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**Recognition of Gender Microaggressions in the Workplace:
The Case of Predisposition and Propensity to Recognize**

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Abstract

This study examined the individual factors that affect the recognition of gender microaggressions in the workplace. A total of 220 subjects participated in this study. Specifically, this study revealed how social dominance orientation, ambivalent sexism and gender discrimination perceptions toward women affect a third-party observer's recognition of gender microaggressions perpetrated against women. In addition, this study examined the effect of role congruence on the propensity to recognize gender microaggressions. Role congruence stems from role congruity theory which posits that a woman in a leadership or masculine role will receive positive or negative evaluations based on the degree to which she conforms to her gender stereotype. The results demonstrated significant negative correlations between SDO, hostile sexism, benevolent sexism, and the recognition of gender microaggressions. Gender discrimination perceptions were also positively correlated with recognition of gender microaggressions. Results however did not support the prediction that males and females differ in the recognition of gender microaggressions. In that same vein, role congruity did not significantly interact with the independent variables as expected. Reasons for the support or lack thereof of hypotheses are discussed as well as results of additional analyses. Implications for research and practice are also discussed along with some suggestions for future studies.

Keywords: gender, microaggressions, social dominance orientation, ambivalent sexism, role congruity

Recognition of Gender Microaggressions in the Workplace: The Case of Predisposition
and Propensity to Recognize

Although the Civil Rights Act of 1964 has been in place for over five decades, discrimination against protected classes remains an issue for organizations. The organization responsible for enforcing this law is the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). Under this Civil Rights Act, the EEOC enforces laws and policies that protect minorities and other protected classes from workplace discrimination. Despite these efforts, people continue to report unfair treatment at work with more than \$505 million in monetary relief awarded to victims of employment discrimination in the fiscal year 2018 (US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2018).

Some studies have shown that women are more likely than men to be discriminated against in the realm of employment decisions (e.g., Koch et al., 2015). These laws therefore serve as a check to overt forms of discrimination experienced by women in the workplace. Although these laws help to prevent overt discrimination, discrimination still exists albeit in more subtle forms that are not punishable by law. The lack of legal repercussions emboldens the perpetrators of such acts and organizations are more likely to overlook these behaviors due to their covert nature. Gender microaggressions, a subtle form of sexism, is fast becoming the predominant form of prejudice and discrimination because it is difficult to detect and it does not have serious disciplinary repercussions as is the case with overt forms of discrimination (Basford et al., 2014). Gender microaggressions are just one type of microaggression. Microaggressions, just like any other form of discrimination, can be perpetrated toward any minority group – women, racial minorities, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer

and genderqueer (LGBTQ) individuals. The term microaggressions was first introduced by Pierce (1977) and later, reconceptualized by Sue et al. (2007). It was defined as “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral or environmental indignities whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults towards people of color” (Sue et. al, 2007, p. 271). Although it was initially defined as a construct related to race, Sue (2010) contended that microaggressions can be extended to other areas such as gender and sexual orientation. Gender microaggressions thus refers to microaggressions that are perpetrated toward an individual based on their gender. Research on gender microaggressions has mainly focused on women and the subtlety associated with it (e.g., Nadal et al., 2013; Nadal & Haynes, 2012).

The term gender microaggressions refers to indignities perpetrated towards people because of their sex or gender identity. Thus, both men and women may experience gender microaggressions, but comparable data from a report by McKinsey and LeanIn (2019) shows that women are twice more likely to experience gender microaggressions than men in the workplace. They further have statistics that show that (73%) of women have experienced microaggressions as compared to (59%) of men thus lending credence to the fact that women experience gender microaggressions more than men in the workplace. To shed more light on the nuances of the gender microaggressions, they should be investigated by paying attention to the experiences of both men and women since gender comprises both the sex and identity of an individual. However, this study only examined gender microaggressions perpetrated against women because they face more microaggressions than men. (McKinsey & LeanIn, 2019). To be precise, this study

examined social dominance orientation (SDO), ambivalent sexism – both benevolent and hostile, gender discrimination perceptions toward women and finally, role congruity perceptions of women in the workplace. These factors were hypothesized to affect an observer's recognition of gender microaggressions in the workplace. Gender microaggressions are very complex and difficult to recognize due to their ambiguous nature (Sue et al., 2007). However, researchers usually focus on the negative impact and not the intent of the perpetrator (e.g., Sue et al., 2009). This is important because the detrimental effect of gender microaggressions can affect the individual's performance at work. Some of the negative effects of gender microaggressions include lower morale, increased absenteeism, and problems with work-life balance (Nielsen et al., 2009). Another study that highlights the negative impact of gender microaggressions suggests that the effects can be as harmful, if not more than the effects of overt discrimination (Basford et al., 2014). This study identified the different roles involved in a gender microaggression situation. There is usually the perpetrator (instigator of the microaggressive act), the target (recipient of the microaggressive act), the ally (the person who speaks up about discrimination) and the bystander (the person who simply observes). Furthermore, the impact of gender microaggressions may not be readily apparent and repeated exposure to such subtle forms of discrimination may cause targets to cognitively ruminate over such acts. These effects are as real and harmful as overt acts of discrimination (Sue, 2017).

Further evidence of the ambiguity of gender microaggressions lies in the social and cultural norms about female roles. Women who decide to enter male-dominated roles in the workplace usually face discrimination because their work role is seen as different

from their stereotypical female role (Eagly & Karau, 2002). They have to work harder to prove that they are as competent as their male counterparts. As a result, they may face subtle forms of discrimination in their careers. For example, a female executive whose idea is overlooked in favor of a similar idea proposed by a male executive with the same position and title would feel discouraged and this could affect her performance at work. The problem lies in the fact that the third-party observers of this event may not recognize that the female executive's idea is overlooked due to more ascription of competence to the male executive as compared to the female executive. Consequently, social and cultural bias may affect the tendency to recognize gender microaggressions due to the ingrained stereotypical perceptions of men and women that individuals may hold. Furthermore, the detrimental effect of gender microaggressions on targets and the ambiguity associated with recognizing them necessitates more research into the factors that affect their recognition. Since previous research has shown that women recognize gender microaggressions more than men do (e.g., Basford et al., 2014), this paper extends that research on gender microaggressions by exploring some individual differences that enable bystanders to perceive or recognize them thus helping to increase awareness of the concept. By examining gender microaggressions perpetrated against women in leadership roles, the present study may shed light on the different reasons why it is difficult to detect gender microaggressions and why it is important to recognize them.

As stated earlier, there are laws that protect minorities from overt workplace discrimination which serve as a deterrent to the perpetrators. However, more subtle forms of discrimination like gender microaggressions do not have any legal repercussions. Furthermore, their ambiguity makes them difficult to detect. The impact of these subtle

prejudicial expressions especially in the workplace has been linked to the glass ceiling, which refers to the difficulty in attaining higher positions in leadership and the glass cliff, a concept that refers to a situation whereby a woman and people of color are promoted to a senior position in difficult times or when the risk of failure is high (Besen & Kimmel, 2006; Ryan & Haslam, 2005). These effects make it difficult for women to attain high paying positions and stifles their subsequent performance when they do obtain these positions. Consequently, the concept of gender microaggressions has a role to play in the field of industrial-organizational psychology because they affect behavior and performance in the workplace. By recognizing gender microaggressions, one would be able to establish the link between their occurrence and the negative outcomes associated with them. Negative outcomes related to gender microaggressions will continue to be a problem for organizations unless these biases are recognized and addressed from the start. Women who are targets of microaggressive acts may have intentions to quit their jobs which leads to actual turnover (Dalton et al., 2014). Other women might feel as if their career progression and success will be slowed by these acts of gender microaggressions (Herrbach & Mignonac, 2012). Women may also experience stress and anxiety (Ford et al., 2007), lower morale, increased absenteeism and problems with work-life balance (Nielsen et al., 2009). These negative outcomes are just a reminder of how pervasive gender microaggressions can be and the need to recognize them.

The ability to detect gender microaggressions, may also help organization to make better hiring and promotion decisions. For example, female faculty have cited problems with academic climate and questioning of their leadership competence as reasons for leaving the profession (Morley, 2013). Academic institutions may therefore increase their

diversity and inclusion efforts when gender microaggressions are found to be a reason for turnover or poor performance. In addition, the recognition of gender microaggressions may increase the conversation around addressing them since they lead to a host of negative outcomes as described above. On one hand, targets of gender microaggression may be more likely to call out the perpetrators of gender microaggression when they recognize them. On the other hand, perpetrators will be more aware of the biases that may lead them to commit gender microaggressions and their repercussions. This awareness may then serve as a deterrent to committing gender microaggressions.

Purpose and Significance of Study

The main aim of this research was to address some individual difference variables that may affect the relationship between acts of gender microaggressions and their recognition. The ambiguity surrounding gender microaggressions in the workplace makes them difficult to recognize and subsequently address. The problem of detecting or recognizing a gender microaggression was assessed through the presentation of some microaggression scenarios. Since previous research has shown that women are more attuned to recognizing microaggressive acts than their male counterparts (Basford et al., 2014), this study reexamined this hypothesis as well.

Apart from ambiguity, the stereotype content model (SCM; Fiske et al., 2002) also presents another way to look at perceptions or reaction to individuals based on their gender. This model posits that people judge others' intentions along two dimensions; intentions to help or harm (warmth) and intentions to act on their intentions (competence). This means that the behaviors of women may also impact the detection of gender microaggressions. Such behaviors may also lead to differences in recognition. The

degree to which women conform to female stereotypes of women in the workplace such that they are perceived as either warm or competent is just one of the ways by which these differences in recognition can occur. To be precise, a woman who does not conform to stereotypically female behaviors may receive some backlash in the form of prejudice and discrimination. On one hand, a female in a leadership role may be viewed less favorably than a male in that same leadership role. On the other hand, a female who exhibits behaviors that are traditionally male or typical of a leader's role is also likely to face prejudice and discrimination. Thus, occupying a leadership role or exhibiting masculine behaviors can lead to discrimination and this sums up role congruity theory's account of prejudice towards female leaders (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Detection of gender microaggressions may therefore be influenced by role congruity.

The topic of microaggressions has garnered a lot of attention and criticism in recent times (e.g., Lilienfeld, 2017; Sue, 2017). As with every scientific debate, it must undergo rigorous scrutiny until its antecedents, effects, and variables that affect it have been thoroughly established by researchers and practitioners alike. The next few paragraphs highlight previous research on gender microaggressions and hypothesized relationships that were proposed for this study.

In a study conducted by McKinsey and LeanIn (2019), they found that women in the workplace tend to have their expertise questioned more than men. Besides, women were twice more likely than men to be mistaken for someone in a subordinate role. Noteworthy is the fact that black women and LGBTQ women face gender microaggressions to a greater degree than other women. Moreover, these findings show that women with repeated exposure to gender microaggressions are more likely to have

turnover intentions than women who do not experience them. Consequently, gender microaggressions may also negatively impact employee retention in organizations.

Literature review

Microaggressions

Although there is a wealth of information on prejudice and discrimination, and their impact, they still exist in organizations and the larger society. Subtle forms of prejudice have permeated organizations due to the difficulty in detecting and properly managing such subtle forms. Moreover, most of the research on prejudice has focused on racial minorities (e.g., Sue et al., 2007) and women (e.g., Eagly & Carli, 2007) with little attention paid to other protected groups.

The term microaggressions was originally coined by Chester Pierce, who defined the concept as "subtle, stunning, often automatic, and non-verbal exchanges which are "put-downs" of blacks by offenders" (Pierce et al., 1977, p. 65). Pierce et al.'s (1977) work emphasized the pervasiveness of racism by employing a content analysis of interracial interactions in TV commercials. Microaggressions received a lot more attention when Sue et al. (2007) revisited them in their journal article that examined microaggressions in daily life. This piece spurred research into microaggressions and the various forms it can take. Sue (2010) offered a tripartite taxonomy of microaggressions that include microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations. Microassaults refer to often conscious and explicit displays of verbal and non-verbal attacks, and intentional discriminatory behavior meant to hurt the target. They are akin to overt forms of racism because the perpetrator is aware of what he or she is doing and often feels safe when doing it. An example of a microassault is the deliberate serving of a white person before a

black person. Although this form of microaggression is overt, it is considered micro because the perpetrator normally has to feel safe and has to be in a private situation where his or her anonymity is assured. Microinsults, on the other hand, refers to often unconscious and subtle verbal and behavioral snubs that are rude or insensitive. The perpetrator is mostly unaware that his or her behavior has garnered such ill feelings in the target. For example, a seemingly innocent question of how a person of color attained a high position at a job may be misconstrued as a question of how the person got that job even though they lack the ability. This borders on the stereotype that people of color have lower general mental abilities than white people. Lastly, microinvalidations refer to unconscious verbal or non-verbal remarks that debunk the experiential realities of the target. An example is when a white person tells a black person that they do not see color. The black person might interpret this as meaning that they do not have a cultural identity. All these examples give credence to the fact that microaggressions do exist, but they are prone to subjective interpretations and this makes it difficult to detect or interpret. It is also possible that some traits or characteristics might make an individual more attuned to detecting microaggressions.

