




RESEARCH ARTICLE

How do disadvantaged groups perceive allies? Women's perceptions of men who confront sexism in an egalitarian or paternalistic way

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Abstract

In this research, we focused on women's perception of men as allies depending on the type of confrontation. We conducted four experimental scenario studies (Study 1 and 2 in a bar setting; Study 3 and 4 in a workplace setting) where a man confronted a sexist comment using either an egalitarian or paternalistic argument. Results showed that women are more likely to perceive egalitarian (vs. paternalistic) confronters as allies (Studies 1–4). This is explained by the fact that they contribute to reducing power asymmetries (decreasing perceived interpersonal power differences: Studies 2 and 4; or increasing women's empowerment: Studies 3 and 4). Furthermore, the egalitarian (vs. paternalistic) confrontation positively impacts interpersonal and intergroup relations, and this is explained by the perception of the confronter as an ally (Studies 1, 2 and 4). We discuss the role of disadvantaged group members' perception of advantaged group members to disentangle the complexity of alliances.

KEYWORDS

ally perception, egalitarian confrontation, empowerment, interpersonal perceived power differences, men as allies, paternalistic confrontation

1 | INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, allies are defined as members of powerful social groups who work to end the system of oppression that affords them privileges and power over others (Broido, 2000; Washington & Evans, 1991).¹ Paradoxically, although advantaged group members can be involved in actions that aid disadvantaged groups, not all of these behaviours

genuinely aim to promote social change (Edwards, 2006; Radke et al., 2020), are equally empowering, are approved of by targets of discrimination or are perceived as helpful (e.g., Cheng et al., 2019; Conley et al., 2002; Ostrove et al., 2009). For instance, men can confront sexism for paternalistic or egalitarian reasons (Estevan-Reina et al., 2021), which have different consequences for women's well-being (Estevan-Reina et al., 2022).

In this research, we examined women's perception of men as allies depending on whether men confronted sexism in an egalitarian way (i.e., arguing that men should fight against gender inequality) or a

¹ Note that the concept of allies can also be used to consider intraminority solidarity (e.g., Burson & Godfrey, 2020; Cortland et al., 2017; Starzyk et al., 2019).

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paternalistic way (i.e., arguing that men should protect and care for women). Furthermore, we examined the reduction of interpersonal power asymmetries (via perceived power difference and empowerment) as an underlying mechanism and we analysed the implications of ally perceptions for interpersonal and intergroup gender relations (social closeness, perceived willingness of the confronter to participate in collective action in solidarity with women and willingness to work with the confronter or to exclude him from the movement).

1.1 | Advantaged group members acting against inequality

Previous research suggests that advantaged group allies can assist in facilitating social change (Mallet et al., 2008; McGarty et al., 2009; Stefaniak et al., 2020; Subašić et al., 2008; van Zomeren et al., 2011). In the context of gender relations, men can play an important role as allies against sexism (Cihangir et al., 2014; Drury & Kaiser, 2014; Subašić et al., 2018). However, the literature has also pointed out that advantaged groups may undermine disadvantaged groups' resistance and consequently reinforce social hierarchies (Saguy et al., 2009; Wright & Lubensky, 2008) if they do not explicitly recognize that the inequality is illegitimate (Becker et al., 2013), provide dependency-oriented help (Nadler, 2002), and/or adopt a leadership position that prevents disadvantaged people from leading their own fight (Droogendyk, Wright, et al., 2016).

To disentangle when advantaged group members promote social change or reinforce social hierarchies, research must consider that advantaged group members involved in actions for disadvantaged groups can have a range of motives (Cheng et al., 2019; Edwards, 2006; Radke et al., 2020). In the context of sexist confrontations, we propose that advantaged group members' behaviours can be motivated by egalitarian or paternalistic reasons. Egalitarian motives are those based on acknowledging the existence of gender inequality and aiming to overcome it, whereas paternalist motives are characterized by benevolence that may perpetuate the status quo (Estevan-Reina et al., 2020; 2021). This is drawn from the literature that reflects on power asymmetries in intergroup relations in general (Jackman, 1994; Nadler, 2002; Shnabel & Nadler, 2008; Wright & Lubensky, 2008) and gender relations in particular (Barreto & Ellemers, 2005; Becker & Wright, 2011; Glick & Fiske, 1996; Good et al., 2018; Jost & Kay, 2005; Shnabel et al., 2016; Radke et al., 2018).

1.2 | Ally perception from the disadvantaged group's perspective

Recently, researchers called for empirical research focused on disadvantaged group members' perceptions of advantaged group members acting as allies and how these perceptions shape evaluations and support for allies (Kutlaca et al., 2020). These evaluations can depend on the group to which potential allies belong (e.g., Major et al., 2013),

the behaviours they perform, and the motivations that trigger them. Disadvantaged group activists more positively evaluate advantaged group allies who are high in trust but low in influence (e.g., they do not have much decision-making power, play a supporter role) than those low in trust and high in influence (Park et al., 2022). Likewise, Black Americans and women were less positive, attributed less effectiveness towards and expressed a lower likeliness to support a speaker who communicated his support for the Black Lives Matter movement or International Women's Day, respectively, in a dominant compared to a neutral way, and these effects were explained because disadvantaged group members perceived that the advantaged group member was trying to take over the movement and make themselves the centre of attention (Radke et al., 2022). Similarly, women evaluated a man who attended a rally to support gender equality less positively and were less willing to work with him for gender equality if he denied his male privilege. This was because women who rated a man who denied his male privilege found him to be less moral (Wiley et al., 2023).

Thus, questioning privileges, avoiding being influential in the movement as well as dominant communication styles and being trustworthy, sincere and moral can be considered aspects that define the perception of an advantaged group member as an ally from a disadvantaged group perspective. We argue that women will define as allies men who endorse pro-equality values, identify as feminists, are aware of their privilege, reflect on traditional masculinity and avoid exerting influence and leadership in the women's movement (Case, 2007; Droogendyk, Wright, et al., 2016; Liss et al., 2001; Nelson et al., 2008; Park et al., 2022; Radke et al., 2022). In the current research, we measure the perception of men as allies considering a comprehensive measure of ally perception. We hypothesized that *women would be more likely to perceive a man who confronts sexism in an egalitarian way as more of an ally than a man who confronts it in a paternalistic way* (Hypothesis 1).

1.3 | Power asymmetries and ally perception from the disadvantaged group's perspective

We propose that the crucial aspect underlying the perception of an advantaged group member as an ally is that the relationship between the disadvantaged group member and the advantaged group member needs to be perceived as symmetric. That is, for women to perceive the man who confronts a sexist comment as an ally, they must perceive the target of the sexist comment and the confronter as equals. Presuming that gender relations are based on power asymmetries (Pratto & Walker, 2004; Yoder & Kahn, 1992) and that social change is achieved when the status and power differences are reduced (Stroebe et al., 2015), we expect that egalitarian (vs. paternalistic) confronters will be perceived as allies because they contribute to reducing perceived power differences at the interpersonal level. Note that this does not preclude acknowledging the existence of power differences between women and men at the intergroup level (which might undermine social change; Dixon et al., 2010; Saguy et al., 2009; Wright & Lubensky, 2008).

Previous reasoning aligns with the literature that shows the benefits of supportive (rather than positive) contact to promote social change (Becker & Wright, 2022; Droogendyk, Louis, et al., 2016; Droogendyk, Wright, et al., 2016). Reducing power asymmetries is related to disadvantaged groups' need to restore their agency through empowerment (see the needs-based model: Shnabel & Nadler, 2015). Feelings of autonomy are facilitated by the experience of being recognized as an equal (equality-based respect; Renger et al., 2017). Women feel more empowered after seeing men confront sexism in an egalitarian rather than in a paternalistic way (Estevan-Reina et al., 2021). The satisfaction of the need for empowerment is associated with greater support for social change among disadvantaged groups (Hässler et al., 2021). We expect that egalitarian (vs. paternalistic) confronters will be perceived as allies because they contribute to increasing disadvantaged group members' empowerment. Thus, we hypothesize that *the reduction of power asymmetries (via decreasing perceived power difference between the target and the confronter or via increasing women's empowerment) would contribute to explaining the effect of type of confrontation (egalitarian or paternalistic) on ally perception* (Hypothesis 2).

1.4 | Implications of ally perception for interpersonal and intergroup relations from the disadvantaged group's perspective

Advantaged group members' behaviours can have important implications for both interpersonal and intergroup relations. For instance, advantaged group members acting against inequalities can contribute to creating safe spaces for disadvantaged groups, leading to more anticipated trust and belonging, and increasing support and respect in an organizational setting (Johnsons & Pietri, 2022; Moser & Branscombe, 2022). Considering the nature of gender relations (where intergroup contact between men and women occurs daily), women might prefer to have closer interpersonal relations with men who confront sexism in an egalitarian (vs. paternalistic) way since it might have more positive consequences for their self-esteem (Chu & Ashburn-Nardo, 2022) and general well-being (Estevan-Reina et al., 2021).

Advantaged group members' actions can also have implications for intergroup relations. Previous theorizing suggests that genuine allyship is characterized by effortful actions and sustained support for the disadvantaged group over time (Radke et al., 2020; Kutlaca & Radke, 2023). Further, advantaged group members acting against inequalities can affect the disadvantaged group's willingness to engage with them in joined collective action (Radke et al., 2022; Wiley et al., 2023) or exclude them from the women's rights movement (Radke et al., 2022). Specifically, we hypothesized that *perceiving the man who confronts sexism in an egalitarian (vs. paternalistic) way as an ally would lead to more willingness to express social closeness, to attribute more collective action intentions in solidarity with women and to express more willingness to work with the confronter and less willingness to exclude him from the movement* (Hypothesis 3).

