



# The Future Is Female (and Behavior Analysis): A Behavioral Account of Sexism and How Behavior Analysis Is Simultaneously Part of the Problem and Solution

Natalia A. Baires<sup>1</sup>  · D. Shane Koch<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

In 2015, females accounted for 82.2% of Board Certified Behavior Analysts (Nosik & Grow, 2015, “Prominent Women in Behavior Analysis: An Introduction,” *The Behavior Analyst*, 38, 225–227). Females represent most certificants, yet their presence in research and on editorial boards for peer-reviewed journals is lower than males’ presence (Li, Curiel, Pritchard, & Poling, 2018, “Participation of Women in Behavior Analysis Research: Some Recent and Relevant Data,” *Behavior Analysis in Practice*, 11, 160–164). Various contingencies are certainly involved, which may include instances of sexism or gender-based discrimination. Despite behavior analysis having the means to change contingencies that reinforce sexism, the discipline is not adequately taking cultural contingencies into consideration. As a result, behavior analysis is simultaneously part of the problem and the potential solution. Moreover, behavior analysis has not adequately studied sexism and its subtle topographies despite sexism being a long-existing behavioral phenomenon. The purpose of the current paper is to provide a behavioral account of sexism, particularly in the field of behavior analysis. Feminism as a culture and views of feminism from males and females will be further examined, as well as their implications for behavior change. Finally, recommendations for cultural and individual change will be discussed to promote gender equity.

**Keywords** sexism · feminism · gendered practices · gender-based discrimination · cultural practices

*Sexism* is defined as prejudice, stereotypes, or discrimination based on gender, most commonly toward females (“Sexism,” 2010). Although sexism toward females is commonly observed, any gender can engage in it. At an individual level, examples of sexism can range from sexual harassment to females with doctoral degrees being addressed as “Miss,” despite male colleagues with the same degree being addressed as “Doctor” or “Professor.” When examining sexism from a cultural level, examples include gender pay gaps and the use of generic masculine terms to refer to a group of individuals of various genders (e.g., “you guys” or “mankind”). As

illustrated by Glick and Fiske’s (1996) theoretical framework, sexism consists of two subcomponents: hostile sexism, which characterizes females as incompetent or overly emotional, and benevolent sexism, which characterizes females as delicate, pure, and in need of male protection and care.

Previous research efforts in behavior analysis have included work related to females and their experiences in the field. In 2015, *The Behavior Analyst* included a special section titled “Prominent Women in Behavior Analysis” that contained interviews with seven leading female behavior analysts. Although the special section was meant to be a celebration of prominent females within behavior analysis, light was shed on some of the gender-based challenges these women faced. Other research efforts have included that of Simon, Morris, and Smith (2007), who examined trends in females’ participation at conferences hosted by the Association for Behavior Analysis (now known as the Association for Behavior Analysis International; ABAI) between 1975 and 2005. Their findings indicated that female presence was dominant for posters and for first authors among coauthors but not for invited addresses, sole authors, and symposia discussants.

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✉ Natalia A. Baires  
natalia.baires@siu.edu

<sup>1</sup> Behavior Analysis and Therapy Program, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL 62901, USA

Previous researchers have also studied trends in the involvement of females in behavior-analytic research (see McSweeney, Donahoe, & Swindell, 2000; McSweeney & Swindell, 1998; Myers, 1993; Poling et al., 1983); however, recent research has demonstrated that although females' participation as authors has steadily grown over the years (i.e., a mean of 42.7%), females are substantially underrepresented as authors and editors in behavior-analytic journals (Li, Curiel, Pritchard, & Poling, 2018). Clearly, gender disparities exist within the field of behavior analysis. Perhaps behavior analysis is failing to identify sexism and gender equality as research topics because most single-author articles are published by "productive senior scientists" who are male (Li et al., 2018 p. 163) who are less likely to experience or identify sexism. Despite these reasons, more research is needed in this area to identify what variables are responsible for gender disparity and how it can be eliminated.