Gender microaggressions

Gender microaggressions may take the form of any of the above-mentioned types of microaggressions but it has to be due to the person's gender. A lot of the research done on microaggressions stems from the clinical and counseling psychology research streams (e.g., Sue et al., 2008; Torres et al., 2010). These researchers have mostly focused on the negative impact of microaggressions and the measures that can be put in place to prevent it. However, another aspect of microaggression research that is paramount to advancing

the literature is its recognition. This is because the elusiveness and subtlety associated with gender microaggressions may make it difficult for people to recognize it.

Consequently, the recognition of gender microaggressions is an important topic for I-O psychologists since adult women spend a greater part of their day at the workplace. When women experience subtle incivilities, they must be addressed because it not only affects the emotional, psychological and behavioral wellbeing of individual employees and teams but also the bottom line of organizations.

Extant Literature on Gender Microaggressions

Capodilupo and colleagues (2010) provided the first known taxonomy of gender microaggressions much like the taxonomy that Sue and colleagues (2007) found for racial microaggressions. The themes of gender microaggressions identified were sexual objectification, second class citizenship, assumption of inferiority, assumption of traditional gender roles, use of sexist language and environmental invalidations. This work also found that some forms of gender microaggressions occurred more than others. For example, assumptions of traditional gender roles and sexual objectification were found to occur more than environmental invalidations and second-class citizenship. With more women in the workforce these days, and more time spent in the day at the workplace than one's home, it is possible that these forms of gender microaggressions happen more at the workplace than in other contexts.

In terms of recognizing an act as a microaggression, Parker (2017) explored Whites' recognition of racial microaggressions and found that variables such as belief in a just world (BJW), social dominance orientation (SDO), awareness, perspective-taking, and empathic action helped to predict White people's recognition of racial

microaggressions. In this same vein, exploring the variables that influence a person's ability to recognize gender microaggressions may provide organizations with more insight into the construct of gender microaggressions. Externally motivated compliance with enforced laws and changing perceptions of discrimination in the workplace might make them appear as less of a problem in today's workplace (Sipe et al., 2016), but perpetrators may be more inclined to commit gender incivilities when they are not punishable by law. This is because there are no apparent legal prohibitions associated with subtle acts of gender microaggressions (Lukes & Bangs, 2014). This could create a hostile working environment and a host of other negative psychological outcomes for women in the workplace.

The Sipe et al. (2016) study on the perception of workplace-related gender discrimination found that university students no longer viewed gender discrimination as a serious threat to themselves or others, which does not necessarily mean that they are nonexistent nor impactful for others. As this study compared data from two cohorts in the millennial generation (2006 and 2013), the results suggested that those students who were getting ready to enter the workforce did not see gender discrimination as a problem for themselves or other women already in the workforce. These results are not surprising because research has shown that overt forms of sexism are on the decline and no longer socially acceptable (e.g., Crandall & Eshleman, 2003; Tougas et al., 1999). In sum, these findings may indicate a true decline in overt sexism or that individuals may be more prone to exhibiting other (subtle) forms of prejudice that may not have legal repercussions. For example, gender-specific stereotypes of women, such as being bad at math and good at cooking have led to certain verbal and behavioral acts that may be deemed non-

discriminatory. These perceptions can make it difficult to recognize the occurrence of gender microaggressions and blurs the lines between appropriate and inappropriate behavior toward gender minorities. Moreover, the term gender microaggression might be elusive to the many people in the workforce unless they have had related training or workshops to understand its nuances.

Because gender microaggressions stemmed from research on racial microaggression (e.g., Sue et al. 2007,) a lot of the research on it overlaps with many concepts in research related to covert sexism. One example of a related concept is ambivalent sexism. Ambivalent sexism comprises two types of attitudes - hostile and benevolent sexism. Hostile sexism refers to prejudice against women when they are perceived as seeking to control men through feminist ideologies and masculine behaviors whereas benevolent sexism refers to sexism women are seen as warm individuals who need to be protected and supported (Glick & Fiske, 2001). These forms of sexism tend to engender discrimination in HR policies and decision making that negatively affects women in the workplace. Some examples of the negative effects include but are not limited to lower pay, fewer opportunities for promotion, physical and mental stress (Schmader et al., 2008; Starnarski & Son Hing, 2015). However, gender microaggressions differs from these forms of sexism because their measurement has exhibited discriminant validity from other measures of modern sexism. (Judson, 2014)

One of the first researchers to study gender microaggressions was Solorzano (1998) who investigated the experiences of both racial and gender microaggressions of Chicana and Chicano scholars. This study was primarily qualitative and it employed critical race theory to examine the outcomes on the career path of predoctoral,

dissertation and postdoctoral fellows. The results showed that racial and gender microaggressions negatively impacted minority scholars. To be precise, participants reported feeling that they did not belong in their chosen field of academia due to their gender or race. Furthermore, they reported feelings of inadequacy with regards to advisor expectations and feelings of rejection due to subtle and overt incidents of racial and gender microaggressions. Taken together, these effects underscore the pervasiveness of gender microaggressions in academia. Similarly, subtle gender biases may lead to discrimination in other work settings. For example, Starnski and Son Hing (2015) reviewed the insidious effect of gender inequalities in organizations. They concluded that gender inequalities exist due to a HR practices that have been negatively affected by both hostile and benevolent sexism. Both types of sexism were found to lead to gender discrimination in HR policies, HR discrimination and HR enactment. The gradual escalation of subtle gender biases into full blown discrimination has therefore spurred some I/O psychologists to do more research on gender microaggressions in the workplace (e.g., Basford et al., 2014; Foley et al., 2005).

The literature on gender microaggressions is replete with exploratory research on discrimination against women but not much with regards to microaggressions. However, there have been some recent attempts at finding confirmatory support for the occurrence of gender microaggressions and its effects. Basford et al. (2014) for example, conducted an empirical study that highlighted the experiences of women at work. Their findings suggest that gender microaggressions, despite not being as overt as blatant discrimination, can be detected by third party observers and these observers differ in their perceptions. To be precise women were more attuned to detecting microaggressions.

They also suggest that these differences exist because women may have experienced more discrimination than men, thus making them more sensitive and cognizant of microaggressive acts. Another study that lends credence to the fact that gender microaggressions in the workplace are becoming a problem was conducted by Foley et al. (2005) which demonstrates the negative effects of gender microaggressions. In this study, female targets reported more negative levels of job-related attitudes such as organizational commitment and satisfaction.

Well-Being Outcomes of Gender Microaggressions

There has been some debate over the harmful effects of microaggressions in general. Some researchers have even speculated that a single instance of a microaggression should not lead to emotional or physical distress and that the effect of microaggressions has been overstated (e.g., Thomas, 2008; Schacht, 2008). Sue (2010) begs to differ on this notion and argues that microaggressions do not often occur as a one-time event but may rather occur often throughout one's life. According to Sue (2010), the cumulative effects of these experiences are often harmful and affect both the physical and meant wellbeing. Some of the negative outcomes for the target of microaggressions include stress and depression.

A meta-analytic review of adjustment outcomes associated with microaggressions demonstrated that LGBTQ, racial and health status microaggressions were all associated with adjustment outcomes except for gender microaggressions (Lui & Quezada, 2019). In this study, they described adjustment outcomes as including psychological (such as anxiety and depression), positive functioning indicators (such as self-esteem and subjective wellbeing), and physical health adjustment (diseases and physiological

responses). The results of this study demonstrated that microaggressions were more strongly associated with stress, positive affect, negative affect and internalizing problems. Specifically, these associations had a positive association with adjustment problems such that greater experience of microaggressions was related to more adjustment problems. The correlations with positive adjustment and positive outcomes were negative indicating that less microaggressions led to high positive affect or outcomes and vice versa. Together, these results show that microaggressions can negatively impact an individual's physical and mental wellbeing. Since most working adults spend a greater part of their day at work, these negative outcomes may affect their productivity and satisfaction with work. One reason for the insignificant results for gender microaggressions in this study may be because of the sample studied. Only one study in the meta-analysis solely examined the relationship between gender microaggressions and adjustment outcomes and this may have affected the effect size.

The specific effects of gender microaggression have not been well documented but the scant research available shows that there are some effects of gender microaggressions that can be detrimental to an individual's wellbeing. For example, there is evidence that suggests that there are biological consequences of experiencing a gender microaggression. Individuals on the receiving end of gender microaggressions may experience such symptoms as an increase in the stress hormone glucocorticoids, and also an increase in heart rate and blood pressure (Sapolsky, 2004). Since Sue (2010) asserts that microaggressions often happen throughout one's life, the continuous exposure to such experiences may lead to stress induced diseases, hypertension, and heart disease (Kaskan & Ho, 2016).

In addition, the targets of microaggressions may experience cognitive, emotional and behavioral problems. One of the ways that gender microaggressions can affect cognitive performance is through stereotype threat (Steele & Aronson, 1995). This concept suggests that people may feel the risk of affirming the stereotypes that others have of the social group to which they belong. It has been well documented that stereotype threat leads to poor performance or essentially confirms the stereotype of the social group to which one belongs (e.g., Beilock et al., 2007). A study by Kaskan and Ho (2016) also demonstrates the negative effect that gender microaggressions can have on female athletes. This study highlights the fact that salient negative stereotypes about a female athlete's physical ability could negatively impact their athletic performance. This reflects Sue's (2010) taxonomy of the assumption of inferiority. Extrapolating this effect to the workplace, a female worker who is made to feel inferior by virtue of her gender may exhibit subpar performance as opposed to good performance in the absence of stereotype threat.

Recognition of Gender Microaggressions

Because gender microaggressions are subtle and naturally ambiguous, they can leave the target confused as to whether some form of discrimination has occurred. Since they can range from very overt to subtle forms of discrimination, they give a broad lens to discover the modern forms of discrimination against women. Additionally, the ambiguity of gender microaggressions makes it difficult for organizations to take any disciplinary action through formal organizational policies (Jones et al., 2017). Despite this difficulty in recognizing microaggressions, the current literature suggests that women are more likely to recognize gender microaggressions because they may have personally

experienced them, thus making them a bit more sensitive to instances of microaggression (Basford et al., 2014). Men, on the other hand, might be less likely to recognize workplace-related gender microaggressions because they do not experience them as much as women do.

Hypothesis 1: Female participants will be more likely to recognize gender microaggressions than their male counterparts.

Role Congruity Theory

Role congruity theory (RCT) stems from social role theory and proposes that individuals have prescriptive and descriptive role expectations that they use to define behaviors of men and women (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Eagly & Wood, 2012). Based on these expectations, women are typically described and expected to be warm, nurturing and communal while men are described and expected to be assertive, agentic and more task-oriented than women (Schein, 2007). RCT extends social role theory (Eagly & Wood, 2012) by examining the congruence between gender roles and leadership roles such that when there is perceived incongruity, it leads to less favorable evaluations. Women who display agentic behaviors such as assertiveness and ambition are seen as violating their stereotypical expectations and this role incongruence leads to backlash and negative outcomes for women in organizations (Rudman & Phelan, 2008). Research on gender stereotypes generally shows that women are perceived to be more communal (e.g., caring and interdependent) than men, whereas men are perceived to be more agentic (e.g., ambitious and self-reliant), compared to women (Williams & Best, 1990). This backlash extends not only to women in leadership positions but to all women who are seen as violating their gender stereotypes at the workplace. The effect of conforming to

one's stereotype is perceived warmth whereas violations of the stereotype lead to less perceived warmth. Furthermore, people behave more favorably towards women in the form of benevolent sexism when they are perceived as warm and pure creatures. On the contrary, people tend to be more prejudiced in the form of hostile sexism when women exhibit masculine behaviors or lean towards feminist ideologies (Glick & Fiske, 2001). These perceptions could then affect the degree to which people recognize gender microaggressions perpetrated towards women.

Gender Stereotypes

Stereotypes refer to general assumptions and attributions we make about people due to their group membership (Welle & Heilman, 2007). Such over generalized beliefs can eventually lead to prejudice and discrimination through attitudes and behaviors. Gender represents one of the categories or ways in which stereotypical beliefs can lead to prejudice or discrimination. As a result, women have historically been perceived as the weaker sex in society and given roles that have to do with taking care of the home. Men on the other hand, have been seen as the stronger sex and were given roles that included being the breadwinner for their families. Research has however consistently classified gender stereotypes across two categories — communal and agentic (e.g., Broverman et al, 1972, Fiske et al, 2002; Eagly & Steffen, 1984). Women are usually described as communal which refers to behaviors such as being warm, nurturing and kind whereas men are described as agentic which refers to behaviors such as being assertive, dominant, and controlling (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Gender stereotypes can also be categorized as prescriptive and descriptive (Eagly, 1987). Descriptive gender stereotypes simply refer to how women and men are described while prescriptive gender stereotypes refer to the

expectations that others have of women and men on how they should behave. These stereotypes can therefore negatively affect women and men alike in the workplace if attributes or behaviors do not conform to the gender of a person.

In the workplace, gender stereotypes can be applied to jobs. For example, jobs requiring communal qualities such as nursing may have a greater percentage of women as opposed to men being employed in that field. In that same vein, jobs requiring agentic qualities such as engineering may have a greater percentage of men as opposed to women being employed in that field. Thus, a woman who is employed in a male typed job is seen as less likely to succeed and vice versa. This lack of congruence between gender stereotype and job stereotype can and often leads to bias in hiring and employment decisions (Rudman et al, 2012). Consequently, individuals are positively rated in gender consistent jobs that are considered consistent with their gender than jobs that are not considered inconsistent with their gender. For example, meta-analyses have revealed that men have are rated more positively in masculine type jobs than women in (e.g., Davison & Burke, 2000; Koch et al., 2015).