2 | STUDY 1

In Study 1, our goal was to examine whether women's perceptions of men who confront sexism as allies depend on the type of confrontation (egalitarian vs. paternalistic; Hypothesis 1) and to establish the implications of those for interpersonal (social closeness) and intergroup gender relations (perceived willingness to participate in collective action in solidarity with women) (Hypothesis 3).² For this purpose, we presented a sexist confrontation scenario in which a man confronts another man about a sexist comment made towards a woman using an egalitarian or paternalistic argument. We also included a nonconfrontation control condition. We hypothesized that women would be more likely to perceive the man who confronts sexism in an egalitarian way as more of an ally than those who confront sexism in a paternalistic way (Hypothesis 1a) and to perceive the man who confronts sexism in a paternalistic way as more of an ally than the nonconfronter (Hypothesis 1b). Analogously, we expected the same pattern of results regarding social closeness and the perceived willingness of the confronter to participate in collective action in solidarity with women. Finally, we expected women's perception that the confronter was an ally to mediate the effects of the confrontation type on social closeness (Hypothesis 3a) and the perceived willingness of the confronter to participate in collective action in solidarity with women (Hypothesis 3b). These last hypotheses were preregistered as exploratory³ (see preregistration of Study 1 at <https://osf.io/86ub5>).

2.1 | Method

2.1.1 | Participants

A total of 237 women participated in this study, after removing 14 participants who failed the manipulation check question (this exclusion criterion was preregistered).⁴ The participants' ages ranged from 18 to 51 years, with a mean of 22.63 years ($SD = 5.88$). Most (93.2%) were students from a university in southern Spain, and 90.7% were Spanish citizens.

We conducted a sensitivity analysis using G*Power (Faul et al., 2007) to determine the effect size that the current study could detect. The results showed that with a sample size of 237, with $\alpha = .05$ and $1 - \beta$ (power) = .80, the minimum effect size that we could detect for an ANOVA (analysis of variance) unifactorial analysis with three groups was $f = .203$ ($\eta_p^2 = .040$) and for multiple regression with two tested predictors, $f^2 = .041$ ($R^2 = .039$).

² Note that Hypothesis 2, concerning the mechanisms underlying ally perception, was not tested in Study 1.

³ To simplify the presentation of the hypothesis and to match the hypothesis of each study with the main hypotheses presented in the introduction, we only used numbers to refer to the general hypotheses along the paper. However, some of them can be divided into different hypotheses. For instance, in the preregistration, Hypotheses 2 and 3 (mediation models) appear divided into three different predictions for each dependent variable: the effect of x on m (mean comparisons), the effect of x on y (mean comparisons), and the effect of x on y via m (mediation analyses).

⁴ Most participants completed the manipulation check correctly (96.4% in the egalitarian confrontation condition and 90.5% in the paternalistic confrontation condition).

2.1.2 | Confrontation manipulation

Participants viewed a hypothetical scenario presented in the form of a storyboard in which a man made a sexist comment to a woman (Estevan-Reina et al., 2020, 2021). We asked participants to imagine that they were the targets of the sexist comment. In the first picture, a woman asks two men for a lighter. One man responds to her with a sexist comment: 'Of course, I will lend it to you, pretty, if in return you sleep with me because I don't want to sleep alone tonight'. In the next panel, the woman confronts the perpetrator, labelling his comment as sexist: 'Hey! What's wrong with you? That comment is sexist'. The manipulation occurs in the last panel. In the egalitarian confrontation condition ($n = 81$), a second man confronts the sexist comment, saying, 'I agree with her. I don't think it's fair to treat women like this. Men should fight against inequality'. In the paternalistic confrontation condition ($n = 76$), he says, 'I don't think that it's appropriate to treat women like this. Men should care for and protect women'. In the control condition ($n = 80$), the man witnesses the scene but does not intervene.

2.1.3 | Measures

After being exposed to the manipulation, participants were asked to complete the following measures. Unless otherwise noted, participants were asked to rate each measure on a scale from 1 (*nothing*) to 7 (*a lot*). Demographic variables were included that measured participants' age, nationality, political orientation ($M = 3.12$; $SD = 1.26$ on a bipolar scale from 1 [*extreme left*] to 7 [*extreme right*]) and occupation.

Perception of men as allies of women. We created a scale with 10 items based on the antecedents for being a true ally described in the literature such as endorsing beliefs and attitudes that are pro-equity, identifying with a politicized superordinate group and being aware of their privileges (Case, 2007; Droogendyk, Wright, et al., 2016; Liss et al., 2001; Nelson et al., 2008). Participants rated the extent to which they thought the man (regardless of whether he confronted or not) embodied an ally's features such as commitment to gender equality⁵ (two items; e.g., he might be 'a man who is committed to gender equality'); feminist identification (two items; e.g., 'a man who defines himself as feminist'); privilege awareness (two items; e.g., 'a man who is willing to give up his male privilege'); questioning traditional masculinity (two items; e.g., 'a man who questions traditional masculinity'); intergroup alliance (one item: 'an ally of women in fighting inequality') and recognizing his secondary position in the movement (one item: 'a man who understands that men should not be protagonists in the fight against gender inequality'). After removing three items with corrected item-scale correlations lower than .40 (this exclusion criterion was pre-

registered), we averaged the remaining seven items to create a single scale, with higher scores indicating a higher likeliness to perceive the confronter as an ally ($\alpha = .93$). We conducted a factorial analysis to test construct dimensionality. A principal components factor analysis with oblimin rotation confirmed the one-dimensionality of the construct, extracting a single factor with eigenvalues larger than one explaining 72.24% of the variance (loadings 0.92–0.72).

Perceived willingness of the confronter to participate in collective action in solidarity with women. We translated the four items used by Radke et al. (2018) to measure feminist collective actions into Spanish. However, in this case, we used them to ask women about the extent to which they thought that the bystander would be willing to participate in such actions (e.g., 'He will protest against sexism'). In addition, we created four additional items to capture the extent to which participants thought that the confronter would participate in actions challenging male privilege and promoting a more equal power redistribution between men and women (e.g., 'He will engage in an equal distribution of domestic tasks'). A principal component factor analysis with oblimin rotation that included the eight items, revealed a unidimensional structure, accounting for 74.08% of the variance. Therefore, we averaged all items as a single measure. Higher scores indicate a higher perceived willingness of the confronter to participate in collective action in solidarity with women ($\alpha = .95$).

Social closeness. Based on the social distance items used by Zaal et al. (2017; adapted from Skitka et al., 2005), we constructed five items to assess social closeness with the male confronter. Participants indicated a 7-point scale that ranged from 1 (*nothing*) to 7 (*a lot*) the extent to which they wanted the confronter to play several roles in their lives (neighbour, coworker or colleague, family member, friend and romantic partner).⁶ Items were averaged so that higher scores indicate more desire for social closeness with the confronter ($\alpha = .98$).

Manipulation check. We asked participants to remember the social interactions described in the vignettes and select the option that best summarized them. We offered four possible options, three of which summarized the content of each experimental condition and one 'I don't remember' option.

Extra measures can be found in the [Supporting Information](#).

2.1.4 | Procedure

We asked students from various undergraduate psychology courses to participate in a 10-min paper-and-pencil survey for which they received extra credit points. We also approached people who were studying in the university library to ask for their participation; in this case, when they finished, we offered them a chocolate bar to thank them for their participation. In all studies, the participants gave their informed consent to participate in the research.

⁵ Note that there is a potential overlap between our egalitarian confrontation condition and this element of ally perception in Studies 1–3. To overcome this problem, we ran all the analyses excluding these items and obtained the same results in all the studies irrespective of whether we retained or excluded this element. We decided to keep it to be consistent with the construct definition.

⁶ We decided to exclude the romantic partner item as it can be difficult to interpret for LGTIQ+ women. The results are quite similar regardless of whether this item was included or not.

TABLE 1 Correlations for Study 1 (above diagonal) and Study 2 (below diagonal).

	1	2	3	4
(1) Ally perception		.83**	.86**	-
(2) Social closeness	.86**		.82**	-
(3) Perceived willingness for man's collective action in solidarity with women	.88**	.84**		-
(4) Interpersonal perceived power difference	-.67**	-.69**	-.67**	

* $p < 0.05$.** $p < 0.01$.