*Feminism* describes movements to eliminate sexism by ensuring social, economic, and political rights for all genders (Issitt & Flynn, 2018). Similar to other cultures, feminism has evolved over time. Feminism began in an effort to secure access and equal opportunities for females in voting and education rights (Kroløkke & Sørensen, 2005). Now in its current form, the fourth wave of feminism is focusing on intersectionality (known as the social and political discrimination overlap with gender) and the empowerment of traditionally marginalized groups through the use of technology and social media to increase representation of these groups in politics and business by communicating adversities and promoting online advocacy (Chamberlain, 2016; Munro, 2013). Clearly, the female experience differs significantly from the male experience in terms of equal access to social, economic, and political rights, which feminism strives to change by promoting equality for all genders.

In a review of 25 years of literature in behavior-analytic journals, papers written on sexism are close to nonexistent. The only empirical account of sexism is by Ruiz (2003) in her work on gendered practices, which was published over 15 years ago. The lack of research provides substantial evidence that behavior analysts have not adequately examined sexism or the impact of sexism on our discipline and communities at large. This places behavior analysis in the complex role of acting as both the solution and the problem regarding problematic societal contingencies such as sexism (Holland, 1978). Therefore, the purpose of the current paper was to interpret sexism from a behavior-analytic perspective and propose how behavior analysts can use our science to reduce sexism within our field at the societal and individual levels. More specifically, a primary focus will be placed on sexism as seen within the field of behavior analysis. As feminism directly challenges sexism, solutions based on feminist efforts will be discussed, along with feminism's four waves and how the evolution of a culture is necessary when creating behavior

change in another culture. Further, male and female views on feminism will be considered, along with their implications for behavior change.

## Sexism Hits Home

Females in behavior analysis have reported that they have either observed or directly experienced instances of sexism. For instance, LeBlanc (2015) discussed observing older male behavior analysts' inappropriate interactions with younger female behavior analysts at conferences. McSweeney (2015) spoke of her experience with fellow behavior analysts taking over her presentation in order to promote their own work. Pétursdóttir (2015) described being addressed as "Miss," even though her male colleagues with the same degree were addressed as "Doctor" or "Professor." Furthermore, cases of intimidation and inappropriate flirtation by male professors toward students have been observed (Taylor, 2015). Although these incidents have taken place in professional settings, trends in gender inequity are also seen in research contexts.

In 2015, Dixon, Reed, Smith, Belisle, and Jackson evaluated the research productivity of graduate-level programs that provide course sequences approved by the Behavior Analyst Certification Board. Their results yielded the 10 most prolific faculty members published in the *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis* (JABA), the *Journal of the Experimental Analysis of Behavior*, *The Behavior Analyst*, *Behavior Analysis in Practice*, *The Psychological Record*, and *The Analysis of Verbal Behavior*. Of the 10 faculty members, 3 of them were females, ranking in 6th, 8th, and 10th. Although females' participation in behavior-analytic journals in terms of article authorship and editorial board membership has generally increased from 2014 to 2017 (Li et al., 2018), there is still substantial underrepresentation. For instance, single-author articles are frequently written by males, whereas females are more likely to share authorship and less likely to work independently or self-promote compared to males (Li et al., 2018).

As indicated by McSweeney et al. (2000), it may be that females' lack of presence in research and editorial boards is due to the possibility of authors needing a particular skill set to publish, females having less interest in certain areas of behavior analysis (e.g., the experimental analysis of behavior), or females having different motivations to publish. However, it does not seem likely that female behavior analysts are insufficiently skilled or lacking in intelligence given that they comprise more than 82% of certificants (Nosik & Grow, 2015) and 42% of authors and editors in behavior-analytic journals (Li et al., 2018). Still, there may be differences in motivation to publish, competing contingencies (e.g., clinical and teaching responsibilities), and differences in amounts of support (e.g., more seasoned academic behavior analysts having students available to assist with research) between males and females,

which can contribute to a decreased female presence in research. These variables, and possibly others, affect females who do have a desire to publish, which makes these phenomena worth examining.