Since gender stereotypes affect and are affected by society, they can act a mechanism through which people commit acts of prejudice and discrimination. Furthermore, it can affect the ability of onlookers to recognize an act as a microaggression. Since gender microaggressions are subtle slights and snubs that are based on a person's gender, these stereotypes may lead people to say or do things that may not readily appear as a gender microaggression. For example, a woman being interrupted by a group of men during a meeting might seem normal because they are not used to hearing a female's opinion on a particular topic. This interruption might even be

unintentional, but it is still recognized as a gender microaggression if it has a negative impact on the target. Thus, researchers often focus on the impact gender microaggressions and not the intent of the perpetrator (Sue et al., 2009).

Stereotype Content Model

As discussed above, men are traditionally seen as agentic which is a term that describes masculine behaviors such as being assertive, independent, and active. Women, on the other hand, are seen as communal which describes feminine behaviors such as being warm, kind and helpful. These behaviors are also informed by the stereotype content model (Fiske et al., 2002) which postulates that group stereotypes lead to either warmth or competence perceptions. Specifically, women who display agentic behaviors are perceived as high in competence and low in warmth and women who display communal behaviors are seen as low in competence but high in warmth. Furthermore, since agentic women are perceived as less likable (warm), less hireable, and more likely to be discriminated against (e.g., Heilman & Okimoto, 2007; Rudman & Phelan, 2008), it is hypothesized that women who do not conform to their communal stereotypes will be viewed less favorably, and instances of gender microaggressions perpetrated against them are less likely to be recognized. This is because selection and evaluation decisions may be biased in favor of agentic men rendering this bias a systemic type of prejudice that goes unnoticed. Extrapolating this systemic prejudice to a workplace setting, we may infer that women who are perceived as lacking warmth, may be subject to more instances of subtle discrimination and observers may become complacent in recognizing gender microaggressions perpetrated towards such women. This may happen because women perceived as lacking warmth are less likeable. Conversely, when a woman

conforms to her gender stereotype, she is viewed as more likable and observers are more likely to recognize microaggression perpetrated towards her.

Hypothesis 2: Participants will be less likely to recognize gender microaggressions when the target is role incongruent or displays more masculine behaviors.

Hypothesis 3: Participants will be more likely to recognize gender microaggressions when the target is role congruent or displays more feminine behaviors.

System Justifying Ideologies

Another way in which gender microaggressions may be perpetuated is through system justifying ideologies. This concept stems from system justification theory which refers to the idea that people try to preserve the status quo by rationalizing economic, political, and social climates as fair and legitimate (Jost et al., 2004; Jost & Hunyady, 2002). There are many types of system justifying ideologies ranging from belief in a just world (the idea that people get what they deserve; Jost & Burgess, 2000) to social dominance theory (the idea that group based hierarchy is not bad; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). An interesting effect of these ideologies is that minority groups consciously and unconsciously have preferences for majority group ideas (Jost et al., 2002). This may seem counterintuitive at first because it makes more sense for minority groups to endorse positive change for their group rather than maintain the status quo. However, dispositional variables such as the need for control and situational variables such as the system instability may increase the acceptance of such ideologies. It is based on the premise that the devil you know may be better than the angel you do not know (Jost & Hunyady, 2016). These ideologies may therefore perpetuate the cycle of prejudice and discrimination in societies. Endorsement of system justifying ideologies could lead to

minority groups evaluating majority groups more favorably than their ingroup (Jost & Hunyady, 2016). For example, females may unconsciously or consciously endorse males for certain managerial roles in companies if that is the status quo. This could easily lead to hiring discrimination when a woman who is more qualified than a male vying for the same position is not considered because of her gender. In that same vein, system justifying ideologies could encourage gender microaggressions through the endorsement of attitudes such as men being superior to women in certain job roles namely science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). Group based system justifying ideologies such as social dominance orientation represents one of the mechanisms through which gender microaggressions may occur because of the gender split of men and women and instances where either gender could be a majority or minority group.

Social Dominance Orientation

Social dominance orientation (SDO) is one of the examples of system justifying ideologies and individual personality differences that can play a role in the recognition and perception of microaggressions. According to Pratto et al. (1994), SDO is an individual difference variable that reflects the extent to which an individual favors hierarchy enhancing or hierarchy attenuating ideologies. SDO is derived from social dominance theory (SDT) which also explains group-based hierarchies and how it affects society (Pratto et al., 1994). To be precise, it explains why society gives access to social and political value to groups considered as traditionally high status (e.g., men) and lower social and political value to traditionally considered low-status groups (e.g., women, minorities). This traditional hierarchy of high-status groups is maintained because individuals in the high-status group want to maintain their status and so they use their

ideologies and behaviors to maintain such status in society (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999; Sidanius et al., 2000).

Gender and SDO

Individuals with high SDO tend to favor the distribution of power and status to high-status groups and the relegation of things that are of low social value to lower-status groups (Sidanius & Veniegas, 2000). They tend to want leadership or high-status positions (Son Hing et al., 2007), and discriminate against qualified but traditionally considered low-status individuals seeking leadership or high-status positions (Simmons & Umphress, 2015). Even individuals who are a part of the low status or minority group sometimes act favorably toward members of their out-group or majority group versus members of their ingroup due to ingrained societal hierarchies. This is a concept known as outgroup favoritism and it occurs when members of low-status groups display a bias in favor of a dominant group (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). This bias could stem from discrimination due to gender (women), age (younger individuals), and socially constructed low-status groups (e.g., African Americans; Sidanius et al., 2000; O'Brien & Dietz, 2011).

In the modern workplace, SDO manifests itself through opposition to decisions or policies that favor lower status groups. In a study conducted by Fraser et al. (2015), SDO was found to be positively correlated with opposition to gender based affirmative action with benevolent sexism (the idea that women are weak and need to be cared for) as a moderating factor. The results of this study confirmed the hypotheses that SDO serves as vehicle through which inequalities exist at the workplace through. Benevolent sexism was negatively correlated with opposition to gender based affirmative action and it also

attenuated the relationship between SDO and gender based affirmative action. Although benevolent sexism attenuated the relationship between SDO and opposition to gender based affirmative action, this result perpetuates gender inequality by through paternalistic ideologies that women need extra help to enter the workforce. Thus, support for affirmative action based on benevolent sexism promotes the idea that women are less capable than men in the workplace.

SDO could also lead to the use of harsh influence tactics or abuse of power in organizations. Previous research has demonstrated that both supervisor and subordinate workers who are high in SDO, are more likely to endorse the use of harsh tactics such as being controlling and coercive, as opposed to soft tactics that allow the recipient to freely choose to comply with requests made by the influencer (Aiello et al., 2013). These results suggest that women may be subjected to harsh influence tactics from either their colleagues or managers.

Prejudice toward women is one of the many harmful effects of SDO in the workplace. Christopher and Wojda (2008) highlighted the effects of SDO, right wing authoritarianism, sexism and prejudice on women in the workplace. Relevant to this study is the relationship between SDO, employment skepticism and traditional role preference. The results showed that SDO significantly predicted employment sexism which refers to the idea that women did not have the ability to succeed at the workplace (Valentine, 2001) and traditional role preference which refers to the preference for adherence to gender roles (Valentine, 2001). Furthermore, hostile sexism partially mediated the relationship between SDO and employment skepticism. This means that those high in SDO are most likely high in hostile sexism, and hostile sexism helps to

explain the relationship between SDO and employment skepticism. Taken together, these results show that SDO could lead to subtle discrimination or in this case, gender microaggressions through employment skepticism and traditional role preference.

Given all the research indicated above that shows that SDO is positively associated with prejudice and prejudicial expression towards low-status groups, it is expected that individuals with high SDO will be less likely to recognize gender microaggressions due to their endorsement of power differentials and specific to this study, sexism. Consequently, it is expected that an observer's level of SDO will impact the recognition of gender microaggressions. When an observer is high in SDO, it is expected that he or she will be less likely to recognize gender microaggressions due to their preference for inequality. On the other hand, if an individual has low SDO, they might be more likely to recognize gender microaggressions because they prefer equitable treatment of individuals in society.

Hypothesis 4: Participants who are high in SDO will be less likely to recognize gender microaggressions while participants who are low in SDO will be more likely to recognize gender microaggressions.

Ambivalent Sexism

Modern day sexism can also be conceptualized as ambivalent sexism which comprises both hostile and benevolent sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Society has entrenched certain norms in the minds of individuals such that there are accepted attitudes and opinions about gender roles. Historically, women have been given gender roles that relate to nurturing relationships and taking care of the home. These cultural and societal norms may affect the way women are perceived when they enter the workforce.

Although there are laws that protect women from blatant discrimination, women currently face a more subtle form of discrimination known as modern sexism (Swim et al., 1995). According to Swim et al. (1995) modern sexism manifests itself through a belief that discriminatory behavior towards women is no longer an issue, animosity towards women who push for political and economic agendas, and general displeasure surrounding special treatment of women. On one hand, they are expected to work just like their male counterparts and on the other, they have to exhibit behaviors that are deemed stereotypical for women in terms of being warm, nurturing and relationship-oriented. A high preference for traditional gender roles is perceived as negative attitudes towards women because it does not encourage women to defy the odds or to take on roles that are not typical of their gender. Low preference for traditional roles, on the other hand, would mean that one has a positive attitude toward women regardless of gender stereotypical or non-stereotypical roles.

Hostile and Benevolent Sexism

Hostile sexism is characterized by ill feelings towards women who challenge men's authority and power whereas benevolent sexism reflects protective and paternalistic beliefs towards women who are deemed as warm and nurturing (Glick & Fiske, 2001). Both forms of sexism are harmful and they can lead to negative consequences on both the well-being and career progression of women in the workplace.

For example, hostile sexism has been linked to lower morale, lower job satisfaction, increased absenteeism, anger, anxiety, and depression of women in the workplace (Fitzgerald, 1993). There is also some research on the psychosomatic effects of hostile sexism from which we can infer that the emotions caused by experiencing

hostile sexism lead to physical illness such as cardiovascular issues (Schneider et al., 2001).

Recognition of gender microaggressions perpetrated towards communal women may be based on the subtype of ambivalent sexism known as benevolent sexism. This type of sexism comprises of attitudes that are paternalistic or protective of women (Glick & Fiske, 2001). Nevertheless, benevolent sexism also leads to subtle discrimination because warm women may be seen as incompetent and they may be treated in a condescending manner (Dardenne et al., 2007). These attitudes might make observers more attuned to instances of gender microaggressions perpetrated towards communal women. Benevolent sexism may initially seem innocent or positive but it also has detrimental effects. It maintains gender inequality by increasing women's acceptance of the status quo (Jost & Kay, 2005). Moreover, women may also downplay their task competencies and emphasize their relational qualities (Barreto et al., 2010). Lastly, the experience of benevolent sexism may lead to a reduction in women's cognitive performance (Dardenne et al., 2007). It is therefore expected that observers with negative or hostile attitudes towards women will be less likely to recognize microaggressions whereas those with positive or benevolent attitudes towards women will be more likely to recognize gender microaggressions.

Hypothesis 5: There will be an inverse relationship between hostile sexism and gender microaggressions such that participants with high levels of hostile sexism will be less likely to recognize gender microaggressions and vice versa.

Hypothesis 6: There will be a positive relationship between benevolent sexism and gender microaggressions such that participants with high levels of benevolent sexism will be more likely to recognize gender microaggressions and vice versa.

Perception of Gender Discrimination Toward Women

Generational differences affect the way people perceive ideas and social climates. For baby boomers (those born between the 1940s and 1960s), they saw a wave of organizations and laws that protect individuals from being discriminated against in the workplace. Examples of such organizations and laws include the EEOC and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 respectively. These formal policies and organizations, therefore, made this cohort aware of the legal ramifications of overt discrimination in employment. It is therefore expected that as the years go by, overt discrimination becomes less of a problem. However, perceptions can still vary regardless of formal policies and laws that are in effect.

A study conducted on the perception of discrimination by university students shows that they did not see discrimination against women as a major threat to women and themselves (Sipe et al., 2009). The conclusion from this study is that the generation commonly referred to as Millennials or Generation Y (those born in the 1980s and 1990s) believe that gender discrimination is fast becoming a mere relic of the past. Contrary to this view, a follow-up study shows that this perception of discrimination has shifted to more awareness of not only women but men as well (Sipe et al., 2016). The only finding that remained constant across these two studies is the fact that these millennials do not perceive that they will be personally affected by discrimination when they enter the workforce. Thus, the current perceptions regarding gender discrimination by the young generation is that it persists. However, they do not believe that they will be personally affected which seems a bit counterintuitive. If they believe it persists then they should anticipate facing some form of discrimination in the workplace. It is expected that the

degree to which one believes that gender discrimination toward others is still a problem in the workplace will affect the propensity to recognize gender microaggressions because the individual may be more or less attuned to it based on their current perceptions.