2.2 | Results

Correlations among the main variables can be found in Table 1.⁷

2.2.1 | Ally perception, social closeness, and the perceived willingness of the man to participate in collective action in solidarity with women

We conducted a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) to test the effects of the confrontation type (egalitarian confrontation vs. paternalistic confrontation vs. no confrontation) on women's perceptions of the man as an ally, desired social closeness, and the perceived willingness of the confronter to participate in collective action in solidarity with women, Wilks's $\Lambda = .343$, $F(6, 464) = 54.65$, $p < .000$, $\eta_p^2 = .414$. As expected, a significant effect of condition emerged for the perception of confronters as allies, $F(2, 234) = 155.82$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .571$, 95% confidence interval (CI) [0.49, 0.63]; social closeness, $F(2, 234) = 205.07$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .637$, 95% CI [0.56, 0.69]; and collective action in solidarity with women, $F(2, 234) = 114.52$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .495$, 95% CI [0.40, 0.56]. The post hoc analysis (Sidak) revealed significant differences among the three experimental conditions for each dependent variable (all $ps < .001$). Our results supported Hypothesis 1a: women perceived the egalitarian confronter as more of an ally ($M = 4.84$, $SE = 0.13$) than the paternalistic confronter ($M = 3.17$, $SE = 0.13$); and Hypothesis 1b: they perceived the paternalistic confronter as more of an ally than the non-confronter ($M = 1.64$, $SE = 0.13$). Our results also showed that women expressed more social closeness

⁷ Due to high bivariate correlations observed among the main variables of our studies, we conducted exploratory factor analyses in Study 1 and confirmatory factor analyses in Studies 2 and 4 to confirm that the DVs are different enough and load in different factors. Exploratory factor analyses in Study 1 broadly confirmed the existence of the three expected factors. A maximum likelihood factor analysis with oblimin rotation confirmed the three expected factors with eigenvalues larger than .30, explaining 76.40% of the variance (29.7% first factor; 26.9% second factor; 19.9% third factor) with factor loadings 0.97–0.32. Fit indices of confirmatory factor analyses in Study 2 were acceptable, confirming the four expected factors (Comparative Fit Index = .94, Tucker-Lewis Index = .93, Standardized Root Mean Square Residual = .04, Root Mean Square Error of Approximation = .09). (See more details about factorial analyses in the Supporting Information.)

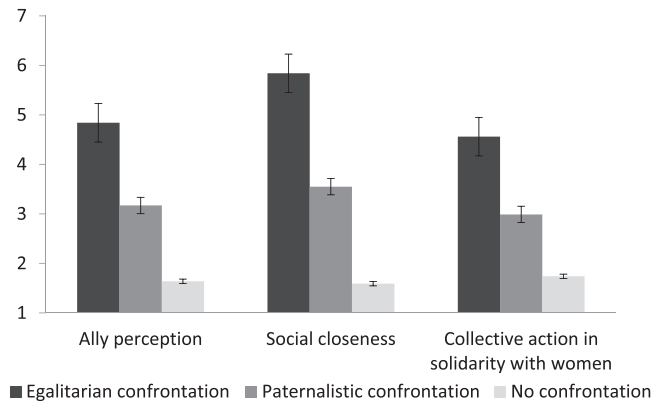


FIGURE 1 Women's perception of men as allies, social closeness and the perceived willingness of the man to participate in collective action in solidarity with women as a function of his response to the sexist comment (Study 1).

with the egalitarian confronter ($M = 5.84$, $SE = 0.15$) than the paternalistic confronter ($M = 3.55$, $SE = 0.15$) and expressed the least social closeness with the non-confronter ($M = 1.59$, $SE = 0.15$). Similarly, participants perceived that the egalitarian confronter had a higher willingness to participate in collective action in solidarity with women ($M = 4.56$, $SE = 0.13$) than the paternalistic confronter ($M = 2.99$, $SE = 0.14$), and they perceived the least willingness to participate in collective action in solidarity with women by the nonconfronter ($M = 1.74$, $SE = 0.13$) (see Figure 1). Controlling for political orientation does not change the results.⁸

2.2.2 | Implications of ally perception on social closeness and the perceived willingness of the man to participate in collective action in solidarity with women

To determine whether ally perceptions mediated the relationship between confrontation type and social closeness on the perceived willingness of the confronter to participate in collective action in solidarity with women, we conducted two mediational analyses with the PROCESS macro (PROCESS Model 4; Hayes, 2013) using 5000 bootstrap samples to estimate bias-corrected standard errors and 95% percentile confidence intervals⁹ (See Figure 2). We created two contrast variables. In Contrast 1, we compared the egalitarian confrontation (coded 1) with the paternalistic confrontation (coded -1); the no confrontation was coded 0. In Contrast 2, we compared the confrontation (egalitarian: coded 1; paternalistic: coded 1) and the no confrontation (coded -2). The analyses were conducted including Contrast 1 as the main predictor and Contrast 2 as a control variable (analyses

⁸ In all the studies, we ran the analyses twice: once without covariates and once including political orientation as a covariate. In no case did the results change when we controlled for political orientation.

⁹ Throughout the paper whenever we carry out a mediation analysis, we will use the same criteria in relation to bootstrap and confidence intervals.

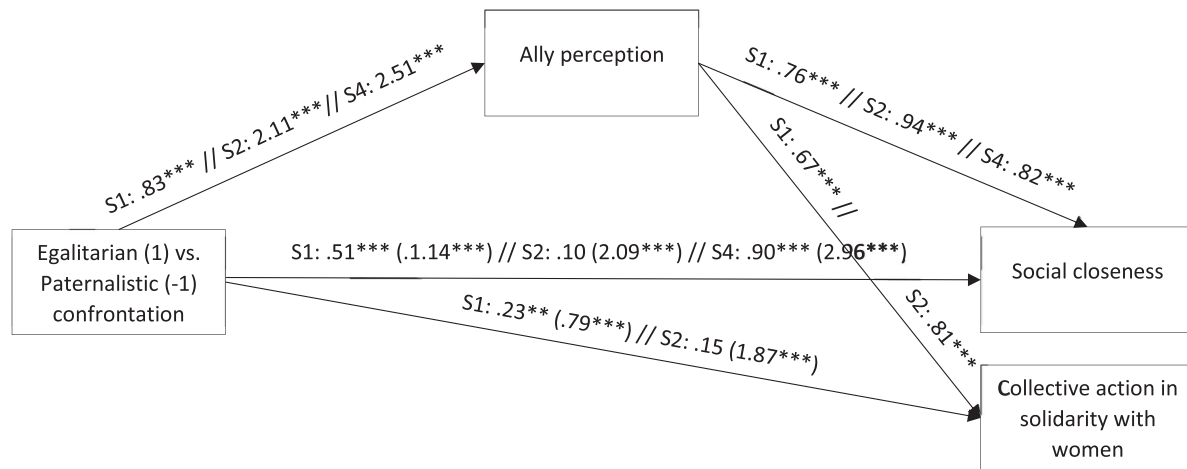


FIGURE 2 Effect of the type of confrontation on social closeness and the perceived willingness of the confronter to participate in collective action in solidarity with women via ally perception (Studies 1, 2 and 4).

with Contrast 2 as the main predictor can be found in the Supporting Information).

The total effect of Contrast 1 (egalitarian vs. paternalistic confrontation) on social closeness was significant as well as the indirect effect via ally perception, $b = .63$, 95% CI [0.47, 0.82]. The direct effect was reduced but remained significant when the mediator was included. The total effect of Contrast 1 (egalitarian vs. paternalistic confrontation) on the perceived willingness of the confronter to participate in collective action in solidarity with women was significant as well as the indirect effect via ally perception, $b = .56$, 95% CI [0.40, 0.75]. The direct effect was reduced but remained significant when the mediator was included. These results supported Hypotheses 3a and 3b, indicating that one of the reasons why women express greater social closeness and perceive the confronter to be more willing to participate in collective action in solidarity with women in the egalitarian (vs. paternalistic) confrontation condition is because they perceived the egalitarian confronter as more of an ally.

2.3 | Discussion

These results confirmed that women perceived men who confronted sexism in an egalitarian way as more likely to be allies than those who confronted it in a paternalistic way. These findings are consistent with those of Wiley and Dunne (2019), who found that feminist men who offer autonomy-oriented help were perceived as better allies than those who offer dependency-oriented help. However, our research goes two steps further by analysing the implications of ally perception at the interpersonal (social closeness) and intergroup (perceived willingness of the confronter to participate in collective action in solidarity with women) levels and comparing the two types of confrontation with an additional control condition in which a male bystander does not confront sexism. In this regard, our results show that women perceive men who confront sexism in a paternalistic way as more likely to be allies, express more social closeness with such men and perceive these

men as more willing to participate in collective action in solidarity with women than men who do not confront sexism at all. The interpersonal and intergroup implications of ally perception are related to the two dimensions that define allies from the disadvantaged group's perspective (Brown & Ostrove, 2013): orientation towards relations offering interpersonal support (social closeness) and orientation towards social justice offering intergroup commitment (perceived willingness of the confronter to participate in collective action in solidarity with women).

The remaining question is why women perceive men who confront sexism in an egalitarian way as better allies than paternalistic ones. To promote social change, status and power relations between groups must be reduced (Nadler, 2002; Stroebe et al., 2015). In Study 2, we aimed to replicate Study 1's findings and examined the role of interpersonal perceived power differences between targets and confronters as a possible mechanism involved in women's perception of men as allies.

3 | STUDY 2

In Study 2, we aimed to replicate the main findings of Study 1 (Hypotheses 1 and 3) and we wanted to go a step further by examining the interpersonal perceived power difference between the confronter and the target as a mechanism that explains why women perceive men who confront sexism in an egalitarian way as more likely to be an ally than those who confront it in a paternalistic way. Following the idea that social equality becomes closer when status and power differences are reduced (Stroebe et al., 2015), and allies interested in improving disadvantaged groups' status (Radke et al., 2020) should empower them (Estevan-Reina et al., 2021; Shnabel & Nadler, 2008), we hypothesized that the perception of lower power differences between the target and confronter would explain why men who confront sexism in an egalitarian way were more likely to be perceived as allies than those who confront it in a paternalistic way (Hypothesis 2). We also tested whether the main effect of confrontation on the main variables was influenced by whether the target woman herself confronted the

comment before the man did so. A 'true ally' might not take centre stage but wait and see whether the woman said something (Droogendyk, Wright, et al., 2016; Radke et al., 2021) (see the preregistration of Study 2 at <https://osf.io/9xj5s>).