Per McSweeney et al. (2000), gender inequities are evidenced by females being more likely to be included as authors on a manuscript if a female was the editor and if females serve as editorial board members for behavioranalytic journals; compared to males, females represent a small presence of editors and editorial board members. Through their analysis of females' participation in JABA and three similar journals, McSweeney et al. defined the glass ceiling as the participation by females being largely limited to working as practitioners. Although data revealed that the number of females serving the roles of authors and editorial board members has substantially increased over the years (i.e., a mean of 42.7%), the data were consistent with the point that gender inequity and a glass ceiling still exist in the field of applied behavior analysis.

Later work by Li et al. (2018) showed similar findings to McSweeney et al. (2000) and provided further evidence of females' growing role in publication-related activities. Despite this fact, the authors stressed that females continue to face adversities, particularly for females of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer community and various racial and ethnic groups. It is unfortunate that even in a field that relies on a data-driven science to change behavior and in which the majority is female, gender inequity is still taking place.

Devising solutions to target sexism is well within the realm of behavior analysis; however, there is a paucity of research in the literature regarding behavior change for sexism at a cultural level. Behavior analysis has developed the scientific methodological approach and specific tools for analyzing structures and systems in order to devise plans to change those structures and systems for the betterment of society. Examples of these efforts include using feedback and goal setting to reduce electricity in households (Frazer & Leslie, 2014), using bin proximity and visual prompts to increase recycling in a university building (Miller, Meindl, & Caradine, 2016), and embedding nudges to reduce food waste among restaurant customers (Tagliabue & Sandaker, 2019). If behavior analysis has made numerous impacts at the societal level as previously mentioned, then is it contributing to the solution or perpetuating the problem of sexism?

In a controversial paper published by Holland (1978), the question is posed as to whether applied behavior analysis is part of the problem or part of the solution regarding programming for contingencies. He stated that prolonged behavior change requires societal contingencies to be changed. In the paper, Holland discussed three victims (i.e., "the alcoholic," the criminal, and the behavior analyst) and how behavior analysts tend to contribute to the problems of excessive alcohol consumption, crimes being committed, and other problems at

the cultural level, despite behavior analysis having the means of producing solutions. For example, Holland explains that consuming alcohol plays a predominantly social role. Although individuals who heavily consume alcohol are seen as being the cause of their own problem, the culture mediates salient reinforcement for drinking. This victim blaming perpetuates the problem, rather than calling to account the cultural practices supporting the individual's behavior.

Parallels to sexism can be drawn from Holland's (1978) paper, as females who experience sexism can be seen as causing their own problems, such as by "choosing to go into a male-dominated career." Instead of blaming females when they experience sexism and thus creating more complex contingencies, society should be mediating reinforcement for individuals who engage in behavior consistent with the goals of feminism to promote gender equity. More importantly, behavior analysis plays a significant role within this multifaceted issue because it is not sufficiently collaborating with social institutions, as these systems have contingencies in effect that determine individuals' behaviors. As Holland indicated, social equality will not be observed if social institutions do not promote equality of power and status.

Our ethical and professional obligation as behavior analysts demands that we recognize that societal contingencies are as important as smaller scale contingencies. The failure to meet this obligation may result in merely targeting behaviors of the individual rather than that of society, resulting in the failure to reduce, in any significant way, the impact of the sociocultural contingencies that maintain aversive outcomes for large segments of society. For example, solely treating individual behavior does not seem logical for someone who engages in sexist behavior or for a survivor of sexual assault. Eventually, individuals leave the controlled environment where treatment took place and are reintegrated into society. If changes have not been made in the natural environment and have only been made in their temporary environment (i.e., where treatment occurred), it should not come as a surprise if the individual no longer engages in his or her newly acquired behaviors due to extinction or punishment. The skills learned can certainly generalize, but the environment is not equipped to mediate reinforcement for such skills, particularly because societal contingencies are lacking for engaging in such behaviors.

The focus on individual contingencies, as opposed to societal or group contingencies, applies to decreasing sexism in the current time. It is common for some members of the societal culture to engage in victim blaming, which involves blaming those who face prejudice, stereotyping, or discrimination. Or it may be that perpetrators are blamed because of their upbringing, beliefs, or attitudes (Holland, 1978). Regardless of what reason is provided, behavior analysis and society are contributing to the problem of sexism by mediating particular contingencies and failing to focus on societal contingencies.