Hypothesis 7: Participants with a low level of gender discrimination perceptions towards women will be less likely to recognize gender microaggressions and those with a high level of gender discrimination perceptions towards women will be more likely to recognize gender microaggressions.

Methods

Participants

A total of 232 participants were recruited nationally from Amazon MTurk. To qualify for the study, participants had to be at least 18 years of age, English speaking and reside in the United States. Participants also had to have an approval rating greater than (95%) and must have completed more than 5000 human intelligence (HIT) tasks. These options were selected because they help to ensure overall quality of results. Participation was voluntary, and the study took approximately 15 minutes to complete.

Due to data loss from screening and cleaning, the final sample was 220. The sample comprised of 100 men representing (45.5%) of the sample and 118 women representing (53.6%) of the sample. Two subjects chose “other” for gender representing (0.9%) of the sample. The mean age of participants was 39.95 with a standard deviation of 11.87. Regarding the racial composition of the sample, (70%) identified as White/Caucasian, (4.5%) as Hispanic/Latinx, (6.4%) as Black/African American, (0.5%) as Native American/American Indian, (16.4%) as Asian/Pacific Islander, and (2.3%) identified as other. The sample was then split into microaggressive and non-

microaggressive samples. Descriptive statistics for demographic information including the sample size for gender, and sample size and percentages of the split sample are presented in Table 1.

Design

This study employed a 2 (scenario type: microaggressive condition, non microaggressive condition) x 2 (role congruency: feminine, masculine) between-subjects factorial design. An a priori analysis using G*Power (Faul et al., 2009) indicated that a total of 179 participants were needed to achieve statistical power based on a medium effect size and an alpha of .05. Due to data cleaning there was an unequal number of participants assigned to the four conditions – role congruent microaggressive condition ($n = 57$), role incongruent microaggressive condition ($n = 55$), role congruent non microaggressive condition ($n = 50$) and role incongruent non microaggressive condition ($n = 58$).

Procedure

Participants were recruited from Amazon MTurk, a crowdsourcing marketplace that enables businesses and individuals to collect data using human intelligence tasks (HIT). The questionnaire for this study was constructed with Qualtrics and then exported to Amazon MTurk for data collection. The questionnaire was created such that every participant was assigned a code in Qualtrics at the beginning, but this code was only presented to them after successfully completing the survey.

Participants were asked to read a statement of informed consent and to indicate whether they agree or not before moving forward. After their consent, participants were then randomly assigned to one of four gender microaggression conditions and they each

read one scenario that depicts an interaction between a male supervisor and a female subordinate. Participants then rated the scenarios based on how offensive they were using the perceived gender microaggressions scale. This was used to determine the recognition of gender microaggressions.

After completion of the ratings, they were administered the social dominance orientation (SDO) scale, ambivalent sexism inventory (ASI) scale, and perception of discrimination towards women scale. Upon completion of these self-reports, participants answered some demographic questions including but not limited to age, race, gender, level of education, and socioeconomic status. After successfully completing (80%) or more of the survey in Qualtrics, participants were presented with a unique code for verification which they inserted into a box provided on the Amazon MTurk task page. Participants were compensated \$0.50 for their time after completing the surveys and providing the right code for approval of compensation.

Materials

The vignettes were developed by the principal researcher and reviewed by dissertation committee members. They comprised of a blurb that describes an interaction between a man and a woman in a workplace setting. The behavior manipulation in these vignettes were specifically meant to convey the adherence to or lack thereof, of female stereotypes at work. In other words, role congruity was conveyed by the depiction of a woman in either a gender-conforming or gender non-conforming role based on adjectives used to describe masculine and feminine behaviors.

Behavior descriptions based on the warmth and competence dimensions of the stereotype content model (SCM; Fiske et al., 2002) were used to manipulate role

congruity. To be precise, words such as warm, nurturing, and people-oriented were used to describe the role congruent woman while assertive, goal focused, and task oriented were used to describe the role incongruent woman. The vignettes also comprised of a microaggression statement and a no microaggression statement. Role congruity therefore had two levels – role congruent and role incongruent and perceived microaggression also had two levels – a microaggressive condition and a non microaggressive condition. Thus, there were four total conditions – microaggressive role congruent, microaggressive role incongruent, non-microaggressive role congruent and non-microaggressive/role incongruent conditions. In addition, the vignettes chronicled information about the target's role and expertise. All four vignettes contained the same information as a control except for the manipulation of role congruity and perceived gender microaggressions (see Appendix A).

Measures

Perceived Gender Microaggressions Scale: The perceived microaggression scale was adapted from a scale developed by Graebner et al. (2009). This scale was originally developed to assess the degree to which third-party observers recognize racially motivated subtle behaviors that were discriminatory (Sue et al., 2007). It was further modified by Basford et al. (2014) to reflect perceived gender microaggressions by replacing racially descriptive words with gender descriptive ones. It is a 13 item Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Higher scores on this scale indicate higher perceptions or recognition of microaggression while low scores indicate lower perceptions or recognition of microaggression based on each vignette. Scores on this scale were obtained by computing the average. An example item from this scale is

“The supervisor’s behavior was meant to harm the subordinate”. In previous research (Basford et al., 2014), this scale has demonstrated an acceptable Cronbach’s alpha ($\alpha = .68 - .89$). In the present study, this scale demonstrated good reliability across conditions. The role congruent microaggressive condition was .86, role incongruent microaggressive condition was .76, non-microaggressive role congruent was .86 and lastly, the non microaggressive role incongruent condition was .86.

Social Dominance Orientation: SDO was measured using the revised version of the social dominance orientation scale proposed by Ho et al. (2015). This 8-item version is measured on a 7-point Likert type scale ranging from Strongly oppose (1) to Strongly favor (7). An example item from this scale is “Some groups of people are simply inferior to others”. Higher scores on this scale reflect high levels of SDO. Also, this scale has been found to have good reliability ($\alpha = 0.87$). In the present study this scale demonstrated good reliability ($\alpha = .91$)

Ambivalent Sexism: To measure sexist attitudes towards women, the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI; Glick & Fiske, 1996) was employed. This scale has two subscales (hostile and benevolent sexism) that can be used separately as well as an overall measure of sexism. An example item is “Women seek to gain power by getting control over men”. Higher scores on this scale indicate higher levels of sexism whereas lower scores indicate lower levels of sexism. This scale is measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from disagree strongly (0) to agree strongly (5). Also, this scale has a good Cronbach’s alpha ranging from .83 to .92 across six samples (Glick & Fiske, 1996). This scale also demonstrated good reliability for this study ($\alpha = .92$)

Gender Discrimination Toward Women: The degree to which one perceives others (women to be specific) will experience discrimination in the workplace will be assessed using an adapted measure from Sipe et al.'s (2016) study known as GD women. High scores on this scale indicate high levels of gender discrimination perceptions towards women and vice versa. An example item from this scale is “Women will face gender-specific biases to their career success.” This scale is measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from never (1) to likely (5) and it has a good Cronbach’s alpha of .88 (Sipe et al., 2016). For this study, the Cronbach’s alpha was .90.

Results

Before analyzing the data, the data were screened for missing data, outliers, normality of variables and failed attention checks. Firstly, the data were coded and found to be within range for both the demographic data and Likert type data. To test for missing values, Little’s MCAR test was conducted on all variables used for hypothesis testing. All the variables in the dataset had less than (5%) missing data and Little’s MCAR test was insignificant on all the variables indicating that the data were missing completely at random. The data was then analyzed with and without missing values, but the data reported are without missing data because no significant differences were found between the two datasets.

Next, the data were screened for univariate and multivariate outliers. Only one case was identified as both a univariate and multivariate due to an extreme score in age (82), but this case was kept because it had no other extreme scores or missing data. There were four conditions reflecting gender microaggressions and role incongruity. Subjects were removed only when they failed both attention checks. The multiple-choice attention

check items asked for the occupation of the person in the vignette and the second check item asked for a behavioral description of the leader. The first attention check item was consistent across conditions whereas the second attention check item was dependent on the manipulation – role congruent or role incongruent. There were 12 total subjects that failed both attention check items – four from condition 1, three from condition 2, three from condition 3, and two from condition 4.

Since most of the scales used in this study were in Likert format which is susceptible to insufficient effort responding (IER), the data were observed for long string responding which is one of the types of IER. This type of IER assumes that unmotivated participants may choose a particular response repeatedly (Huang et al., 2012). All the scales in the study were assessed for IER with a cutoff point of 5. This means that a participant repeating the same answer five times would be flagged. There were no flagged participants using this cutoff. The remaining usable sample after cleaning the data was 220. The original data and cleaned data were both used to test the hypotheses, but no significant differences were found between the two datasets. The results in this study therefore reflect the results from the cleaned data.

To confirm that the manipulation for perceived gender microaggressions was successful, an independent *t*-test was used to test for a difference between those who received the microaggression conditions versus the non-microaggressive conditions. The results showed a significant difference, [$t(218) = 14.19, p < .001$] between the two conditions. Those in the microaggressive condition scored higher in levels of perceived microaggression ($M = 3.38, SD = 0.60$) than those in the non-microaggressive condition ($M = 2.20, SD = 0.63$) suggesting that the manipulation worked. Further analyses using

an ANOVA test was significant. [$F(3, 216) = 70.29, p < .001$] and a Tukey post hoc test revealed a significant difference only between the pairwise comparisons of the microaggressive conditions and non microaggressive conditions. The comparison between the role congruent microaggressive condition ($M = 3.46, SD = 0.62$) and the role incongruent microaggressive condition ($M = 3.29, SD = 0.57$) yielded no significant difference ($p = .47$). Similarly, the comparison between the role congruent non-microaggressive condition ($M = 2.08, SD = 0.56$) and the role incongruent non-microaggressive condition ($M = 2.31, SD = .68$) yielded no significant difference ($p = .21$). Results of the multiple comparisons including the mean differences and standard errors are displayed in Table 2. The frequency distribution for the four conditions are displayed in Figures 1 through 4. Due to the loss of data resulting from data screening, there was an unequal number of participants assigned to the different conditions. The means, standard deviations, and sample sizes of the four conditions are presented in Table 3. The means, standard deviations and correlations between the scale variables in the study namely, SDO, ASI, gender perceptions, hostile sexism, benevolent sexism, and perceived microaggressions for both the full sample and subsample of those in the microaggressive conditions, are presented in Table 4 and Table 5 respectively.

To test hypothesis 1, an independent t-test was used to assess whether female participants were more likely to recognize gender microaggressions than their male counterparts. The sample subset that received the microaggression conditions was used to test this hypothesis. The results showed that gender was not significant [$t(110) = -.53, p = .60$] although women ($M = 3.41, SD = 0.63$) attained slightly higher scores than men ($M = 3.34, SD = 0.57$). This does not fall in line with previous hypotheses that state that

women are more attuned to recognizing microaggressions than men. Hypothesis 1 was therefore not supported.

Hypothesis 2, which stated that participants would be less likely to recognize microaggressions if the target in the scenario displayed more masculine behaviors (role incongruent) and hypothesis 3, which stated that participants would be more likely to recognize gender microaggressions if the target in the scenario displayed more feminine behaviors (role congruent) were tested with an independent t-test. The two microaggression conditions (microaggressive role congruent and microaggressive role incongruent) served as the independent variables and perceived gender microaggressions served as the dependent variable. There was no significant effect of role congruency conditions on levels of perceived microaggression [$t(110) = 1.49, p = .14$]. Consequently, the hypothesis that participants would be less likely to recognize gender microaggressions when the target is role incongruent was not supported. In that same vein, the hypothesis that participants would be more likely to recognize gender microaggressions when the target is role congruent was not supported.

To test hypothesis 4, which stated that participants high in SDO would be less likely to recognize gender microaggressions while participants low in SDO would be more likely to recognize gender microaggressions, a Pearson Product Moment correlation was conducted with a subset of participants under the microaggression conditions. The results revealed a statistically significant negative correlation between level of SDO and level of perceived microaggression, $r(110) = -.34, p < .001$. This means that higher levels of SDO are associated with lower recognition of gender microaggressions and vice versa. Hypothesis 4 was therefore supported.

Hypothesis 5, which stated that there would be an inverse relationship between hostile sexism and gender microaggressions such that participants with high levels of hostile sexism would be less likely to recognize gender microaggressions and vice versa, and hypothesis 6, which stated that there would be a positive relationship between benevolent sexism and gender microaggressions such that participants with high levels of benevolent sexism would be more likely to recognize gender microaggressions and vice versa were also tested using the Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficient. A significant negative correlation was found between hostile sexism and levels of perceived gender microaggression, $r(110) = -.31, p < .001$, which supports hypothesis 5. However, a negative correlation was found between benevolent sexism and levels of perceived gender microaggressions, $r(110) = -.28, p = .003$. As a result, hypothesis 6 was not supported.

Hypothesis 7 stated that participants with a low level of gender discrimination perceptions towards women would be less likely to recognize gender microaggressions and those with high levels of gender discrimination perceptions towards women would be more likely to recognize gender microaggressions. This hypothesis was tested using the Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficient. The results showed a positive correlation between gender discrimination perceptions towards women and levels of perceived gender microaggressions, $r(110) = .28, p = .003$, lending support to hypothesis 7.