3.1 | Method

3.1.1 | Participants

A total of 340 valid cases were recruited after excluding 12 participants for taking less than 5 min or more than 2 h to complete the study (this exclusion criterion was preregistered) and 33 participants for failing the manipulation check question.¹⁰ The participants' ages ranged from 18 to 57 years, with a mean of 22.73 years ($SD = 4.50$). Most (90.9%) were students from a university in southern Spain, and 91.5% were Spanish citizens.

We conducted a sensitivity analysis using G*Power (Faul et al., 2007) to determine the effect size that the current study could detect. The results showed that with a sample size of 340, with $\alpha = .05$ and $1 - \beta$ (power) = .80, the minimum effect size that we could detect for an ANOVA unifactorial analysis was $f = .152$ ($\eta_p^2 = .023$) and for multiple regression with four tested predictor, $f^2 = .036$ ($R^2 = .035$).

3.1.2 | Confrontation manipulation

We used a similar methodology to the one followed in Study 1 but excluded the control condition. In this study, we manipulated not only the man's confrontation type (egalitarian [$n = 176$] vs. paternalistic [$n = 164$]) but also whether the woman confronted the sexism first (target's confrontation: present [$n = 175$] vs. absent [$n = 165$]). The first two panels were the same as those used in Study 1: a woman asks for a lighter, and a man responds with a sexist comment. In the experimental conditions in which the woman confronts the sexism first, the third picture panel was the same as in Study 1 (the woman confronts the man's comment, labelling it as sexist), whereas in the condition in which the woman does not confront it, this panel was excluded. Next, the male bystander confronts the sexist comment in an egalitarian or paternalistic way, saying, '[I agree with her] that the comment is sexist/rude. I don't think that it's fair/appropriate to treat women like this. Men should fight against gender inequality/take care of and protect women'. In the condition in which the woman did not confront the sexist comment, the male confrontation took place immediately after the sexist comment and did not include the words in brackets.

¹⁰ We forgot to pre-register this exclusion criterion in the preregistration but decided to apply it to remain consistent with Study 1. The results were the same regardless of these participants' inclusion or exclusion. As in Study 1, most of the participants selected the manipulation check correctly (90.7% in the egalitarian confrontation condition and 91.6% in the paternalistic confrontation condition, regardless of whether the woman confronted the sexism or not).

3.1.3 | Measures

Interpersonal perceived power difference. We created three declarative items to assess participants' perceived power difference between the target and the confronter ('The man is adopting a powerful/superiority/privileged position regarding women'). We asked participants to what extent they agreed with these items (from 1: *totally disagree*; to 7: *totally agree*). Items were averaged so that higher scores indicate more perceived power between the target and the confronter ($\alpha = .94$).

Manipulation check. To check that participants attended to the manipulation, we asked them at the end of the survey to remember the social interaction described in the vignettes and select the option that best summarized it. We offered five possible options, one for each experimental condition and one additional option in case they did not clearly remember what they had read previously.

We measured political orientation (single item: $M = 2.73$; $SD = 1.21$), perception of men as allies of women (seven items; $\alpha = .94$), social closeness (four items; $\alpha = .97$) and the perceived willingness of the confronter to participate in collective action in solidarity with women (eight items; $\alpha = .96$), including the same items as in Study 1. Extra measures can be found in the [Supporting Information](#).

3.1.4 | Procedure

We distributed the link to the online survey using the students' distribution list of the university. First, participants completed demographic variables, then they read the storyboard scenarios, and later we asked them to respond to the motivations scale and perceived interpersonal power differences between the target and confronter items. Finally, they completed the same measures included in Study 1. When participants finished the survey, they were debriefed and offered the opportunity to take part in a lottery for 50 euros or to gain course credits (if they attended certain undergraduate courses) to thank them for their participation.

3.2 | Results

Correlations among the main variables can be found in Table 1.

3.2.1 | Ally perception, social closeness, and the perceived willingness of the confronter to participate in collective action in solidarity with women

We conducted a 2 (type of confrontation: egalitarian vs. paternalistic) \times 2 (target's confrontation: present vs. absent) MANOVA to analyse the effect of experimental conditions on women's perception of confronters as allies, social closeness and the perceived willingness of the confronter to participate in collective action in solidarity with

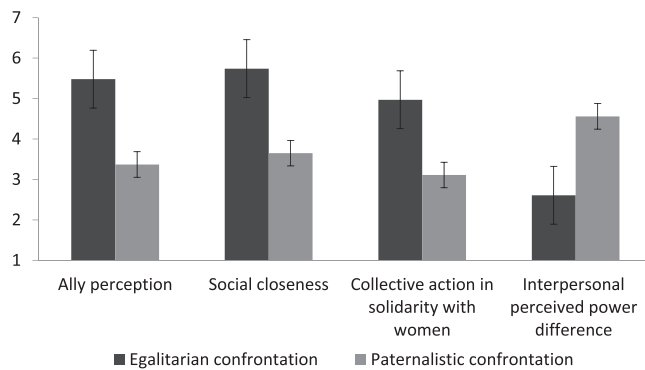


FIGURE 3 Women's perception of male confronters as allies, social closeness, perceived willingness of the confronter to participate in collective action in solidarity with women and interpersonal perceived power difference as a function of the type of confrontation (Study 2).

women, Wilks' $\Lambda = .633$, $F(3, 334) = 64.54$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .367$. As in Study 1, the effect of the type of confrontation emerged on the perception of allies, $F(1, 336) = 191.88$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .363$, 95% CI [0.28, 0.43]; social closeness, $F(1, 336) = 134.35$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .286$, 95% CI [0.21, 0.36]; and in collective action in solidarity with women, $F(1, 336) = 151.52$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .311$, 95% CI [0.23, 0.38]. As can be seen in Figure 3, women perceived the egalitarian confronter as more of an ally ($M = 5.48$, $SE = 0.11$) than the paternalistic confronter ($M = 3.37$, $SE = 0.11$). Thus, Hypotheses 1 was supported. Congruently, women expressed more social closeness with the egalitarian confronter ($M = 5.74$, $SE = 0.12$) than the paternalistic confronter ($M = 3.65$, $SE = 0.13$). Finally, participants perceived the egalitarian confronter as being more willing to participate in collective action in solidarity with women ($M = 4.97$, $SE = 0.10$) than the paternalistic confronter ($M = 3.11$, $SE = 0.11$). Neither a multivariate nor univariate effect of target confrontation (present vs. absent) nor its interaction with the type of confrontation (egalitarian vs. paternalistic) was significant for any dependent variable (all F s < 3.08 , $p > .08$).

3.2.2 | Interpersonal perceived power difference

We conducted an ANOVA to test if the type of confrontation affected the interpersonal perceived power differences between the target and the confronter. We found significant differences as a function of the type of confrontation, $F(1, 335) = 103.99$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .237$. As can be seen in Figure 3, participants perceived a lower power difference between the target and the confronter after the egalitarian confrontation ($M = 2.61$, $SE = 0.13$) than after the paternalistic confrontation ($M = 4.55$, $SE = 0.14$). Again, neither the effects of target confrontation (present vs. absent) nor their interaction with the type of confrontation (egalitarian vs. paternalistic) was significant (F s < 0.52 , p s $> .46$).

3.2.3 | Interpersonal perceived power difference as the mechanism underlying ally perception

We conducted a simple¹¹ mediation model (PROCESS Model 4; Hayes, 2013) to analyse whether the perceived power difference between the target and confronter explained the relationship between the type of confrontation and perception of the confronter as an ally (see Figure 4). Egalitarian confrontation was coded as 1 and paternalistic confrontation was coded as -1 . In this and the rest of the mediational analyses of Study 2, we included the experimental manipulation of target confrontation (present: coded as 1; vs. absent: coded as -1) as well as the interaction between the type of confrontation (egalitarian vs. paternalistic) \times target's confrontation (present vs. absent) as covariates in the analyses. The total effect of the type of confrontation (egalitarian vs. paternalistic) on ally perception was significant as well as the indirect effect via interpersonal perceived power difference, $b = .43$, 95% CI [0.33, 0.54]. The direct effect was reduced but remained significant when the mediator was included. This result shows that women perceived the man who confronted sexism in an egalitarian (vs. paternalistic) way as more of an ally because they perceived a lower power difference between the target and the confronter, supporting Hypothesis 2.

3.2.4 | Implications of ally perception on social closeness and the perceived willingness of the confronter to participate in collective action in solidarity with women

We used two simple mediational models (PROCESS Model 4; Hayes, 2013) to test whether the perception of confronters as allies mediated the relationship between the type of confrontation and women's social closeness towards confronters and on the perceived willingness of the confronter to participate in collective action in solidarity with women (see Figure 2). The total effect of the type of confrontation (egalitarian vs. paternalistic) on social closeness was significant as well as the indirect effect via ally perception, $b = 1.00$, 95% CI [0.82, 1.17]. The direct effect became non-significant when the mediator was included. The total effect of the type of confrontation (egalitarian vs. paternalistic) on the perceived willingness of the confronter to participate in collective action in solidarity with women was significant as well as the indirect effect via ally perception $b = .86$, 95% CI [0.73, 1.00]. The direct effect became non-significant when the mediator was included. These results confirmed hypotheses 3a and 3b, replicating the findings of Study 1.