In order to adequately discuss sexism from a behavioral account, social contingencies within cultures must first be examined.

## The Cultures of Sexism and Feminism

According to Skinner (1984), *culture* can be defined as a set of behaviors maintained by contingencies of social reinforcement delivered by a particular group. He further stated that selection by consequences accounts for shaping and maintaining the behavior of members of culture(s) as they evolve (Skinner, 1981). In other words, operant conditioning is responsible for strengthening the new responses of an individual, whereas practices and their effects on a group are responsible for the evolution of a given culture. The evolution of cultures (i.e., social environments) also includes verbal behavior, defined by Skinner (1957) as behavior that is reinforced through the mediation of other individuals. Because members of a group or culture are among the most stable features of an environment, Skinner (1981) stated that behaviors selected in a culture are established via imitation and are thus maintained as a result. However, other behavioral repertoires such as mands, intraverbals, and rule-governed behaviors can also contribute to the selection of behaviors in a culture.

When viewed as a noun and as a category of phenomena, *culture* can be defined as a set of learned behaviors disseminated socially, with cultural practices viewed as a response class for a *variety* of individuals as opposed to a response class for a *particular* individual (Glenn, 1989, 2004). Moreover, cultural practices are closely related to interlocking contingencies because they involve the behaviors of two or more individuals and explain the process of expanding behavioral contingencies to include the behavior of others in the environment (Glenn, 1988). The common point of agreement between Skinner's (1984) and Glenn's (2004) definitions of culture is the emphasis on social contingencies. Cultural practices and contingencies consequently impact individual behavior; therefore, it is essential to examine the unique practices that a culture adopts and maintains if individual behavior is to be understood within broader cultural contexts.

## Shaping Sexism

Given that sexist behaviors can occur, the contingencies that follow (which are mediated by members of a culture) are partly responsible for the maintenance of the sexist behavior and can in turn contribute to its impact at the cultural level. For example, the behavior of a male telling a female "Can I speak to your husband?" when a decision needs to be made about a matter contacts social reinforcement when the male gains access to the female's husband, thus making his behavior more likely to happen again. Glenn's (2004) definition of a culture

would describe this phenomenon of sexist behavior as a response class that encompasses learned behaviors that are disseminated socially. Additionally, metacontingencies—defined as the units of analysis within a cultural practice in conjunction with the variations and contributions to the current variations and outcomes in place—must be considered (Glenn, 1988). Metacontingencies require recurring interlocking contingencies, which involve interrelated behavior, and are responsible for the probability of future recurrences of said interlocking contingencies (Glenn, 2004). Based on the example, interrelated behaviors (i.e., the individual asking to speak with the female's husband, the female providing access to her husband, and the husband speaking to the individual) are responsible for these metacontingencies as opposed to the cumulative effect of the individual behaviors. This gives rise not only to shaping other sexist behaviors but also to the collection of contingencies that amount to increasingly complex interlocking contingencies.

Sexist behavior may serve as a socially mediated system of support for the behavior of others in the same culture; therefore, sexism is maintained when a member of the culture engages in behavior and contacts reinforcement that other members have also contacted in the past. Moreover, established individuals from the sexist culture shape repertoires of new members through procedures such as modeling and feedback. It appears that instead of using the scientific methodology of behavior analysis to decrease sexist behavior and increase feminist efforts, behavior analysis may be maintaining and shaping new sexist behaviors within the culture (Li et al., 2018). However, genders contact different cultural contingencies with regard to gendered practices. Consider the previously discussed example: The behavior of asking to speak to a female's husband in order for a decision to be made about a matter contacts reinforcement from other members of the sexist culture. Yet from a feminist view, the behavior of a female permitting access to her husband is likely to contact punishment if it contrasts with the culture of feminism, while simultaneously contacting negative reinforcement because it leads to the removal of the individual asking for information or a decision.