Additional Analyses

A principal components analysis was conducted on the 13-item perceived gender microaggressions scale using oblique rotation. The measure of sampling adequacy,

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO), was .81 and above the commonly recommended value of .60. Bartlett's test of sphericity was also significant ($\chi^2(78, N = 220) = 640.32, p < .001$). The results showed that a three-factor solution explained a substantial portion (63%) of the total variance in scores (Figure 5). Factor loadings for the three factors were all above .50. The first factor, which accounted for (34%) of the variance seemed to ask about the intent of the perpetrator(intention). The second factor, which accounted for (18%) had a cluster of items that asked if the actions were discriminatory(discrimination) and the third factor, which accounted for (10%) of the variance were items that revolved around awareness of the discriminatory nature of their actions(awareness). Factor loadings of the three-factor solution are displayed in Table 9.

Gender and racial differences in SDO were tested using an independent samples t-test and an ANOVA test respectively. The results of the analyses showed a significant difference between genders on level of SDO, [$t(216) = 1.97, p = .05$]. However, the ANOVA test revealed no significant racial differences on levels of SDO [$F(5, 214) = 0.42, p = .86$].

To test for priming effects of the vignettes on the self-report inventories, an ANOVA was conducted to test for differences in SDO, ambivalent sexism, hostile sexism, benevolent sexism and gender discrimination perceptions towards women on all four conditions. The results were insignificant for SDO [$F(3, 216) = 2.37, p = .71$] and ambivalent sexism [$F(3, 216) = 2.16, p = .94$]. Similarly, there were insignificant results for both benevolent sexism [$F(3, 216) = .54, p = .65$] and gender discrimination perceptions towards women [$F(3, 216) = 0.39, p = .76$]. There was a significant effect however between conditions on hostile sexism [$F(3, 216) = 2.84, p = .04$]

A regression analysis was also conducted with gender and age groups as the independent variables and recognition of gender microaggressions as the dependent variable to test for gender and age differences in recognition. The results from the ANOVA in the regression model were insignificant [$F(2, 109) = .27, p = .76$]. Similarly, the results for an interaction effect for gender and age were also insignificant [$F(1, 110) = .02, p = .90$].

A hierarchical multiple regression was also performed to analyze the independent contributions of SDO, hostile sexism, benevolent sexism, and gender discrimination perceptions towards women on the recognition of gender microaggressions. In the first block, SDO, hostile sexism and benevolent sexism were entered as predictors. The analysis yielded a significant result [$F(3, 108) = 6.20, p = .001$] and the predictors accounted for (15%) of the variance in recognition of gender microaggressions. In block two, gender discrimination perceptions towards women was added to the predictors. The second model accounted for (19%) of the variance in the recognition of gender microaggressions indicating that gender discrimination perceptions improved the model's ability to predict the recognition of gender microaggressions towards women over and above SDO, hostile sexism and ambivalent sexism [$R^2 = .04, F(4, 107) = 6.14, p < .001$]. To be precise, these results show the significant effect of gender discrimination perceptions ($b = .15, t(110) = 2.29, p = .02$) on recognition of gender microaggressions (see Table 6).

Another hierarchical multiple regression analysis was performed to ascertain the effect of the same predictors in the previous paragraph on the recognition of gender microaggressions in the neutral or non-microaggressive conditions. Since the dependent

variable here was neutral, this analysis was done to see if role congruency has an effect on recognition although there was no microaggression. The analysis yielded a significant result for the first block of predictors [$F(3, 104) = 6.52, p < .001$] accounting for (16%) of the variance. The second block was also significant [$F(4, 103) = 5.40, p = .001$] and accounted for (17%) of the variance. This suggests that the addition of gender discrimination perceptions only slightly improved the model. Of particular interest was the finding that hostile sexism was related to recognition under the neutral microaggression conditions ($b = .20, t(106) = 3.21, p = .002$) indicating that hostile sexism was predicting something in the neutral perceived gender microaggression conditions (see Table 7).

Independent t tests were further used to analyze levels of hostile sexism between the role congruent non-microaggressive and role incongruent non-microaggressive conditions. The results failed to show a significant difference, [$t(106) = -1.05, p = .30$] between role congruent and role incongruent non-microaggressive conditions on hostile sexism. Further independent t-tests were employed to assess the differences between the role congruent non-microaggressive condition and the role incongruent non-microaggressive condition on levels of gender perceptions toward women, SDO, ambivalent sexism, benevolent sexism and hostile sexism. Except for SDO [$t(106) = -2.39, p = .02$], all comparisons were insignificant. A summary of the means, standard deviations and t-test comparisons on the neutral microaggression conditions are given in Table 8.

Independent t-tests were conducted to test for the difference between men and women on hostile and benevolent sexism. The independent t-test conducted to test the

difference between men and women on hostile sexism was significant, [$t(216) = 2.70, p = .007$] with men ($M = 1.90, SD = 1.12$) scoring higher than women ($M = 1.47, SD = 1.21$). However, the independent t-test conducted to test for the gender difference in benevolent sexism was insignificant [$t(215) = 1.11, p = .27$]. Levene's test indicated unequal variances so the degrees of freedom were adjusted from 216 to 215.

Discussion

The present study sought to determine how individual difference variables could impact the recognition of gender microaggressions in third-party observers. The manipulation for perceived microaggression was successful as can be seen with the higher means obtained for the microaggression conditions as compared to the non-microaggressive conditions. This was consistent with the expectation that third-party observers would recognize gender microaggressions. There is research that supports the assertion that women recognize gender microaggressions more than men (Basford et al., 2014). One reason for this is that women may have personally experienced subtle gender discrimination than men. For example, Cortina et al. (2002) conducted a study with a sample of female and male attorneys in which they assessed the level of workplace incivility experienced by both men and women. The results showed that women (65%) experienced more acts of incivility than men (47%) did. This prior experience with subtle gender discrimination may therefore make women more attuned to recognizing gender microaggressions than men. Since previous research has established that women recognize gender microaggressions more than men do (e.g., Basford et al., 2014), it was expected that the same result will hold in this study. On the contrary, this hypothesis was not supported. One possible explanation is that men may be equally attuned to

recognizing gender microaggressions as women. Recent changes in workplaces such as workplace respect training, accountability and gender equity initiatives could have made the topic of subtle discrimination more salient to men. They might not know the term microaggressions, but they may be aware of subtle sexist or gender related incivilities. Another possible explanation for this is the power of the study. The sample size was reduced to focus on solely the microaggression conditions which had 55 males and 57 females.

Due to the backlash experienced by role incongruent women, it was expected that participants would not notice gender microaggressions towards women who displayed masculine behaviors as much as those meted out to women who displayed feminine or role congruent behaviors. Contrary to expectation, these hypotheses were not supported. The changing stereotype of the nature of leadership may provide an explanation for these results. There is some school of thought that supports the adoption of feminine behaviors as crucial or typical for effective leadership (e.g., Due Billing & Alvesson, 2000). This means that the description of the role congruent woman was not seen as an adherence to a stereotype but rather a good characteristic of a female leader or colleague. This explanation presents some favorable conclusions for women in leadership. Consequently, women may have less barriers in obtaining leadership positions, promotions. Furthermore, gender microaggressions perpetrated towards women may be reduced due to the changing stereotype of women in the workplace.

The prediction that SDO is associated with less recognition of gender microaggressions was confirmed in the present study. The results demonstrated that people with higher levels of SDO were less likely to recognize gender microaggressions

and people with lower levels of SDO were more likely to recognize gender microaggressions. Previous research has demonstrated that SDO was associated with higher levels of discriminatory ideologies (Sidanius & Veniegas, 2000). Moreover, SDO is positively correlated with other measures of racism and inequality such as Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA; Roccato & Ricolfi, 2005) and hostile sexism. Thus, those with high levels of SDO are more likely to have higher levels of hostile sexism and this helps to explain the preference for traditional gender roles and sexism in the workplace (Valentine, 2001). Since SDO is related to preference for high status groups and men are arbitrarily seen as higher in status in society than women, they may feel threatened by women who challenge the status quo or try to assume masculine dominated jobs. This explains why individuals (mostly men) may have higher levels of SDO and hostile sexism. The stereotype content model (Fiske et al., 2002) also presents another way in which SDO and sexism may be perpetuated. Women who adhere to traditional stereotypes are seen as warm but incompetent, while women who defy stereotypes are seen as competent but not warm. Consequently, some men in the workplace may feel threatened by women who defy stereotypes and this threat works as another mechanism through which men may display subtle sexist behaviors. This dislike for women who violate traditional gender stereotypes could eventually make men a bit negligent when it comes to recognizing gender microaggressions. Individuals with high levels of SDO and hostile sexism may be the instigators and perpetrators of gender microaggressions making it even more difficult to recognize a gender microaggression after they have committed them. Likewise, a third-party observer who is high in SDO and hostile sexism may not readily recognize them when they occur. Results are therefore consistent with

previous research in the sense that those with high levels of SDO are more prone to higher levels of sexism and consequently, less likely to recognize them as a third-party observer. These results further suggest that a third-party observer's level of SDO plays a big role in determining whether a gender microaggression has been perceived.

Another aim of this study was to identify the differential effects of hostile and benevolent sexism on the ability to recognize gender microaggressions. Both hostile and benevolent sexism were found to have a statistically significant negative correlation with recognition of gender microaggressions. The results of the relationship between hostile sexism and perceived gender microaggressions were in the expected direction. This means that individuals with high levels of hostile sexism were less likely to recognize gender microaggressions. This result intuitively makes sense because individuals with a high regard for sexist ideologies may be less attuned to incivilities meted out against women. On the other hand, the results did not support the hypothesis that benevolent sexism is positively related to perceived gender microaggressions. The reasoning behind this hypothesis was that benevolent sexism operates differently than hostile sexism. Benevolent sexism may manifest itself in the perception that women are weak and need to be cared for. This perception could therefore make people more attuned to recognizing gender microaggressions. Since the results show that the inverse is true, it is possible that there are no differential effects. Benevolent sexism may also prevent people from paying attention to incivilities perpetrated towards women. These results also lend credence to role congruity (Eagly & Karau, 2002) and stereotype content model theories (Fiske et al, 2002)). Firstly, role congruity predicts that women who conform to their prescriptive roles are seen as warm and are less likely to be discriminated against whereas women

who do not conform to their stereotype are seen as less likeable and may be subject to more discrimination. Extrapolating this to gender microaggressions, it can be said that women who do not conform to their stereotype are also seen as less likeable. Individuals are less likely to recognize gender microaggressions perpetrated towards these women because they do not pay much attention to a less likeable person. Similarly, the stereotype content model which posits that group stereotypes may lead to either perceived warmth or competence may manifest itself as less recognition of gender microaggressions due to less perceived warmth on the part of role incongruent women. Conversely, results did not support the hypothesis that benevolent sexism is positively related to perceived gender microaggressions. The reasoning behind this hypothesis was that benevolent sexism operates differently than hostile sexism. Benevolent sexism may manifest itself in the perception that women are weak and need to be cared for (e.g., Cuddy et al., 2015). It was hypothesized that this perception could make people more attuned to recognizing gender microaggressions. However, this form of sexism has been shown to promote gender inequalities (Connelly & Heesacker, 2012). As a result, women may pay more attention to raising families than their professional careers (Chen et al, 2009). These effects may make women overlook subtle forms of sexism that may seem protective at first but detrimental in the long run. Men and women alike, who engage in benevolent sexism may not realize it and may be less attuned to recognizing gender microaggressions that seem to reflect the stereotype of women being weak or needing to be protected. The finding that benevolent sexism is negatively correlated with recognition of gender microaggression is therefore in line with previous research that shows that benevolent sexism encourages gender inequalities (Connelly & Heesacker, 2012). Taken

together, these results show that hostile and benevolent sexism may prevent people from paying attention to incivilities perpetrated towards women. Furthermore, it is possible that there are no differential effects of these two forms of sexism on the recognition of gender microaggression.

Gender discrimination perceptions were found to have a positive relationship with perceived gender microaggressions, and this has several implications. Firstly, it demonstrates the effect that the media has on the ability to recognize gender microaggressions. This can be further attributed to the recency effect that makes people remember the most recent events about a topic. In addition, gender discrimination perceptions are influenced by the frequency associated with personal experiences of microaggressive acts towards women or frequency of third-party observations (Basford et al., 2014). Channeling these results to an organization, more recognition of gender microaggressions due to high levels of gender discrimination perceptions may indicate a deeper problem related to the organizational climate. It is therefore important to control the organizational climate such that there are low levels of discrimination perceptions. Recognition of gender microaggressions may then be attributed to psychological and personality variables that can be ascertained.