¹¹ We preregistered a parallel mediation model including egalitarian and paternalistic motivations attributed to the confronter as potential mediators beyond perceived power differences between the target and the confronter. In responding to a reviewer's comments, we decided to remove motivations from these analyses. This change helps to make the contribution of our research clearer and to reduce the overlap between some of our variables. However, the results of our preregistered analyses can be found in the OSF (<https://osf.io/2xfjy>).

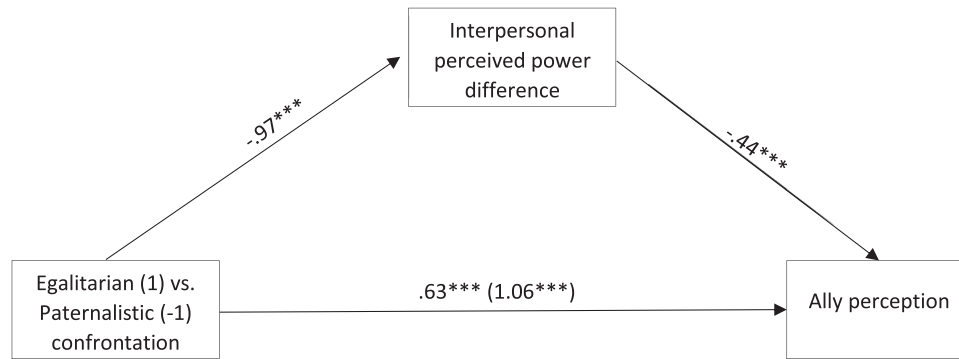


FIGURE 4 Effect of the type of confrontation on ally perception via interpersonal perceived power difference (Study 2).

3.3 | Discussion

The results of Study 2 replicated those of Study 1 and deepened our knowledge about the mechanisms underlying ally perception from the disadvantaged group's perspective. They highlighted that one of the reasons why men who confront sexism in an egalitarian rather than in a paternalistic way are more likely to be perceived as being allies is that women perceive a lower interpersonal power difference with them. This is in line with the idea that to promote social change, advantaged group allies should aim to reduce the power imbalance with disadvantaged groups (e.g., providing autonomy-oriented help; Nadler, 2002; supportive contact; Droogendyk, Louis, et al., 2016; or empowerment: Estevan-Reina et al., 2021) without precluding the acknowledgment of intergroup power differences necessary for social change.

Contrary to our expectations, with this experimental paradigm, it seems like women's perceptions of male confronters as allies are independent of whether they wait for the target to confront sexism in the first place. Future research should further examine the impact of men taking the lead in sexism confrontation as other works highlight the danger of allies taking over spaces in collective action and activism (Droogendyk, Wright, et al., 2016; Park et al., 2022).

Studies 1 and 2 were conducted within the context of a sexual harassment episode in a bar and with a university student sample. To check whether these results generalize to other populations and contexts, we conducted a third study in a different setting (i.e., workplace) and with a general sample of women with work experience. We go one step further by exploring whether women's empowerment after male egalitarian (vs. paternalistic) confrontation explains ally perception, which has not been directly tested in previous studies.

4 | STUDY 3

In Study 3, we aimed to test whether the key findings of previous studies would be replicated in the workplace with a sample of female workers. We decided to frame the confrontation scenario in the workplace because it represents a setting where discrimination towards women

in the form of unwanted sexual attention can also happen (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2018; Stokes et al., 1995; Ilies et al., 2003), so working women would identify more with it. Furthermore, recent research has shown that allies in organizational environments can create safe spaces for disadvantaged groups (Johnson & Pietri, 2022), reducing workplace hostility and increasing support, respect and gender-equality norms for women (Moser & Branscombe, 2022). Additionally, the workplace is a more controlled context, where specific organizational training can be developed to encourage prejudice confrontation to fight against discrimination (Ashburn-Nardo et al., 2008). Thus, this new context might allow us not only to improve the generalizability of our results to different contexts but also to develop materials that might be used in future interventions. We hypothesized that female workers exposed to an imaginary sexist episode in the workplace would also perceive a male coworker who confronted the situation in an egalitarian way as more of an ally (Hypothesis 1) than one who confronted in a paternalistic way. Furthermore, we explored the possibility that the women's empowerment after the confrontation would explain the perception of the confronter as an ally (Hypothesis 2)¹² (see preregistration Study 3 at <https://osf.io/wea53>).

4.1 | Method

4.1.1 | Participants

A total of 127 participants took part in the study after excluding 20 participants who failed the manipulation check,¹³ four people under 18 years old, and two more without work experience (these exclusion criteria were preregistered). The participants' ages ranged from 20 to

¹² Hypothesis 2 in the corresponding preregistration was described as exploratory. The extra hypothesis included in this preregistration (<https://osf.io/wea53>) can be found in the Supporting information <https://osf.io/63dwy>

¹³ As in previous studies, most of the participants selected the manipulation check correctly (85.9% in the egalitarian confrontation condition and 86.8% in the paternalistic confrontation condition).

70 years, with a mean of 42.46 years ($SD = 13.25$). Most (87.4%) were Spanish citizens. We conducted a sensitivity analysis using G*Power (Faul et al., 2007) to determine the effect size that the current study could detect. The results showed that with a sample size of 127, with $\alpha = .05$ and $1 - \beta$ (power) = .80, the minimum effect size that we could detect for an ANOVA unifactorial analysis with two groups was $f = .250$ ($\eta_p^2 = .059$) and for multiple regression with two tested predictors, $f^2 = .089$ ($R^2 = .082$).

4.1.2 | Confrontation manipulation

We used a similar methodology to that followed in previous studies but in this case, the content framing of the sexist comment was different. We represent a situation in the workplace in which a woman says that she would like to share with her coworkers some ideas she has for the current project that they are working on. One of the coworkers insinuates that this is male work and adds that she is not in her position because of her ideas. Finally, another coworker confronts the sexist comment. As in previous studies, in the egalitarian confrontation condition ($n = 67$) the confronter argues that the comment is sexist, that it is not fair to treat women like that, and that men should fight against gender inequality. In addition, he adds that surely, she also has interesting ideas to contribute to the project. In the paternalistic confrontation condition ($n = 60$), the confronter says that the comment is rude, that it is inappropriate to treat women like that and that men should take care and protect women. Finally, he adds that women have a special sensitivity that can be useful in the project. The participants were randomly assigned to the two experimental conditions.

4.1.3 | Measures

We measured participants' political orientation (single item: $M = 2.42$; $SD = 1.06$), and perception of men as allies of women (seven items; $\alpha = .94$) with the same items used in previous studies. Just after the manipulation we measured women's empowerment. We asked participants how they would feel after the male confrontation. It was evaluated through eight items (e.g., 'powerful', 'empowered', 'weak'), adapted from Moya-Garófano et al. (2021). The scale ranges from 0 (nothing) to 10 (very much). Items designed to measure low empowerment were reversed and a total score was calculated, with higher scores indicating greater empowerment ($\alpha = .87$). Finally, as in previous studies, participants responded to the manipulation check, in which we asked them at the end of the survey to remember the social interaction described in the vignettes and select the option that best summarized it. We offered three possible options, one for each experimental condition and one additional option in case they did not clearly remember what they had read previously. Extra measures can be found in the Supporting information (supinfo1).

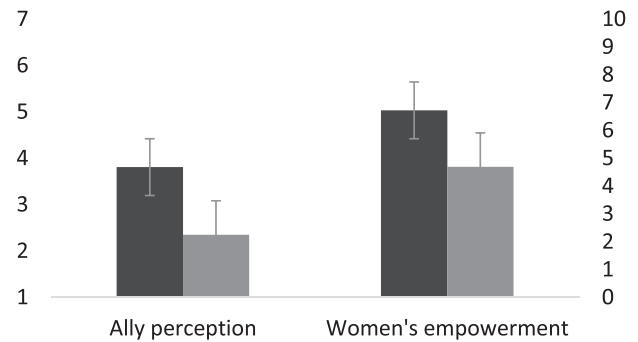


FIGURE 5 Women's perception of men confronters as allies and empowerment as a function of the type of confrontation (Study 3).

4.1.4 | Procedure

We distributed the link to the online survey through social media. First, participants completed demographic variables, then they read the storyboard scenarios, and later we asked them to respond to the measures described previously. When participants finished the survey, they were debriefed and thanked for their participation.

4.2 | Results

4.2.1 | Ally perception and women's empowerment

The correlation between ally perception and women's empowerment was positive ($r = .47$). We conducted a MANOVA to test the effects of the confrontation type (egalitarian vs. paternalistic confrontation) on women's perception of confronters as allies and women's empowerment. Wilks' $\Lambda = .567$, $F(2, 119) = 45.35$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .433$. The effect of the type of confrontation emerged on the perception of allies, $F(1, 120) = 86.42$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .419$, 95% CI [0.29, 0.52], and empowerment, $F(1, 120) = 24.16$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .168$, 95% CI [0.06, 0.28]. As can be seen in Figure 5, women perceived the confronter to be more of an ally ($M = 4.68$, $SE = 0.18$) after the egalitarian confrontation than the paternalistic confrontation ($M = 2.25$, $SE = 0.19$). Thus, Hypothesis 1 was also supported in a different context (workplace) and with a different sample (worker women). Furthermore, women reported more empowerment after the egalitarian confrontation ($M = 6.72$, $SE = 0.28$) than after the paternalistic confrontation ($M = 4.69$, $SE = 0.30$).