Verbal behavior in terms of cultural contingencies can be analyzed differently depending on the gender of the speaker. A behavior such as assertiveness can be seen as being angry or demanding if a female engages in the behavior but direct and confident if a male engages in the behavior. It seems that cultural practices within the sexist culture mediate subtly different contingencies for different genders, which can allow for contrasting interpretations of the same behavior (Ruiz, 2003). However, cultures that oppose sexism have begun to take sexist terms back and transform their function for empowerment efforts, such as with the Me Too and Time's Up movements. Specifically, there was a 50% increase in sexual harassment lawsuits filed by the Equal Employment Opportunity

Commission following the inception of the Me Too movement on social media (Traub & Van Hoose Garofalo, 2019). Although advancements toward decreasing sexism have been made, there are still shortcomings, such as the narrowing but persistent gender pay gap that is still predominant in many occupations (Graf, Brown, & Patten, 2018), including faculty positions in behavior analysis. (Li, Gravina, Pritchard, & Poling, 2019). However, the combining forces of behavior analysis and feminism can dismantle sexism.

### The F Word: Feminism

According to Dyer and Hurd (2016), feminism is frequently misunderstood because of its common portrayal as a movement driven by lonely and unhappy androgynous, lesbian females who despise males. Feminism as a scholarly exploration of gender inequities and female empowerment is defined as a movement that includes goals for achieving social, political, and economic equality for all genders (Issitt & Flynn, 2018). Much like other cultures, feminism has evolved since its inception and has made different waves of impact on policy. As previously mentioned, first-wave feminism strived to secure access and equal opportunities for females through women's suffrage, female education rights, and the abolition of gender double standards from the late 19th to 20th centuries (Kroløkke & Sørensen, 2005). The second wave of feminism, seen from the early 1960s through the late 1980s, focused on the women's liberation movement and shed light on oppression and discrimination against groups such as the working class, African Americans, women, and individuals who did not identify as heterosexual (Kroløkke & Sørensen, 2005).

The third wave of feminism, seen from the early 1990s to 2000s, sought to increase opportunities for females and decrease sexism through efforts such as reclaiming formerly derogatory labels and stepping into male-dominated spaces to claim positions of power. It also sought to increase the saliency of feminist issues that females of color and differing sexual orientations encountered (Mann & Huffman, 2005). Finally, the fourth wave of feminism, which began in 2012 and is still in effect, focuses on intersectionality and the empowerment of traditionally marginalized groups, which include females, particularly by making use of technology (e.g., Twitter, Facebook) to communicate adversities (Chamberlain, 2016) such as violence against females, the gender pay gap, societal pressures placed on females, and the lack of female representation in politics and business (Caffrey, 2018). Alternatively, the term "women's movement" is often used synonymously with feminism but omits the work done by feminists to improve the lives of males (Precopio & Ramsey, 2016). For example, feminism seeks to address gender bias in social norms by exploring challenges such as males' reluctance to express femininity or feminine characteristics due to the perception of female qualities being lower in

status (Rudman, Mescher, & Moss-Racusin, 2012). Given the competing culture of sexism and its varying practices across genders, males and females may have different views of feminism and what it strives to accomplish.

**Male views on feminism** Precopio and Ramsey (2016) used the moral foundation theory (Graham et al., 2011) and administered surveys to male participants to examine the means for encouraging males to support feminism. From a behavioral standpoint, the moral foundation theory mirrors various individual and group contingencies as seen in a culture. For example, particular characteristics relate to the maintenance of a culture and continued access to reinforcement from members of a culture. In contrast, other characteristics are more concerned with the individual members of a culture and the contingencies they contact (for a thorough explanation of the moral foundation theory from the perspective of social psychology, see Precopio & Ramsey, 2016).

From a behavior-analytic perspective, results of Precopio and Ramsey's (2016) survey indicated that behaviors concerned with tradition and social hierarchy were often present in a culture that reinforced antifeminist behaviors, hostile sexism (i.e., negative evaluations and stereotypes about a gender, such as how females are overly emotional and incompetent), and benevolent sexism (i.e., seemingly positive yet damaging evaluations about people and gender equality, such as males needing to protect females) and that punished liberal feminist behaviors. However, individual behaviors that promoted fairness and the physical and emotional well-being of others were in the same response class as liberal feminist behaviors and consequently punished antifeminist behaviors, hostile sexism, and benevolent sexism. Overall, the study highlighted potential reasons for why males are less likely to support the feminist movement, including the endorsement of a suggestive sexism culture, as opposed to changing the existing social hierarchy, even if it results in gender equality.