Some additional analyses were also conducted on the data gathered for this study. The first analysis was a comparison between men and women on levels of SDO. Previous research has shown that women tend to score lower on social dominance orientation compared to men (Pratto et al., 2006; Sidanius et al., 2000). Gender differences in SDO have been studied using mediational analyses to understand the mechanisms that lead to these differences. There is some support for an invariance hypothesis suggesting that the

gender difference in SDO can be explained by biological or gender-based processes (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). However, there is some research that supports other categories of variables in explaining the difference between genders on SDO. For example, Foels and Reid (2010) found evidence to support the hypothesis that cognitive complexity resulting from lower social status explained women's higher scores on SDO than men. This presents a challenge to the invariance hypothesis based on gendered variables. This may be explained by recent research that suggests that there are no significant gender differences in SDO (e.g., Oxendine, 2019). Although participants employed were from different parts of the United States, the gender divide in the US may not be as salient as previously experienced by participants. Noting the years between studies discussed above that have focused on gender differences and the one that did not find any difference, there may be a temporal effect or a downward trend in perceptions of gender inequality. Since SDO deals with arbitrary assignment of a group as superior or inferior, it may be that neither men nor women are assigned a hierarchical group rendering little to no difference in levels of SDO. Gender differences in SDO suggests that gender invariance may rather be situation invariance (Zakrisson, 2008). In other words, there may be no differences in SDO due to the situational context. Zakrisson's (2008) study was carried out using a Swedish sample and a context reflecting political equality. The result demonstrated an interaction effect between gender and group membership. To be precise, men and women scored equally on SDO in voluntary groups dominated by women. Thus, gender differences may be less salient in environments with low gender inequalities and vice versa.

Past research has therefore focused on explaining gender differences in SDO. The results of the comparison between men and women on social dominance orientation in this study was significant. This result is also in line with past research that implies that women may have lower levels of SDO than their male counterparts. Zakrisson (2008) examined the reasons for this difference and concluded that higher cognitive complexity on the part of women was one of the reasons for this difference. To be precise, women are seen as having lower social status than men (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999) and this lower social power makes them seek more diagnostic information (Fiske & Dépret, 2011). Thus, high status groups tend to have higher scores in SDO than low status groups. (Sidanius et al., 2000).

Secondly, the tests conducted to assess any priming effects that may have occurred due to the sequence of questionnaires were all insignificant except for the results on hostile sexism. Speculatively, it could be that the presentation of both role and role incongruent manipulations in the vignettes engendered stronger reactions to items on the hostile sexism scale.

Additionally, an interaction between age and gender could have had an effect on recognition of gender microaggressions such that older men or women may be less attuned to recognizing gender microaggressions than younger men and women based on the premise that gender microaggressions is a relatively new phenomenon. The insignificant results could likely be attributed to the sample studied. Amazon MTurkers come from a broad range of industries, and as a result, generational and gender differences may be obscured.

With regards to racial differences, the results were insignificant. Previous research provides support for racial differences in SDO. For example, Oxendine (2019) found significant racial differences in level of SDO with Whites having higher levels of SDO as compared to other races. He speculated that this may be due to the desire to maintain a dominant White ethnic culture. The literature on race and SDO is also replete with evidence that suggest that modern racism represents one of the tenets on which SDO is based on with Whites scoring higher on measures of modern racism and SDO than other races (Cokley et al., 2010; Poteat & Spanierman, 2012). The insignificant results of racial differences in SDO may also be due to the racial composition of the sample. The sample comprised of approximately (70%) Caucasians and this may have obscured any meaningful differences in levels of SDO. A larger sample with relatively equal subsamples of racial groups may have yielded more meaningful results.

Gender discrimination perceptions improved the model fit of the hierarchical regression model used to test for SDO, hostile and benevolent sexism as predictors of recognition of microaggressions. These results indicate a stronger effect for contextual variables (gender discrimination perceptions) than psychological variables (SDO, hostile sexism, benevolent sexism) on the recognition of gender microaggressions. These results further suggest that recognizing gender microaggression may be induced by manipulation of contextual variables. Since individuals with high gender discrimination perceptions are influenced by gender equality climates, making gender discrimination issues salient or training people on recognition can help bystanders accurately recognize gender microaggressions. More evidence to support this hypothesis can be obtained from a study using an intervention in the form of a workshop activity meant to train faculty members

on subtle gender bias (Cundiff et al., 2018). This study yielded positive results with participants recognizing more subtle gender bias than a control condition. Since gender microaggressions are as subtle as gender bias, making them salient and employing recognition training activities may yield similar results.

The hierarchical regression model tested on the non microaggressive conditions also yielded significant results. However, these results must be interpreted with caution because the non-microaggressive conditions were manipulated to convey neutral conditions. The significance could mean that SDO, hostile sexism, benevolent sexism, and gender perception discrimination perceptions were predicting something other than recognition of gender microaggressions. The finding that hostile sexism was predictive could be related to role incongruity since that was the only other manipulation present in the vignettes. Hostile sexism levels were higher for the role incongruent non-microaggressive condition than those of the role congruent non-microaggressive conditions. However, the comparison between them failed to reach significance. A possible explanation for these results may be attributed to a heightened reaction to role incongruity in the role incongruent microaggressive condition.

For the differences in SDO, benevolent sexism, hostile sexism and gender perception discrimination perceptions between the two neutral conditions, the level of SDO was the only significant result. This suggests that there could be a possible interaction of SDO with role incongruity such that those high in SDO had heightened reactions to role incongruity and vice versa. These results are in line with research that shows a correlation between SDO and sexism with people high in SDO also having high levels of hostile sexism (Sibley et al., 2007). Since sexist people have a stronger reaction

to gender stereotype violations (Eagly & Karau, 2002), recognition in this neutral condition may be a possible reaction to the violation of gender stereotypes.

Previous research has shown that men tend to score significantly higher on hostile sexism than women do (Glick & Fiske, 1996, Glick et al., 2000). In addition, there is also a tendency for men and women to score similarly on benevolent sexism even across countries (Glick et al., 2000). Consistent with past research, a gender difference was found for hostile sexism but not for benevolent sexism. Men scored higher on hostile sexism than women. One explanation is that men engage in this kind of behavior because they feel threatened by women who violate gender stereotypes. This translates into dislike for a woman who does not stick to traditional gender roles. Women on the other hand may not feel as strongly as men because there is no apparent threat from the same sex. For the unexpected results of the correlation between benevolent sexism and recognition of gender microaggressions, one possible explanation is that women sometimes endorse it because they feel protected and cared for through acts of benevolent sexism. Women may therefore have similar levels of benevolent sexism as men do. In the short term however, benevolent sexism might seem unharmed but in the long term, it may stifle women's progression by perpetuating the idea that women are weak and need to be cared for.

Limitations and Future Directions

Although there was support for some of the hypothesized relationships in this study, they should be interpreted with a note of caution. The effects found in this study with respect to SDO, ambivalent sexism and gender discrimination perceptions on the recognition of gender microaggressions must be studied within specific job families or

industries to make them more generalizable. Some of the findings in this study do not establish causality even though other studies have yielded similar results, however these findings may pave the way for additional research into direct causality and more individual difference variables that may be related to the recognition of gender microaggressions. For example, RWA can also be examined with relation to its impact on gender microaggressions. RWA refers to an ideology that includes attitudes such as submission to authority, a preference for the status quo, and opposition towards those who resist authority (Altemeyer, 1998). Since RWA is theoretically similar to SDO and has chronicled some positive correlations with SDO (e.g., Roccato & Ricolfi, 2005), it may have a similar association with gender microaggressions like SDO does.

Another limitation of this study was the strength of the manipulation. Although the manipulation for perceived gender microaggressions yielded results in the expected direction, the manipulation for role congruity did not. This may be attributed to the type of manipulation. Describing behaviors using a vignette may not have been as convincing as seeing a picture or a video describing those same behaviors. Future research may consider using such media to manipulate role congruent or role incongruent women to assess the strength of the manipulation. In addition, the use of a male dominated job type (engineer) may have confounded the effect of the role congruity manipulation in all four conditions. To be precise, there was no significant difference across condition for SDO, ambivalent sexism, gender discrimination perceptions, and benevolent sexism. However, there was a significant difference between the different conditions for hostile sexism. This suggests that the placement of the vignettes before the self-reports could have had some priming effect on responses to the hostile sexism scale. Future research could pilot

test self-report responses with the placement of vignettes both before and after self-reports to compare priming effects. Furthermore, future studies could be conducted in two parts such that there is time between both studies to reduce priming effects. Gender neutral occupations may also be used in the vignettes in place of male or female typed occupations to reduce the focus on the job and to make the personality or role congruence descriptions more salient. In addition, future research using vignettes may manipulate the type of job by using both male and female dominated jobs that are matched on prestige and stereotype.

The use of self-report measures also presented some challenges in this study. By reporting perceptions of discrimination, individuals may have been prone to misrepresenting information based on recency effects. For example, perceptions of discrimination toward women could have been influenced by current events and media portrayals of discrimination toward women thus making an individual's perception of gender microaggressions dependent on current events. Nevertheless, this is still good measure of discrimination perceptions because it speaks to the influence that society has on discrimination perceptions. Furthermore, the results were in the expected direction with higher discrimination perceptions being related to higher levels of perceived gender microaggressions. Future research could explore other measures related to the sociological climate of women in the workplace. It will give more insight into the difference between psychological and sociological variables in determining gender microaggressions. It would also be interesting to study the interaction between psychological and sociological variables that affect the recognition of gender microaggressions.

Another probable step in future research would be to expand the discourse to include gender microaggressions against cisgender men. Since more men are entering into female-dominated careers (e.g., nursing), it would be apt to study the effects on them as well. Furthermore, it would be interesting to study gender differences in the recognition of gender microaggressions against men. Previous research has focused mainly on women because gender discrimination continues to be a problem for more women than men at work.

Additionally, future research could look at the effect of gender microaggressions on turnover intentions and the actual turnover of women in male-dominated jobs. Addressing racial differences in gender microaggressions will also be an interesting avenue for research which would determine the interaction between race and gender on the recognition of gender microaggressions. This would help inform organizations on the detrimental effects of gender microaggressions.

Lastly, participants in this study had to make ratings based on fictitious data instead of real persons in an organizational setting. This makes it difficult to generalize the results of the factors affecting the propensity to recognize microaggressions when they occur in real-time in an organization. Despite this limitation, some studies show that laboratory studies do have similar effect sizes as field studies (e.g., Mitchell, 2012). Therefore, examining these hypothetical relationships is still an important endeavor. Moreover, the delicate nature of gender microaggressions may make it too sensitive to carry out with real targets. Future studies could make use of interviews of real targets of gender microaggressions and third-party observers such that they are anonymous and reparatory which might help to ease the sensitivity associated with the research. It would

be interesting to note the similarities and differences between perceptions of both targets and third-party observers.

Research and Practical Implications

The present study documented certain psychological and sociological variables that affect the ability to recognize gender microaggressions. This study provides additional insight into the factors affecting the recognition of gender microaggressions in the workplace by examining SDO, ambivalent sexism, and gender perceptions towards women at the workplace. There have been very few empirical investigations of gender microaggressions due to the sensitive nature of empirical investigations on the topic. For instance, Basford and colleagues (2014) primarily studied demographic (gender) differences in recognition of gender microaggressions and it is one of the few studies available on the topic of gender microaggressions. Thus, this study makes a significant contribution in that it further explores the psychological and sociological variables that influence the recognition of gender microaggressions.

By studying individual (SDO, ambivalent sexism) and sociological (perceptions of discrimination toward women) variables that affect gender microaggressions, managers and employees alike in organizations may become more aware of their own biases and situational factors that can hinder women's progression and performance at work. Given the myriad detrimental consequences associated with gender microaggressions, it would be helpful to know when these slights or snubs have occurred. Organizations may then be able to put strategies in place to handle complaints when they occur. Awareness and recognition are not the only positive outcomes resulting from this line of research, but also the ability to categorize gender microaggressions as a modern

form of discrimination in the workplace. This categorization may provide impetus to formalize strategies for reducing gender microaggressions in the workplace.

This study also highlighted the effect of gender discrimination perceptions towards women. Specifically, the results demonstrate the effect of a third-party observer's level of gender discrimination perceptions on recognition such that those with higher levels of discrimination perceptions are more likely to recognize gender microaggressions and those with lower levels of gender microaggressions are less likely to recognize gender microaggressions. Extrapolating this to an organizational climate, it may come as no surprise that the recognition of gender microaggressions may be influenced by the perception of discrimination towards women in the workplace. For example, if a survey of employees reveals high level of discrimination perceptions towards women, employees may be more likely to recognize gender microaggressions. However, if this same survey reveals a low level of gender discrimination perceptions, the recognition of gender microaggressions may be attributable to psychological factors such as levels of SDO and sexism. Employees who are still able to recognize gender microaggressions in an organization with low levels of perceived gender discrimination perceptions towards women may have lower levels of SDO and sexism, rendering them desirable candidates for making high stakes decisions such as selection and promotion in an organization. By using unbiased decision makers, organizations can increase the perceptions of fairness both within and outside the organization.

Conclusion

Previous research has indicated that subtle discrimination is an issue for organizations and that it negatively affects employees – perhaps even more than overt

discrimination (Jones et al., 2016). The elusiveness associated with gender microaggressions makes it even more of an issue for organizations because they cannot address them if they do not recognize them in the first place. Given the negative outcomes associated with them such as lower morale, increased absenteeism and problems with work-life balance (Nielsen et al., 2009), it is important for organizations to understand what they are and when they occur. Of noteworthy concern is that there are little to no repercussions of gender microaggressions due to their ambiguous nature. By understanding the factors that affect the recognition of gender microaggressions, employees and managers alike may be able to establish clear guidelines on recognizing, reporting and dealing with gender microaggressions.