4.2.2 | Women's empowerment as the mechanism underlying ally perception

We conducted a simple mediation model (PROCESS Model 4; Hayes, 2013) to analyse whether women's empowerment after male confrontation explained the relationship between the type of confrontation and ally perception (see Figure 6). The total effect of the type of confrontation (egalitarian vs. paternalistic) on ally perception was

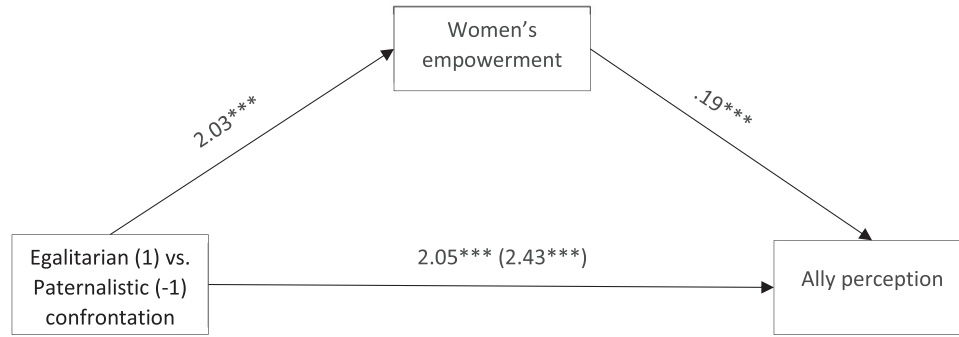


FIGURE 6 Effect of the type of confrontation on ally perception via women's empowerment (Study 3).

significant as well as the indirect effect via empowerment, $b = .38$, 95% CI [0.14, 0.67]. The direct effect was reduced but still significant when the mediator was included. This result supported Hypothesis 2 (exploratory hypothesis), showing that women perceived the man who confronted sexism in an egalitarian way as more of an ally because that type of confrontation empowers them.

4.3 | Discussion

These results replicated previous findings, showing that, in an employment context, female workers also perceived men who confront sexism in an egalitarian way as more of an ally. They also showed that for women, it is important to feel empowered when it comes to considering men who confront sexism as allies. Thus, the results highlight that empowerment is a cornerstone in alliance processes not only because it is a need of disadvantaged groups that restores their agency and encourages them to promote social change (Estevan-Reina et al., 2021; Hässler et al., 2021) but also because it can guide the perception of advantaged group members involved in fighting inequality as allies (see the needs-based model of reconciliation: Shnabel & Nadler, 2015) which can influence interpersonal and intergroup relations (see Study 1 and Study 2 results).

However, Study 3 evaluated women's empowerment but not perceived power differences between the target and confronter. We conducted one last study to test both processes at the same time to address some methodological limitations to avoid potential overlaps between the manipulation and the measure of ally perception and to evaluate the specific implications for intergroup relations.

5 | STUDY 4

Women's empowerment and perceived power differences between the target and confronter can be understood as two different conceptualizations of power asymmetries. For this reason, in Study 4 we planned to test both processes at the same time. Besides, we used an improved measure of ally perception to capture important aspects of being an ally proposed by recent literature (Park et al., 2022; Radke et al., 2022; Wiley et al., 2023) and to reduce the overlap among the

variables included in the study. We also modified the scenarios to reduce the impact of potential confounding variables and decided to test our hypotheses (Hypotheses 1–3) in a general population sample to overcome the limitations of convenience samples. Furthermore, we planned to measure the impact of the type of confrontation on intergroup relations, both directly and indirectly via power asymmetries, using a more specific operationalization of intergroup relations. Based on the recent literature, we evaluated the willingness of women to work with or exclude the confronter from the movement to fight for gender equality (Radke et al., 2022; Wiley et al., 2023) (see preregistration of Study 4 at <https://osf.io/wfpty>).

5.1 | Method

5.1.1 | Participants

A total of 306 women took part in the study after excluding 25 who failed the manipulation check (this exclusion criterion was preregistered).¹⁴ The participants' ages ranged from 18 to 65 years, with a mean of 42.29 years ($SD = 12.00$). Most (95.8%) were Spanish citizens. We conducted a sensitivity analysis using G*Power (Faul et al., 2007) to determine the effect size that the current study could detect. The results showed that with a sample size of 306, with $\alpha = .05$ and $1 - \beta$ (power) = .80, the minimum effect size that we could detect for an ANOVA unifactorial analysis with two groups was $f = .160$ ($\eta_p^2 = .025$) and for multiple regression with two tested predictors, $f^2 = .032$ ($R^2 = .031$).

5.1.2 | Confrontation manipulation

We used a similar methodology to that used in the previous studies. The described sexist situation was the same as in Study 3, but we introduced some changes to reinforce the main aspect of the manipulation, as well as to reduce the potential overlap with the outcome

¹⁴ Most participants completed the manipulation check correctly (94.6% in the egalitarian confrontation condition and 93.8% in the paternalistic confrontation condition).

variables. The participants were randomly assigned to one of the two experimental conditions:

Egalitarian confrontation ($n = 140$): Hey! That comment is out of place. We need a society where men and women are equal. Men should fight against gender inequality.

Paternalistic confrontation ($n = 166$): Hey! That comment is out of place. We need a society where the weak are protected. Men should take care of and protect women.

5.1.3 | Measures

We measured participants' political orientation (single item: $M = 3.41$; $SD = 1.49$), interpersonal perceived power difference (four items¹⁵: $\alpha = .89$), empowerment (eight items: $\alpha = .89$) and social closeness (four items: $\alpha = .98$) with the same items used in previous studies.

Perception of men as allies of women. As in previous studies, we asked participants to rate how the confronter might embody a set of ally features. However, we included two new items to evaluate the potential influence of the confronter in the movement¹⁶ (he might be 'a man who respects women's leadership in the struggle for women's rights' and 'a man who stands by women without taking a leading role'). We substituted the two items included in the commitment to gender equality dimension with social-justice orientation items, to reduce the overlap between the sentences used to build the egalitarian confrontation condition and ally perception measure (he might be 'a man who is committed to social justice' and 'a man who pursues a social change goal'). Finally, to reinforce the privilege awareness dimension we included a new item (he might be 'a man who recognizes male privilege'). However, this item was removed because its corrected item-scale correlation was less than .40 (this criterion was preregistered). Thus, the final scale was 11 items ($\alpha = .95$). We conducted a factorial analysis to test construct dimensionality. A principal components factor analysis with oblimin rotation confirmed the one-dimensionality of the construct, extracting a single factor with eigenvalues larger than one explaining 74.29% of the variance (loadings 0.93–0.71).

Willingness to work with the confronter. We adapted three items used in previous research (Radke et al., 2022; Wiley et al., 2023) to our study (e.g., 'I would be willing to protest for gender equality with someone like this man') ($\alpha = .94$).

Willingness to exclude the confronter from the movement to fight for gender equality. We adapted three items used in previous research (Radke et al., 2022; Wiley et al., 2023) to our study (e.g., 'I think this man should not participate in actions against sexism') ($\alpha = .92$).

Finally, as in previous studies, participants responded to the manipulation check, in which we asked them at the end of the survey to remember the social interaction described in the vignettes and select

the option that best summarized it. We offered three possible options, one for each experimental condition and one additional option in case they did not clearly remember what they had read previously. Extra measures can be found in the [Supporting Information](#).

5.1.4 | Procedure

The questionnaire was designed in Qualtrics® and distributed through the Netquest survey company. First, participants completed demographic variables, then they read the storyboard scenarios and later we asked them to respond to the measures described previously. When participants finished the survey, they were debriefed and thanked for their participation.

5.2 | Results

Correlations among the main variables can be found in [Table 2.17](#)

5.2.1 | Ally perception, social closeness, and willingness to work and to exclude the confronter from the movement for gender equality

We conducted a MANOVA to test the effects of the confrontation type (egalitarian confrontation vs. paternalistic confrontation) on women's perception of confronters as allies, social closeness and willingness to work with and to exclude the ally from the movement for gender equality, Wilks' $\Lambda = .472$, $F(4, 301) = 84.05$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .528$. As in previous studies, the effect of the type of confrontation emerged on the perception of allies, $F(1, 304) = 268.28$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .469$, 95% CI [0.39, 0.53]; social closeness, $F(1, 304) = 279.08$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .479$, 95% CI [0.40, 0.54]; willingness to work with the confronter, $F(1, 304) = 87.71$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .224$, 95% CI [0.15, 0.30]; and willingness to exclude the confronter from the movement for gender equality, $F(1, 304) = 103.13$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .253$, 95% CI [0.17, 0.33]. As can be seen in [Figure 7](#), women perceived the confronter as more of an ally after the egalitarian confrontation ($M = 5.20$, $SE = 0.11$) than the paternalistic confrontation ($M = 2.69$, $SE = 0.10$). Thus, Hypothesis 1 was supported. Congruently, women expressed more social closeness with the confronter after the egalitarian confrontation ($M = 5.40$, $SE = 0.13$) than the paternalistic confrontation ($M = 2.44$, $SE = 0.12$). Finally, they express more willingness to work with the confronter ($M = 4.82$, $SE = 0.15$) and less willingness to exclude him from the movement for gender equality ($M = 2.43$, $SE = 0.15$) after the egalitarian confrontation than the paternalistic confrontation (work with the confronter: $M = 2.91$, $SE = 0.14$; exclude the confronter: $M = 4.51$, $SE = 0.14$).