Precopio and Ramsey (2016) explained that authority, or the concern for the continued existence of already-established social contingencies, was selected by participants who identified as nonfeminists, thus perpetuating a sexist culture. Moreover, participants who identified as feminists commonly chose fairness, or the concern for equality and justice, which maintains a feminist culture and essentially delivers punishment when in contact with behavior consistent with sexism. Thus the work done by Precopio and Ramsey provides some insight regarding the low participation of males in feminist efforts. The role of behavior analysts might be to assist males in recognizing and acknowledging sexism and gender inequity through individual behavior change while fostering discussion about the feminist culture that underlies and supports individual behavior. Although this is a first step, it has yet to be done.

**Female views on feminism** Interestingly, females may also resist or reject the tenets of feminism. Aronson (2003) conducted a longitudinal study to survey 1,000 ninth-grade female students at baseline and then after a 7-year period in order to examine the evolution of their attitudes toward feminism. In the interview conducted after these 7 years, six participants discussed their experiences with blatant occurrences of gender discrimination, specifically concerning workplace discrimination and sexual harassment. Some participants expressed “never ever” experiencing gender-based discrimination because they worked in an industry primarily dominated by females, though it is possible that these participants did not identify instances of discrimination because fellow females “would never do that” to another member of their community or culture or because sexism has become so commonplace in females’ experiences that it was normalized. However, it is important to remember that regardless of an individual’s gender, sexism can still be emitted by any gender.

Results from the study indicated that over half of the females who participated did not identify as being feminists or being interested in feminism. One explanation may be that participants were not able to clearly define the term or that self-labeling with this term might result in perceived negative consequences (i.e., punishing unfavorable views within societal culture; Aronson, 2003). Among the participants, some feminist principles were highly received, whereas others were not. It appeared that many of the participants were passive supporters rather than active agents of change. Again, this relates to the contingencies society has in place for individuals, particularly females, who identify as feminists or who associate themselves with the movement of feminism.

**Implications for behavior change regarding sexism** Although Precopio and Ramsey (2016) used a psychological approach, their data can be analyzed from a behavior-analytic point of view. Even if males are passionate about or interested in supporting the feminist movement, they are likely to encounter punishment or extinction from members of the sexist or societal culture due to competing social contingencies. For instance, males who identify as feminists are stigmatized as more feminine, weak, and likely to be gay (Rudman et al., 2012). Behavior analytically, the lack of reinforcement and application of punishment for feminist behaviors or attitudes should result in minimal to nonexistent occurrences. In fact, the occurrence of these behaviors could potentially lead to complete exclusion from the culture for males, which then eliminates or significantly decreases the potential opportunity for reinforcement.

Similar implications exist for females’ attitudes toward feminism. For example, a female expressing her supporting attitudes toward feminism in the workplace may contact punishment, such as being perceived as a complainer, whereas males who openly challenge sexism do not (Eliezer &

Major, 2012). It might be that her colleagues, or members of the workplace culture, place behavior that is consistent with the feminist culture on extinction by not interacting with her altogether. It may even lead to her being identified colloquially as a “nasty woman.” The behavior emitted by members of the sexist community is likely to be reinforced within that culture; however, the same could not be said for the female who expresses her supporting attitudes toward feminism because the two cultures have opposing values or beliefs.

Instead, the expression of her attitudes supporting feminism would drastically eliminate reinforcing contingencies. Although these implications should be taken into consideration when reinforcing behaviors consistent with the efforts of feminism, change is certainly still possible to decrease sexism. Just as the culture of feminism has evolved over time, so does the culture within behavior analysis.

## Smashing the Patriarchy

When discussing sexism or feminism, the term *patriarchy* is commonly included, which is the concept of describing the social relations of gender in terms of male hierarchy, power, and domination (Macé, 2018). There are several ways to decrease (or smash) patriarchy; however, existing systems may not be attending to the *need* to address sexism at the individual and cultural levels. Although it may be helpful for faculty and graduate students to engage in discussions of gender inequality, it is perhaps significantly less likely that students in elementary and high schools would encounter any curricula or academic experiences that would impact or decrease sexism. For instance, if an occurrence of sexual harassment creates a hostile environment in educational settings, educational institutions (e.g., school districts, colleges, and universities) in the United States must end, eliminate, prevent, and remedy its presence (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). However, these steps are usually taken *after* sexual harassment has occurred, not before. Clearly, reactive strategies are often employed as opposed to preventative strategies.