The current study highlighted two psychological variables that influence the recognition of gender microaggressions - SDO and ambivalent sexism. By further parsing out ambivalent sexism into hostile and benevolent sexism, this study demonstrated that there are no differential effects of both types of sexism on the recognition of gender microaggressions. This study also demonstrated the influence of the social context (gender discrimination perceptions towards women) on recognizing gender microaggressions. Cumulatively, these results show that demographic variables are not the only factors affecting the recognition of gender microaggressions. There may be a host of psychological and sociological variables that may be affecting recognition. Ultimately, research would benefit from exploring such variables that may be manipulated in order to encourage recognition of gender microaggressions as opposed to demographic variables that cannot be manipulated.

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Tables

Table 1*Demographic Characteristics of Participants*

Characteristic	Full sample		Microaggressive conditions		Non-microaggressive conditions	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Gender						
Female	118	45.5	57	50.9	61	56.5
Male	100	53.6	55	49.1	45	41.7
Other	2	.9	-	-	2	1.9
Race						
White/Caucasian	154	70	80	71.4	74	68.5
Hispanic/Latinx	10	4.5	4	3.6	6	5.6
Black/African American	14	6.4	5	4.5	9	8.3
Native American/American Indian	1	.5	-	-	1	.9
Asian/Pacific Islander	36	16.4	21	18.8	15	13.9
Other	5	2.3	2	1.8	3	2.8

Table 2*Multiple Comparisons of Gender Microaggression Conditions*

(I) condition	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	(J) condition	<i>Mean Difference (I-J)</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>
Micro_RC	3.46	.62	Micro_RI	.17	.12	.468
			Nonmicro_RC	1.38*	.12	.000
			Nonmicro_RI	1.15*	.11	.000
Micro_RI	3.29	.57	Micro_RC	-.11	.12	.468
			Nonmicro_RC	1.22*	.12	.000
			Nonmicro_RI	.99*	.11	.000
Nonmicro_RC	2.08	.56	Micro_RC	-1.38*	.12	.000
			Micro_RI	-1.22*	.12	.000
			Nonmicro_RI	-.23	.12	.214
Nonmicro_RI	2.31	.68	Micro_RC	-1.15*	.11	.000
			Micro_RI	-.99*	.11	.000
			Nonmicro_RC	.23	.12	.214

Notes. The dependent variable was perceived gender microaggressions.

Coding of conditions: Micro_RC = role congruent microaggression condition, Micro_RI = role incongruent microaggression condition, Nonmicro_RI = role congruent non-microaggressive condition, Nonmicro_RI = role incongruent non-microaggressive condition.

* $p < .05$

Table 3*Means, Standard Deviations, and Frequencies of Conditions*

Condition	<i>n</i>	%	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Micro_RC	57	25.9	3.46	.62
Micro_RI	55	25.0	3.29	.57
Nonmicro_RC	50	22.7	2.08	.56
Nonmicro_RI	58	26.4	2.31	.68

Notes. The dependent variable was perceived gender microaggressions.

Coding of conditions: Micro_RC = role congruent microaggressive condition,

Micro_RI = role incongruent microaggressive condition, Nonmicro_RI = role

congruent non-microaggressive condition, Nonmicro_RI = role incongruent

non-microaggressive condition.

Table 4*Means, Standard Deviations and Correlations Between Study Variables*

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5
1. SDO	2.66	1.45	-				
2. ASI	1.96	1.00	.54**	-			
3. Hostile sexism	1.68	1.19	.59**	.90**	-		
4. Benevolent sexism	2.25	1.10	.35**	.86**	.55**	-	
5. Gender perception	3.29	.85	-.18**	-.17*	-.21**	-.07	-
6. Perceived microaggression	2.80	.85	-.04	.05	.08	-.01	.11

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

Table 5

*Means, Standard Deviations and Correlations Between Study Variables in
Microaggression Conditions*

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5
1. SDO	2.66	1.53	-				
2. ASI	2.01	.98	.63**	-			
3. Hostile sexism	1.75	1.18	.68**	.88**	-		
4. Benevolent sexism	2.28	1.11	.39**	.83**	.47**	-	
5. Gender perception	3.29	.84	-.23*	-.21*	-.26**	-.08	-
6. Perceived microaggression	3.38	.60	-.34**	-.34**	-.31**	-.28**	.28**

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

Table 6*Summary of Hierarchical Multiple Regression on Recognition of Gender**Microaggressions*

Predictors	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>R</i> ²
Model 1						.15
SDO	-.09	.05	-.22	-1.79	.077	
Hostile sexism	-.05	.07	-.09	-.72	.468	
Benevolent sexism	-.08	.06	-.15	-1.52	.132	
Model 2						.19
SDO	-.08	.27	-.19	-1.61	.110	
Hostile sexism	-.03	.05	-.05	-.41	.684	
Benevolent sexism	-.09	.05	-.17	-1.67	.098	
Gender perception	.15	.07	.21	2.29	.024*	

**p* < .05

Table 7*Summary of Hierarchical Multiple Regression on Neutral Recognition of Gender**Microaggressions*

Predictors	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>R</i> ²
Model 1						.16
SDO	.04	.05	.07	.67	.506	
Hostile sexism	.20	.07	.39	3.05	.003*	
Benevolent sexism	-.03	.07	-.04	-.37	.716	
Model 2						.17
SDO	.04	.05	.08	.76	.452	
Hostile sexism	.22	.07	.41	3.21	.002*	
Benevolent sexism	-.03	.07	-.05	-.44	.663	
Gender perception	.09	.07	.13	1.37	.174	

**p* < .05

Table 8*Summary of Independent T-Tests on Neutral Microaggression Conditions*

Variable	Condition	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Gender perception	Nonmicro_RC	3.23	.92	-.78	106	.438
	Nonmicro_RI	3.36	.80			
SDO	Nonmicro_RC	2.32	1.30	-2.39	106	.019*
	Nonmicor_RI	2.94	1.39			
ASI	Nonmicro_RC	1.82	1.08	-.72	106	.475
	Nonmicro_RI	1.96	.97			
Benevolent sexism	Nonmicro_RC	2.21	1.21	-.21	106	.833
	Nonmicro_RI	2.25	.98			
Hostile sexism	Nonmicro_RC	1.47	1.16	-1.05	106	.298
	Nonmicro_RI	1.71	1.22			

**p* < .05

Table 9*Factor Loadings and Communalities for Perceived Gender Microaggression Scale*

Item	Intent	Discrimination	Awareness	Communality
The supervisor's behavior was meant to harm the subordinate.	.80			.48
The supervisor meant to behave in a gender insensitive manner.	.78			.42
The supervisor's behavior was specifically aimed at discriminating against the subordinate.	.70			.79
The supervisor's behavior was intentionally discriminatory.	.65			.78
The manager's actions were just		-.89		.78
The manager's actions were discriminatory.		-.87		.79
The manager's actions were fair.		-.86		.77
The manager's actions were biased.		-.74		.68
The actions of the manager were based on the manager's prejudice.		-.56		.50
The supervisor was not aware of how Jessica would feel about what he said.			.82	.62
The supervisor was aware of the stigma associated with being a minority.			.66	.53
The supervisor was unaware of the effect his behavior might have on the subordinate.			.63	.50
The supervisor was aware that his behavior would be perceived as gender offensive			.52	.57

Note. Factor loadings <.4 are suppressed.

Figures

Figure 1

Frequency Distribution of Recognition in Microaggressive Role Congruent Condition

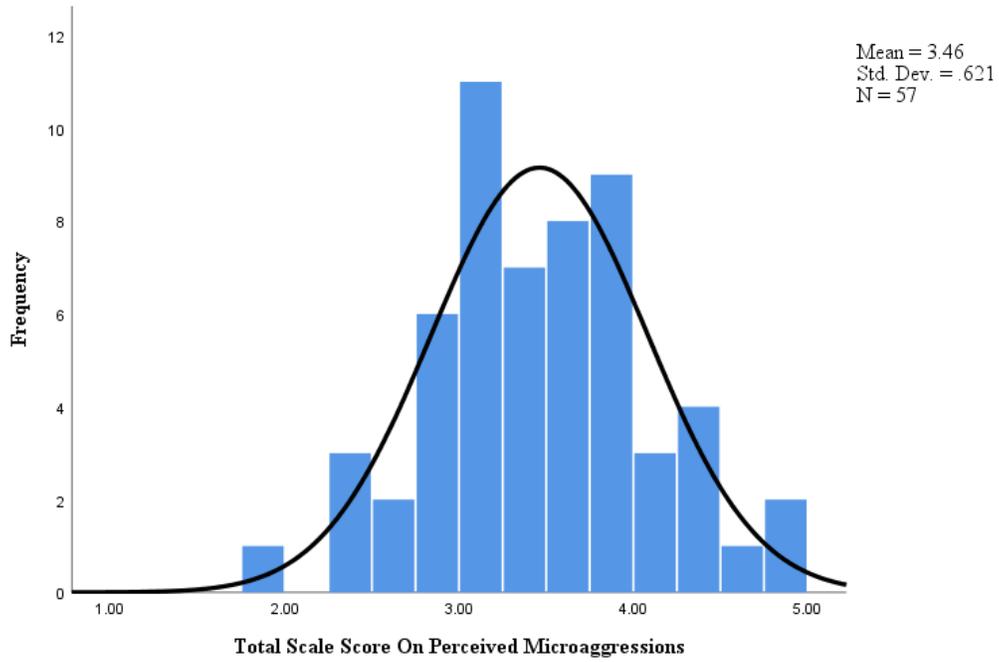


Figure 2

Frequency Distribution of Recognition in Microaggressive Role Incongruent Condition

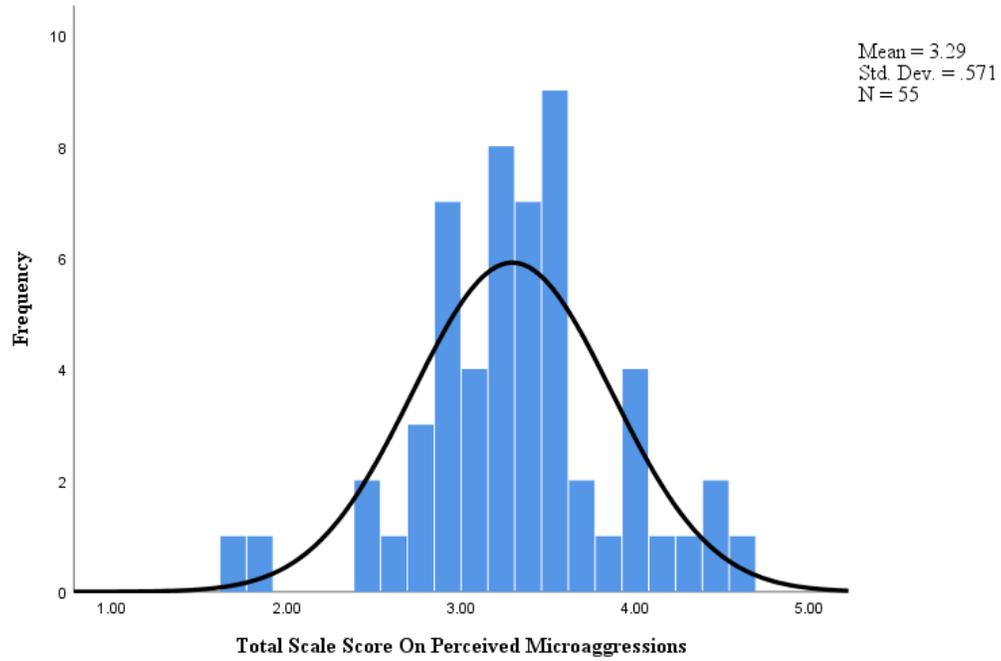


Figure 3

Frequency Distribution of Recognition in Non -Microaggressive Role Congruent Condition

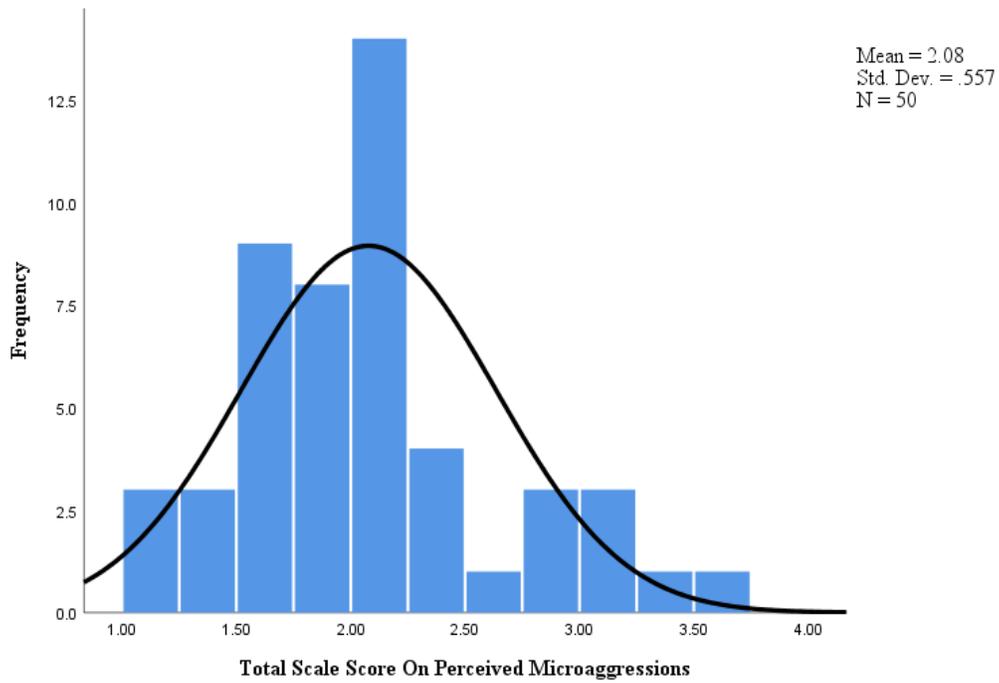


Figure 4

Frequency Distribution of Recognition in Non -Microaggressive Role Incongruent Condition

