If the students comprehend the definition and rationale of gender roles, they may view male and female behavior norms from an objective and tolerant perspective. As gender roles are merely social constructs, men are not restricted from expressing vulnerability and adapting to more communal roles; women are allowed to be ambitious, goal-oriented, and bold-spoken. Under conditions of confrontation, women can voice their concerns and discontent in public, feeling comfortable solving the problems aboveboard under the social environments aware of their needs. Besides, traditional gender roles can be altered through feminist movements over time. Women may be more agentic, attribute equal pay and rights, and compete for leadership roles in the workplace.

However, our research has limitations and crucial factors we fail to incorporate into the results. As we only recruit 52 participants, the sample size is relatively small. We may overlook the effects of the income of the participants. Participants with higher incomes might neglect or react less drastically to the confrontation because the dining expenses do not matter much to their financial status. We may not generalize our findings to diverse ethnic groups due to most of the participants are White. Asian, African American, and Hispanic participants only make up 12.5% of the sample. Cultural differences among the ethnic groups might also intervene in the participants' likelihood of confrontation— for instance, the division between western and eastern values. Generally, Anglo-Saxons and Caucasians are extroverted, individualistic, and inventive. Asians are commonly perceived as reserved, collectivistic, and expertise-seeking. The divergence between mindsets may influence the participants' reaction toward confrontation.

Last but not least, the reasons behind some data remain unclear, requiring further investigation. Firstly, the server's gender fails to predict the participants' likelihood of confrontation. We presume the effect of benevolent sexism should be the strongest when the participants are with a female friend since the male participants may protect their female companions on purpose. However, the effect of benevolent sexism is not significant under this condition. Similarly, we are puzzled when the participants are with a family member; benevolent sexism turns out to be the least significant. Consequently, in the upcoming studies, we endeavor to develop a more accurate model to scrutinize the connection between benevolent sexism and gender roles. Moreover, we anticipate conducting research about transforming gender roles.

5   Conclusions

Past literature introduces the definition of gender roles, exploring its demonstration on people across cultures and social environments. Taking inspiration from these studies, we strive to investigate the effect of gender roles on male and female behaviors in social confrontation, which represents an argumentative and hostile situation between opposing parties. Overall, in this study, we hypothesize women are less likely to confront; and aim to identify the potential moderators influencing their response. We manipulate the confrontation type and the aggressor's gender to predict the participants' likelihood of confrontation. In our survey, the participants imagine themselves as customers in a restaurant. The server, either a waiter or waitress, insults them verbally or mistreats them nonverbally. Their responses based on randomly-assigned scenarios reflect the impact of gender roles to test our hypothesis.

Accordingly, we conduct online research and found data supporting our hypothesis that women are less likely to confront. Besides, the confrontation type significantly predicts the participants' likelihood of confrontation. The participants verbally insulted are more likely to confront the aggressor than those who nonverbally mistreated. The participants endorsing higher benevolent sexism are more likely to confront. The results imply that the participants react according to their gender roles. Exceptions are that female participants are more likely to confront when a male friend accompanies them. Our findings may benefit sex and gender education at school; promote feminist movements for equality between two sexes in incomes and occupations.

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