Over 900 women/gender/feminist study programs, departments, and research centers exist internationally (Korenman, 2017), yet fewer similar opportunities are provided to students in elementary, middle, and high school. Including education for students of all genders on assertiveness, issues of consent, and equality in our educational curricula could significantly impact sexism in our society. Furthermore, it would highlight society’s value of equality across all genders and allow educational institutions to present feminist ideologies through their support and legitimization of feminist perspectives (Aronson, 2003). Behavior analysts are certainly capable of creating such curricula, so it can be accomplished, especially with the use of group contingencies and behavioral skills training.

Similarly, programs such as the Young Men Initiative (Namy et al., 2015), which consists of activities and messages to promote positive shifts in gender attitudes, violence, sexual health, and substance use for boys, can serve as a model or be shaped into a conceptually systematic approach to targeting sexism, feminism, and gender equality. Alternatively, behavior analysts can collaborate with local school districts beginning at the elementary level to create curricula designed to prevent or reduce sexism and increase appropriate inclusive behaviors. This will not only foster gender equity but also make these social institutions aware of the contingencies responsible for promoting oppression.

Another way to smash the patriarchy would include educating all genders on what feminism and sexism are and assisting supporters within the feminist movement. In terms of confrontations with sexism, males can make effective change agents because they are “taken more seriously” (Precopio & Ramsey, 2016 p. 79) and have less to gain because confronting sexism does not seem to directly benefit them (Drury & Kaiser, 2014). As noted previously, some females were not completely certain of how feminism is defined (Aronson, 2003). If information on feminism and sexism does not become a part of our education system, it would explain why our society continues to engage in sexism. After all, Skinner (1968) indicated that education is the greatest technology we have for behavior change.

### Eliminating Sexism as a Culture Within Behavior Analysis

Sexism is clearly a social and societal problem that requires significant change. Although addressing the challenge across our culture may seem daunting and unmanageable, behavior analysts may wish to investigate means to instigate small but meaningful changes that begin to reduce sexist behaviors within our field and our individual cultures. One change that can be made is in how we train behavior analysts. Ruiz (2003) expressed that a challenge for behavior analysts is understanding how cultural metacontingencies participate in the discovery and effectiveness of promoting change. As a result, the coursework to become a Board Certified Behavior Analyst should include a greater emphasis on applying behavior analysis to cultural phenomena.

An additional recommendation would be for students, practitioners, and researchers alike to analyze behavior-analytic texts, such as *Walden Two* (Skinner, 1948), from a multicultural feminist approach, as was done in the work of Wolpert (2005). Her feminist and multicultural analyses of *Walden Two* aimed to answer questions as to whether behavioral societies were good for females and, if so, for which females, as the novel included middle-class, heterosexual non-minorities. In the preface of *Walden Two Revisited*, Skinner (1976) indicated that females’ (i.e., his wife and her friends)

dissatisfaction with domestic responsibilities as housewives led him to write the novel. His intentions in writing *Walden Two* were certainly well meaning; however, how can we be certain females’ dissatisfaction was adequately addressed without their involvement in designing the novel’s utopian community? Vogeltanz, Sigmon, and Vickers (1998) have expressed that Skinner’s (1974) radical behaviorism could analyze sexist behavior in its context and also allow for the examination of the functions of gender, class, age, and ethnicity, which aligns with Wolpert’s analysis of *Walden Two*. Conducting more feminist and multicultural analyses of behavior-analytic texts would not only increase feminism in behavior analysis but also train behavior analysts to think critically about gender inequity and cultural designs within the primary texts of the field.