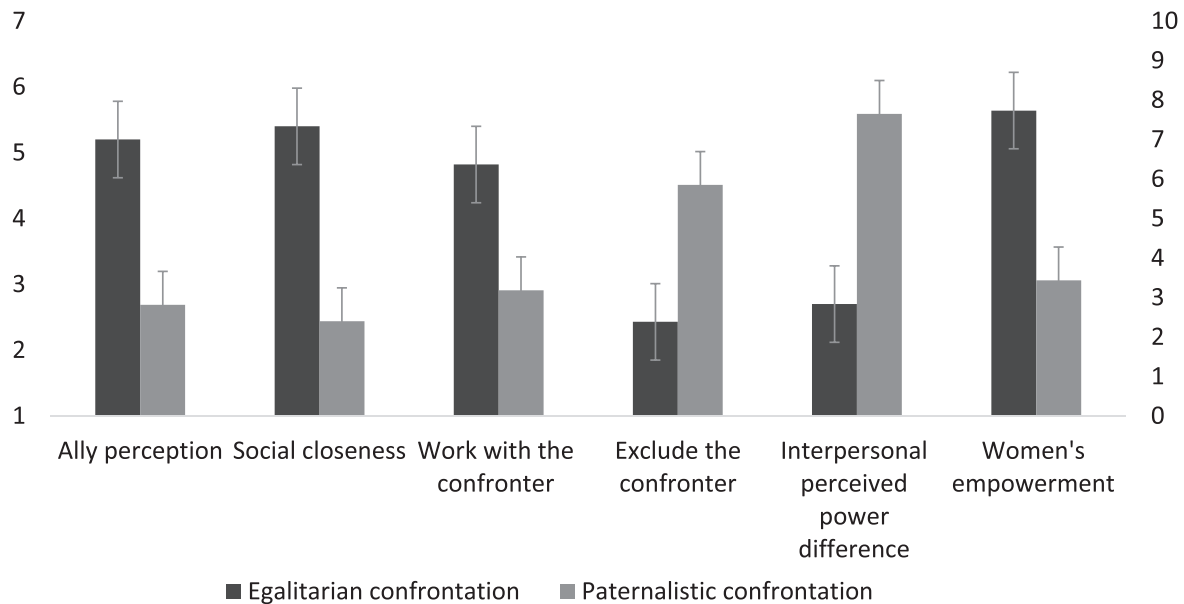
¹⁵ In this study, we also included a reverse item ('he is treating the girl as an equal').

¹⁶ In Study 1, we included an item in the same direction inspired by Droogendyk, Wright, et al. (2016): 'A man who is able to understand that the position of men in fighting gender inequality should not be a protagonist' but it was deleted due to corrected item-scale correlations lower than .40.

¹⁷ Fix indices of the confirmatory factor analysis in Study 4 were acceptable, confirming the six expected factors (CFI = 0.91, TLI = 0.90, SRMR = 0.06, RMSEA = 0.08). See more details about the factor analysis in the Supporting information.

TABLE 2 Correlations for Study 4.

	1	2	3	4	5	6
(1) Ally perception		.58**	-.71**	.85**	.66**	-.53**
(2) Women's empowerment			-.57**	.57**	.44**	-.39**
(3) Interpersonal perceived power difference				-.69**	-.47**	.55**
(4) Social closeness					.68**	-.57**
(5) Willingness to work with the confronter						-.41**
(6) Willingness to exclude the confronter						

* $p < .05$.** $p < .01$.**FIGURE 7** Women's perception of male confronters as allies, social closeness, perceived willingness to work or exclude the confronter from the movement for gender equality, interpersonal perceived power difference and women's empowerment as a function of the type of confrontation (Study 4).

5.2.2 | Interpersonal perceived power difference and women's empowerment

We conducted a MANOVA to test if the type of confrontation affected the perceived power difference between the target and the confronter and women's empowerment, Wilks' $\Lambda = .467$, $F(2, 303) = 172.91$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .533$. We found significant differences as a function of the type of confrontation on interpersonal perceived power difference, $F(1, 304) = 324.09$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .516$, 95% CI [0.44, 0.58], and on women's empowerment, $F(1, 304) = 109.28$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .264$, 95% CI [0.18, 0.34]. As can be seen in Figure 7, participants perceived a lower power difference between the target and the confronter after the egalitarian confrontation ($M = 2.70$, $SE = 0.12$) than after the paternalistic confrontation ($M = 5.59$, $SE = 0.11$). Likewise, women reported more empowerment after the egalitarian confrontation ($M = 5.64$, $SE = 0.18$) than after the paternalistic confrontation ($M = 3.06$, $SE = 0.18$).

5.2.3 | Interpersonal perceived power difference and empowerment as the mechanisms underlying ally perception

We conducted a parallel mediation model (PROCESS Model 4; Hayes, 2013) to analyse whether the perceived power difference between the target and the confronter and women's empowerment explained the relationship between the type of confrontation and perception of the confronter as an ally (see Figure 8). The total effect of the type of confrontation (egalitarian vs. paternalistic) on ally perception was significant as well as the indirect effects via interpersonal perceived power difference, $b = .94$, 95% CI [0.59, 1.30] and empowerment, $b = .41$, 95% CI [0.21, 0.66]. The direct effect was reduced but remained significant when the mediators were included. This result shows that women perceived the man who confronted sexism in an egalitarian (vs. paternalistic) way as more of an ally because they perceived less power difference between the target

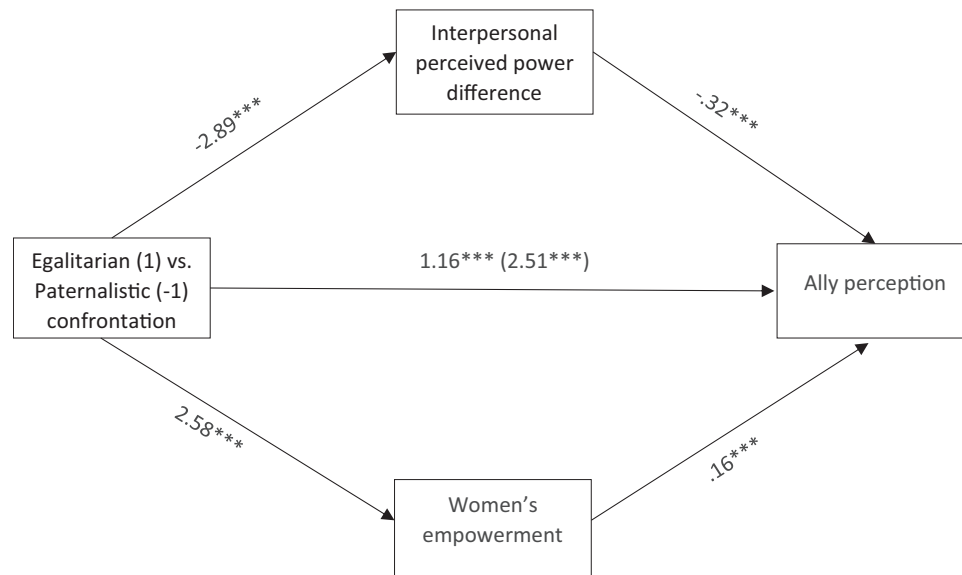


FIGURE 8 Effect of the type of confrontation on ally perception via interpersonal perceived power difference and women's empowerment (Study 4). [Corrections added on 14 March 2024, after first online publication: The figure 8 has been replaced in this version.]

and the confronter and experienced more empowerment, supporting Hypothesis 2.

willingness to exclude him from the movement for gender equality compared to the paternalistic confronter.

5.2.4 | Implications of ally perception on social closeness and willingness to work and to exclude the confronter from the movement for gender equality

We conducted three simple mediational analyses (PROCESS Model 4; Hayes, 2013) to test whether the perception of confronters as allies mediated the relationship between the type of confrontation and women's social closeness towards confronters and willingness to work and exclude the confronter from the movement for gender equality.

The total effect of the type of confrontation (egalitarian vs. paternalistic) on social closeness was significant as well as the indirect effect via ally perception, $b = 2.06$, 95% CI [1.70, 2.42]. The direct effect was reduced but remained significant when the mediator was included (see Figure 2).

The total effect of the type of confrontation (egalitarian vs. paternalistic) on willingness to work with the confronter was significant as well as the indirect effect via ally perception, $b = 1.77$, 95% CI [1.39, 2.16]. The direct effect became non-significant when the mediator was included (see Figure 9).

The total effect of the type of confrontation (egalitarian vs. paternalistic) on willingness to exclude the confronter was significant as well as the indirect effect via ally perception, $b = -.98$, 95% CI [-1.44, -0.57]. The direct effect was reduced but remained significant when the mediator was included (see Figure 9).

These results confirmed Hypothesis 3, replicating the findings of Studies 1 and 2 and extending them to the other outcome variables. The findings showed that the perception of the confronter as an ally partially explains why women expressed more social closeness with the egalitarian confronter, more willingness to work with him, and less

5.3 | Discussion

Study 4 confirmed the main hypotheses of this research in a work setting and with a general population sample, showing that (1) Women were more likely to perceive the man who confronted sexism in an egalitarian way as an ally; (2) power asymmetries (assessed via interpersonal perceived power difference or women's empowerment) play an important role in explaining the perception of the confronter as an ally; and (3) the perception of the egalitarian (vs. paternalistic) confronter as an ally has implications for interpersonal (social closeness) and intergroup relations (willingness to work with and to exclude the confronter from the movement for gender equality). Specifically, the results show that the perception of the confronter as an ally is what explains why women express a greater willingness to work with the man who confronts in an egalitarian way than with the one who confronts in a paternalistic way. Furthermore, this study allowed us to address some methodological and conceptual limitations of the previous studies (e.g., reviewed measure of ally perception and the scenarios). However, we also wanted to acknowledge that the extra sentences we added in the new version of the manipulation might have driven the effect on its own. So future research should delve into this possibility.