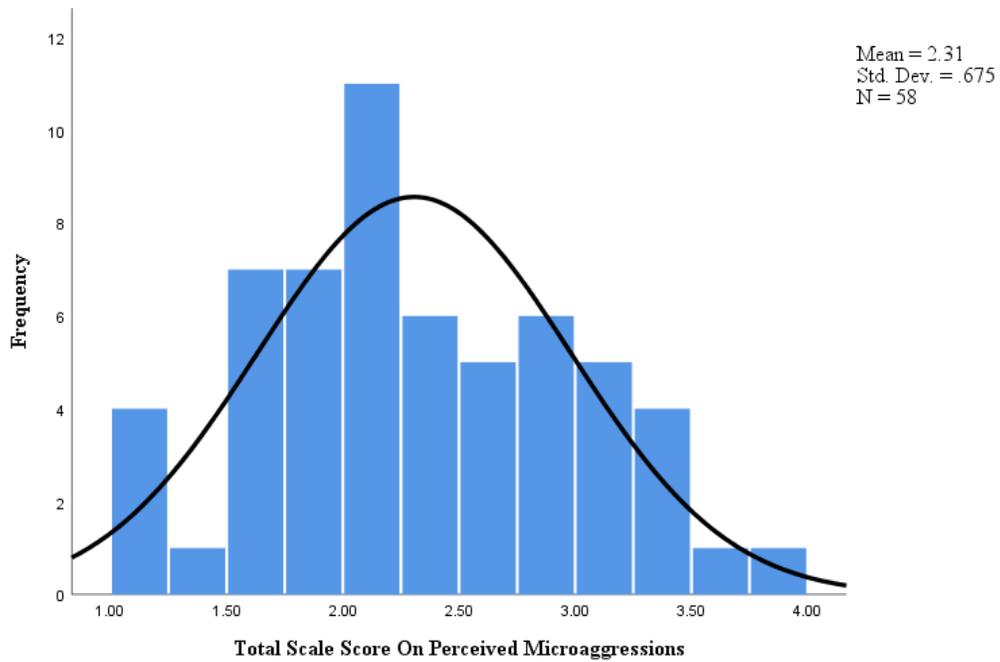
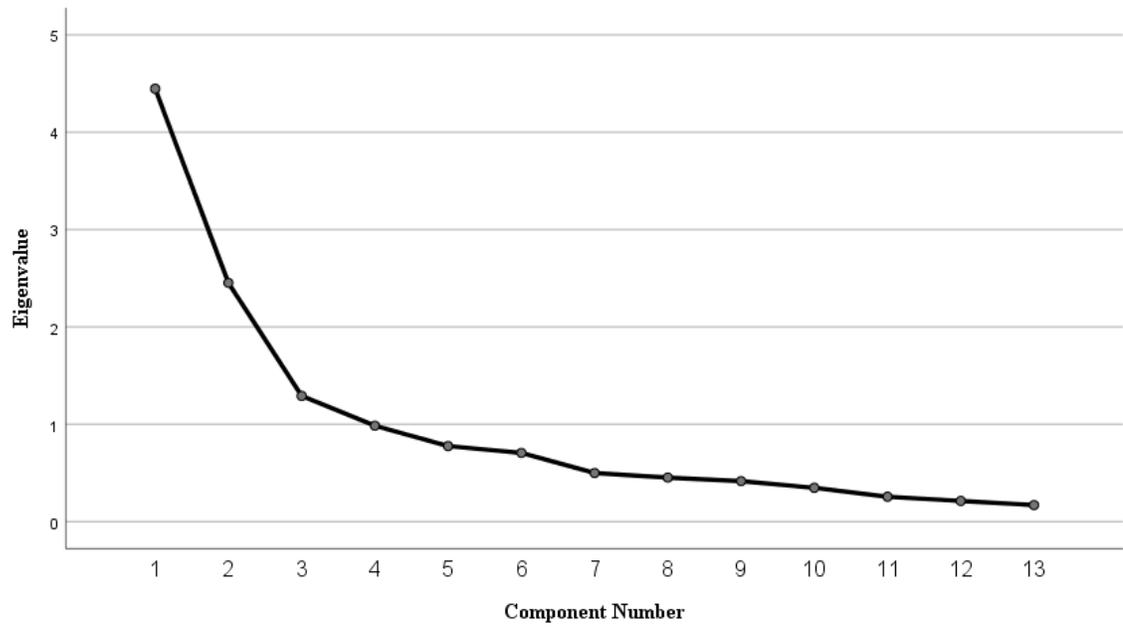


Figure 5

Scree plot of factor solution for Perceived Gender Microaggression Scale



Appendix A

Study Vignettes

(Created by principal researcher)

Microaggressive /Role Congruent Condition

Jessica works at Alphatech systems as the lead systems engineer of her department. She graduated from an Ivy League school and has 10 years of work experience in the mechanical engineering industry. She has been described by her coworkers as a people-oriented manager. To be precise, she displays feminine behaviors such as being warm and nurturing. She pays attention to the wellbeing of her coworkers. Seth is Jessica's direct supervisor and manager.

Seth: "We have a very important meeting coming up with our board members. Can you confirm that you will be there to present our annual report?"

Jessica: "Yes, I have everything ready for our presentation."

Seth: "Jessica, could you do me a favor?"

Jessica: "Sure, what is it?"

Seth: "Do you mind wearing a dress instead of a pantsuit for the meeting? I think it will make you look more feminine."

Jessica: "Okay."

Microaggressive/ Role Incongruent Condition

Jessica works at Alphatech systems as the lead systems engineer of her department. She graduated from an Ivy League school and has 10 years of work experience in the mechanical engineering industry. She has been described by her coworkers as a task-oriented manager. To be precise, she displays masculine behaviors such as being assertive and goal focused. She does not pay attention to the wellbeing of her coworkers. Seth is Jessica's direct supervisor and manager.

Seth: "We have a very important meeting coming up with our board members. Can you confirm that you will be there to present our annual report?"

Jessica: "Yes, I have everything ready for our presentation."

Seth: "Jessica, could you do me a favor?"

Jessica: "Sure, what is it?"

Seth: "Do you mind wearing a dress instead of a pantsuit for the meeting? I think it will make you look more feminine."

Jessica: "Okay."

Non-Microaggressive/Role Congruent Condition

Jessica works at Alphatech systems as the lead systems engineer of her department. She graduated from an Ivy League school and has 10 years of work experience in the mechanical engineering industry. She has been described by her coworkers as a people-oriented manager. To be precise, she displays feminine behaviors such as being warm and nurturing. She pays attention to the wellbeing of her coworkers. Seth is Jessica's direct supervisor and manager.

Seth: "We have a very important meeting coming up with our board members. Can you confirm that you will be there to present our annual report?"

Jessica: "Yes, I have everything ready for our presentation."

Seth: "Jessica, could you do me a favor?"

Jessica: "Sure, what is it?"

Seth: "Do you mind coming in earlier so we can rehearse before the meeting?"

Jessica: "Okay."

Non-Microaggressive/ Role Incongruent Condition

Jessica works at Alphatech systems as the lead systems engineer of her department. She graduated from an Ivy League school and has 10 years of work experience in the mechanical engineering industry. She has been described by her coworkers as a task-oriented manager. To be precise, she displays masculine behaviors such as being assertive and goal focused. She does not pay attention to the wellbeing of her coworkers. Seth is Jessica's direct supervisor and manager.

Seth: "We have a very important meeting coming up with our board members. Can you confirm that you will be there to present our annual report?"

Jessica: "Yes, I have everything ready for our presentation."

Seth: "Jessica, could you do me a favor?"

Jessica: "Sure, what is it?"

Seth: "Do you mind coming in earlier so we can rehearse before the meeting?"

Jessica: "Okay."

Appendix B

Perceived Microaggression Scale

(Basford et al., 2014)

Based on the vignette you just read, indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements using a scale from 1= strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree.

1. The supervisor was not aware of how Jessica would feel about what he said/did.
2. The supervisor's behavior was meant to harm the subordinate.
3. The manager's actions were just.
4. The manager's actions were discriminatory.
5. The supervisor was aware of the stigma associated with being a minority.
6. The supervisor was unaware of the effect his behavior might have on the subordinate.
7. The supervisor was aware that his behavior would be perceived as gender offensive.
8. The manager's actions were fair.
9. The supervisor meant to behave in a gender insensitive manner.
10. The manager's actions were biased.
11. The supervisor's behavior was specifically aimed at discriminating against the subordinate.
12. The supervisor's behavior was intentionally discriminatory.
13. The actions of the manager were based on the manager's prejudice.

Appendix C*Social Dominance Orientation Scale (SDO)*

(Ho et al., 2015)

Show how much you favor or oppose each idea below by selecting (circling) a number from 1 to 7 on the scale following each question. You can work quickly; your first feeling is generally best.

1. An ideal society requires some groups to be on top and others to be on the bottom.
2. Some groups of people are simply inferior to other groups.
3. No one group should dominate in society.
4. Groups at the bottom are just as deserving as groups at the top.
5. Group equality should not be our primary goal.
6. It is unjust to try to make groups equal.
7. We should do what we can to equalize conditions for different groups.
8. We should work to give all groups an equal chance to succeed.

Appendix D

Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI)

(Glick & Fiske, 1996)

Below is a series of statements concerning men and women and their relationships in contemporary society. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement using the following scale: 0 = disagree strongly; 1 = disagree somewhat; 2 = disagree slightly; 3 = agree slightly; 4 = agree somewhat; 5 = agree strongly.

1. No matter how accomplished he is, a man is not truly complete as a person unless he has the love of a woman.
2. Many women are actually seeking special favors, such as hiring policies that favor them over men, under the guise of asking for "equality."
3. In a disaster, women ought not necessarily to be rescued before men.
4. Most women interpret innocent remarks or acts as being sexist.
5. Women are too easily offended.
6. People are often truly happy in life without being romantically involved with a member of the other sex.
7. Feminists are not seeking for women to have more power than men.
8. Many women have a quality of purity that few men possess.
9. Women should be cherished and protected by men.
10. Most women fail to appreciate fully all that men do for them.
11. Women seek to gain power by getting control over men.
12. Every man ought to have a woman whom he adores.
13. Men are complete without women.
14. Women exaggerate problems they have at work.
15. Once a woman gets a man to commit to her, she usually tries to put him on a tight leash.
16. When women lose to men in a fair competition, they typically complain about being discriminated against.
17. A good woman should be set on a pedestal by her man.
18. There are actually very few women who get a kick out of teasing men by seeming sexually available and then refusing male advances.
19. Women, compared to men, tend to have a superior moral sensibility.
20. Men should be willing to sacrifice their own well-being in order to provide financially for the women in their lives.
21. Feminists are making entirely reasonable demands of men.
22. Women, as compared to men, tend to have a more refined sense of culture and good taste.

Appendix E*Gender Discrimination Toward Women (GD Women)*

(Sipe, Larson, McKay & Moss, 2016)

Using a scale from 1= Rarely to 5 = Likely, indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

1. Women will face gender-specific biases to their career success.
2. Parental leave interferes with a woman's career success.
3. Women will have less opportunity for networking due to their gender.
4. Women will have less opportunity for mentoring due to their gender.
5. Women will have less opportunity for advancement due to their gender.
6. Women will have less time to devote to their career due to their gender.
7. Women are paid less due to their gender.
8. Women's colleagues have lower expectations of them due to their gender.

Appendix F*Demographics*

What is your age?

_____ years old.

Please indicate your gender

- a. Male
- b. Female
- c. Other, specify _____

Please indicate your race/ethnicity.

- a. White or Caucasian
- b. Hispanic or Latino
- c. Black or African American
- d. Native American or American Indian
- e. Asian / Pacific Islander
- f. Other, specify _____

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- a. Some high school, no diploma
- b. High school graduate, diploma or the equivalent (for example GED)
- c. Some college credit, no degree
- d. Trade/technical/vocational training
- e. Associate degree
- f. Bachelor's degree
- g. Master's degree
- h. Professional degree
- i. Doctorate degree

What is your marital status?

- a. Single, never married
- b. Married or domestic partnership
- c. Widowed
- d. Divorced
- e. Separated

Are you currently employed?

- a. Yes

- b. No

If yes, how long have you been in the workforce?

_____years.

Is it part-time or full time?

If no, have you had any work experience?

- a. Yes
- b. No

If yes, how long did you work for?

What is your total annual household income before taxes?

- a. Under \$40,000
- b. Above \$40,000