For research purposes, behavior related to feminism and sexism has much to offer behavior analysts. Though it would be logical and easier to focus on specific types of research questions pertaining to feminism or sexism, Ruiz (1998) recommends being aware of the impact that two orienting assumptions guiding feminist work have on behavior-analytic analyses and approaches. The first assumption considers that research is not gender neutral or free of values, because an examination of values and gender should be included in scientific inquiry. The second assumption is that because research serves as a tool for discovering solutions to practical problems, it also serves as political activity and could impact social change. These two assumptions set the occasion for behavior analysts to ask certain questions about the setting their research is conducted in, the context of discovery, or the research process itself. The assumptions outlined by Ruiz (1998) can be applied to both individual and cultural behavior within sexism.

Efforts should also be placed on reinstating systems that aim to assist female behavior analysts with gender discrimination. When asked about barriers faced throughout her education and how she approached them, Favell (2015) discussed how she observed others in the field struggling with challenges related to gender bias in their place of employment. She noted that ABAI instituted a mentorship program to support females facing similar challenges by providing advice and support. Although she expressed not personally experiencing gender bias, Favell noted that she found the experience of participating in the mentorship program to be worthwhile. Given gender-based adversities (e.g., gender pay gap, females not being adequately recognized for their contributions to research), it may be beneficial for larger organizations within behavior analysis, such as ABAI, or even state chapters to consider such mentorship programs. Moreover, mentorship programs for behavior analysts who wish to learn more about how to promote gender equity among their students and employees would also

be a worthwhile effort. Again, social institutions supporting gender equality would have significant implications for contingencies that determine individuals' behaviors.

### Empowered Women Empower Women

For female behavior analysts facing sexism, whether it is in areas of practice or research, it may be useful to program for certain contingencies to continue the progress made in terms of representation and support of females in the field. Sulzer-Azaroff (1987) discussed her experiences with sexism throughout her career and education, and she provided recommendations in order to promote resilience. For instance, when reinforcement is not contacted for effort placed on a task, Sulzer-Azaroff recommends to first accept feelings of anger, grief, or self-pity; then punish those feelings; and finally proceed to contacting reinforcement for engaging in problem solving. She expressed that engaging in behaviors such as revising and resubmitting a rejected manuscript or searching for ways to turn “failures” into possible successes could serve as replacement behaviors. Sulzer-Azaroff also advises that female behavior analysts, or any individual for that matter, become active in organizational governance and policy setting for improving gender inequities.

Rehfeldt (2018) also shared the lessons she has learned as a female academician, particularly providing support to new female university faculty members. Although not everyone is provided with opportunities to build mentoring relationships with females who challenge sexism, Rehfeldt highly advised individuals to do so when possible. She further expressed that similar invaluable relationships with male mentors should not be disregarded due to the individuals' gender. As for faculty members mentoring students, particularly female students who are considering pursuing academic positions, Rehfeldt advised them to be humbly and graciously available to their students, particularly in relation to gender-based challenges that can arise in the pursuit of such academic positions. This recommendation not only makes a difference in female students' graduate school experiences by fostering open discussions about sexism and receiving support for instances of sexism but also allows for faculty to model behaviors consistent with feminism and gender equity. Finally, Rehfeldt discussed that collaborating with females external to one's institution can foster increased opportunities for other females to partake in such activities, in addition to cultivating networks that females would not usually be able to access. Although these recommendations stem from experiences in academics, they can unquestionably apply to environments with female practitioners so that empowered females can continue to empower other females.

### The Future of Female and Behavior Analysis

As culture and society evolve, so should behavior analysis. In a time when survivors of sexist acts are punished for reporting such incidents, it is evident that the science of behavior analysis is needed to shift cultures from reinforcing sexist behaviors to reinforcing behaviors that promote justice, equity, and support. Instead of individuals using the Me Too or Time's Up hashtags to describe their experiences with sexism, those hashtags should respectively be used to describe the proper reinforcement contacted by survivors in advocating for themselves and how behavior analysis contributed to smashing the patriarchy and dismantling sexism. In addition to tackling sexism in general society, behavior analysis must also tackle the oppressive culture within its own community. At the end of the day, survivors of sexism are not just someone's child, someone's spouse, or someone's parent; they are simply *someone* who has the right to a high quality of life.

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**Conflict of Interest** The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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