6 | GENERAL DISCUSSION

Across four studies, with different samples (college students: Studies 1 and 2; working women: Study 3; general population: Study 4) and in two different settings (a bar: Studies 1 and 2; and workplace: Studies 3

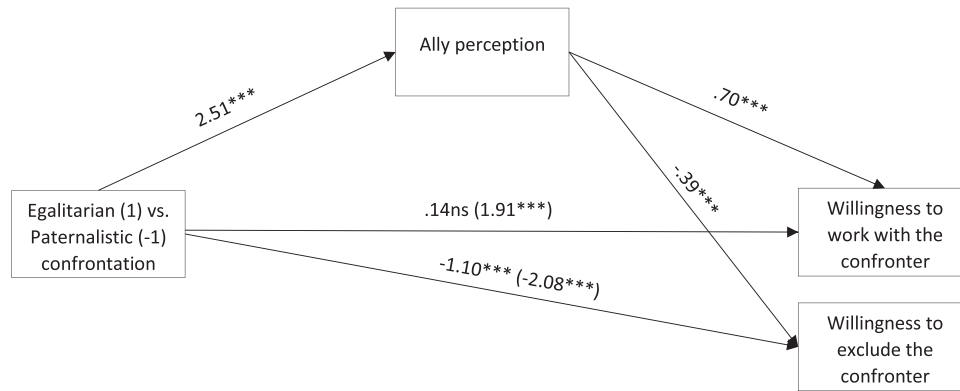


FIGURE 9 Effect of the type of confrontation on willingness to work and exclude the confronter from the movement for gender equality (Study 4).

and 4) we found that women are more likely to perceive men who confront sexism in an egalitarian way as allies than those who confront it in a paternalistic way (Studies 1–4). This is explained by the fact that the man who confronts sexism in an egalitarian (vs. paternalistic) way helps to reduce power asymmetries (decreasing interpersonal perceived power differences: Studies 2 and 4; or increasing women's empowerment: Studies 3 and 4). The perception of the men confronters as allies has implications on interpersonal relations (social closeness; Studies 1 and 2) and intergroup ones (perceived willingness of the confronter to participate in collective action in solidarity with women: Study 1 and 2; women's willingness to work with the confronter or to exclude him from the movement; Study 4).

Previous research has emphasized the relevance of motivations in advantaged group members' actions for disadvantaged groups (Cheng et al., 2019; Edwards, 2006; Radke et al., 2020). In the case of gender relations, men's egalitarian confrontation has a more positive impact on women's well-being and empowerment than paternalistic confrontation (Estevan-Reina et al., 2021). Our results extend these previous findings, highlighting that women perceive egalitarian confronters as more of an ally than paternalistic confronters. One of the reasons for this is because the relationship between the target and egalitarian confronter is perceived in terms of equality, or in other words, acting against sexism the confronter contributes to reducing power asymmetries (either via decreasing interpersonal power difference or via increasing women's empowerment).

It could be argued that perceiving confronters as more symmetrical in terms of power may undermine resistance among women in the future (according to the hypothesis of sedative effects of contact; Dixon et al., 2010; Saguy et al., 2009; Wright & Lubensky, 2008) because it may lead women to assume that gender inequality is decreasing, so there will be no reason to keep fighting. It is important to note that the perception of the confronter as egalitarian in this research happens in an interpersonal context which might activate a process of subtyping that allows women to distinguish the men who confront in an egalitarian way from other men. The process of subtyping may be a pre-condition for an advantaged group member to be considered an ally (Wright & Lubensky, 2008). That is, women eval-

uate the person who is acting as an ally separately from other men. This does not undermine women's resistance against gender inequality, but instead even strengthens women's empowerment, which can lead women to express greater intentions to confront sexism in the future (Estevan-Reina et al., 2021). The fact that advantaged group members may contribute to reducing power asymmetries might help to explain why participants and activists prefer allies who communicate less dominantly and who exert less influence on the movement (Park et al., 2022; Radke et al., 2022). It might also explain why supportive contact, where advantaged group members explicitly oppose inequality, strengthens disadvantaged group collective actions compared to other types of positive intergroup contact (Becker et al., 2022; Droogendyk, Louis, et al., 2016) as well as why refugees perceive more potential for social change to autonomy-oriented than dependency-oriented help (Becker et al., 2019).

Our findings also show that women want to be closer to the egalitarian than to the paternalistic confronters (e.g., participants would like him to be a colleague, friend... but also to take part in joint actions with him), and also women expect more solidarity from egalitarian confronters in the future. Offering support in interpersonal terms and showing commitment against injustice in intergroup terms are two dimensions that define allies from the disadvantaged group's perspective (Brown & Ostrove, 2013). According to our results, considering someone an ally can also explain both disadvantaged groups' desire to approach them and expectations about them, suggesting that both dynamics feed into each other. The implications of ally perception on interpersonal and intergroup gender relations align with the literature highlighting that allies can contribute to creating safe spaces for disadvantaged groups (Johnsons & Pietri, 2022; Moser & Branscombe, 2022). In light of our research, we point out that for this to happen, men must be perceived as allies by women and that in turn depends on their contribution to reducing power asymmetries.

6.1 | Limitations and future research

We have created a measure of ally perception that includes different components, such as feminist identification, intergroup

alliance/support, privilege awareness, questioning traditional masculinity (Studies 1–4), commitment to gender equality (Studies 1–3), social-justice orientation and the influence of men in the movement (Study 4). These all align with theoretical and qualitative works that deepen our understanding of the aspects that define advantaged group allies who contribute to promoting social change (Broido, 2000; Droogendyk, Wright, et al., 2016; Edwards, 2006; Radke et al., 2020; Washington & Evans, 1991) and also with recent empirical works (Park et al., 2022; Radke et al., 2022; Wiley et al., 2023). Although we consider this to be an interesting contribution of this work to the existing literature, future research should validate this measure and try to adapt it to some different intergroup relations.

This work highlights the importance of analysing the perception of allies from the perspective of disadvantaged groups. However, social reality is much richer and more complex. Thus, to understand alliances fully, both advantaged and disadvantaged perspectives should be considered (Kutlaca et al., 2020). An interesting avenue for future research should be to combine both perspectives in one study. This might allow us to understand possible misunderstandings between advantaged and disadvantaged groups (e.g., evaluating the level of [dis]agreement between both parties when they evaluate a confronter as egalitarian or paternalistic), to identify more and less ambiguous ways of confrontation (Burns & Granz, 2023), to find the better strategy to confront inequality by respecting advantaged and disadvantaged group needs and to achieve a better empirical understanding of performative allyship (Kutlaca & Radke, 2023).

Likewise, it might be interesting to consider the meta-perception of men in fighting gender inequality (advantaged group) and women as targets of discrimination (disadvantaged group). Recent research suggests that advantaged group members' beliefs regarding what the disadvantaged think of them substantially contribute to their willingness to engage in solidarity (Adra et al., 2020). Additionally, intergroup meta-perceptions shape perceptions of the outgroup (O'Brien et al., 2018). Egalitarian confronters might also be considered to be male dissenters or deviants from the perspective of other men (Jetten & Hornsey, 2014). Upcoming research could analyse how men perceive dissenters or deviants among the group of men and to what extent they can influence other men to promote social change.

Interestingly, we found that women perceive men who confront sexism in a paternalistic way as more of an ally, express more social closeness with them, and attribute more collective action intentions to them than men who do not confront sexism at all (Study 1). This suggests that women prefer men who confront sexism in a paternalistic way to those who avoid the confrontation. Future research should address if these findings are limited to the paternalistic nature of confrontation or if it can be extended to other types of actions (e.g., hostile or aggressive confrontation). Moreover, it would be important to study the implications of these different types of confrontation both for targets of discrimination and for general society in terms of perpetuation versus change of the status quo.

7 | CONCLUSION

By analysing women's perceptions of men as allies, researchers can deepen the understanding of gender intergroup alliances, to clarify when they promote social change or reinforce the status quo. The current research contributes to the literature showing that women perceive men who confront sexism in an egalitarian way as allies to a greater extent than those who act in a paternalistic way; revealing that the reduction of power asymmetries (via decreasing perceived differences or increasing women's empowerment) is key in the process of alliance; and highlighting the implications of men confronting sexism for women at both the interpersonal and intergroup levels. Women prefer allies who confront sexism in an egalitarian way instead of a paternalistic way because only the former contributes to weakening social hierarchies.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors have no conflict of interest to declare that are relevant to the content of this article.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Preregistration of Studies 1–4 as well as Supporting Information of Studies 1–3 and English translations of the main measures used in the three studies are already available in the Open Science Framework: https://osf.io/9gh62/?view_only=be3e413bfac44d8cbe048b46720703fb The raw data supporting the conclusions of Studies 1–4 and the original version of measures used in Studies 1–4 will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation, to any qualified researcher.

ETHICS APPROVAL STATEMENT

The current work has been conducted in a manner consistent with the American Psychological Association's Ethical Principles in the Conduct of Research with Human Participants (2010). Approval from the University of Granada Ethics Committee was obtained before data collection.

TRANSPARENCY STATEMENT

Data and study materials are available via osf: <https://osf.io/9gh62/>

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SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information can be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of this article.

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