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"I'm Sure He Didn't Mean It That Way": The Influence of Leader Characteristics on Perceptions of Everyday Sexism

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“I’m Sure He Didn’t Mean It That Way”:

The Influence of Leader Characteristics on

Perceptions of Everyday Sexism

A Thesis

Presented in

Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

By

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the ability of organizational leaders to facilitate the experience of everyday sexism in the workplace by influencing individual perceptions and acceptance of sexist behaviors. Rationale for hypotheses is presented under a social information processing framework. Social and organizational consequences of leader likability and idiosyncrasy credits are also discussed. It was hypothesized that particular leader characteristics (e.g., leader likability) and individual differences (gender identification and stigma consciousness) impact perceptions of bias. Female MTurk workers viewed a video of a female employee describing her male supervisor in a 2 (Leader Likability: high vs. low) × 2 (Sexism Cues: present vs. absent) between-subjects design and provided ratings of perceived leader bias and competence, as well as answers to behavioral response items.

As predicted, sexism cues and likability had main effects on leader perceptions, such that leaders were perceived more negatively when sexism cues were present rather than absent and when the leader was low in likability rather than high. Stigma consciousness and gender identification both served as moderators between the presence of sexism cues and perceptions of leader bias. Sexism cues and leader likability also impacted endorsement of a variety of behavioral responses that could be taken against the leader (e.g., filing a complaint with Human Resources). Theoretical and practical implications are discussed.
Thesis Committee

Jane Halpert, Ph.D., Chairperson

Kimberly Quinn, Ph.D.
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LEADER CHARACTERISTICS AND SEXISM

Introduction

Despite the promising trend of increased efforts to expand diversity and limit instances of workplace prejudice and discrimination, such as through the rising use of diversity training (Paluck, 2006), major obstacles remain in the push for equality in the United States. Although there has seemingly been a steep decline in overt expressions of prejudice over the last 50 years (Griffin, 2004; Schneider, 2004), stigmatized individuals continue to frequently face subtle forms of prejudice and discrimination, often referred to as “everyday prejudice” (Swim, Hyers, Cohen, & Ferguson, 2001; Swim, Hyers, Cohen, Fitzgerald, & Bylsma, 2003) or “microaggressions” (Sue et al., 2007). This shift likely reflects a change in the social acceptability of overtly sharing prejudicial attitudes toward particular groups in the U.S., causing the expression of clear biases to decline as less obvious forms continue to occur (Schneider, 2004). Nevertheless, a number of serious negative consequences can result from instances of prejudice and discrimination, despite the less overt forms they often take. This thesis aims to investigate the role of organizational leaders in facilitating the acceptance of prejudice and discrimination against women in the workplace, specifically in the form of everyday sexism. Particular leader characteristics are expected to influence individual perceptions of everyday sexism, and a number of individual differences may moderate this relationship.
Stereotyping, Prejudice, and Discrimination

Before moving forward, it is important to first delineate the concepts of stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination, and discuss how they differ and relate. Early discussions of attitude formation adopted a tripartite model, consisting of a cognitive, affective, and behavioral component (Ostrom, 1969). Thus, applied in very general terms to this topic, stereotyping is mainly considered to be the cognitive component (beliefs), prejudice the affective component (emotional reactions and attitudes), and discrimination the behavioral component of the formation and expression of attitudes toward particular groups (Fiske, 2010; Schneider, 2004).

Stereotypes, when applied in a social context, are defined as oversimplified generalizations of social groups that may be rigidly applied and are often biased (Allport, 1954; Stroebe & Insko, 1989). Although rigid, stereotypes are rarely universally endorsed by the individuals who hold them (Schneider, 2004). For example, a person who holds the stereotype that women are less intelligent than men is likely to admit that not all women are less intelligent, if asked directly, and may provide notable exceptions (e.g., “Some of my best friends are…”) (Schneider, 2004, p. 198).

Prejudice can be defined as “the set of affective reactions we have toward people as a function of their category memberships” (Schneider, 2004, p. 27). Prejudice allows for the formation of emotional prejudgments, and unlike stereotypes (which are more simple beliefs), prejudice is a complex and multidimensional attitude (Schneider, 2004). Thus, an individual may actually
have several competing attitudes (and stereotypic beliefs) regarding a certain group, which may guide how he or she interprets behaviors committed by members of that group. This interpretation can also be influenced by the situation, as different situations are likely to activate different reactions (either positive, negative, or both) and the individual’s own motivations (he or she may have the goal of seeing the group member positively, or vice versa) (Schneider, 2004).

Discrimination can be defined as “the unjustified use of category information to make judgments (and/or behavioral decisions) about other people” (Schneider, 2004, p. 29). While expressing prejudice can be considered sharing one’s attitude toward a particular group, discrimination can be considered acting or making judgments based on information from a particular group (dependent or independent of attitudes). When applying discrimination to the context of the workplace, it is more specifically defined as when persons of a particular social category “are put at a disadvantage in the workplace relative to other groups with comparable potential or proven success” (Griffin, 2004, p. 132; see also Cascio, 1998).

Although it may be tempting to assume stereotypes automatically give rise to prejudice, which in turn leads to discriminatory actions, this relationship is not quite so simple or complete (e.g., Biernat & Crandall, 1994; Crandall & Eshleman, 2003; Eagly, Mladinic, & Otto, 1994). Thus, just as our beliefs may have the potential to lead to certain attitudes, our attitudes may just as easily inform our beliefs (Allport, 1954). Similarly, our attitudes may
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(or may not) shape our behavior, or we may behave in certain ways without any particular affective explanation (Schneider, 2004). For example, an individual may hold prejudiced attitudes toward African Americans, but never actively express these attitudes or act on them. At the same time, an individual who respects African Americans may still inadvertently gravitate away from social interactions with them or otherwise behave differently toward them, even subconsciously. Hence, although having prejudicial attitudes, expressing prejudice, and exhibiting discriminatory behavior may be very similar, they are not necessarily always the same.

Prejudice can be expressed in a number of ways and, as mentioned earlier, is rarely expressed explicitly. One example of less overt prejudice is the concept of “subtle prejudice,” which indirectly supports prejudice against a particular group through the support of traditional values, the exaggeration of cultural differences, and the denial of positive emotions (Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995). Much research has been conducted on the related concepts of “symbolic racism” (Kinder & Sears, 1981) or “modern racism” (McConahay, 1986), in which individuals hold strong attitudes based on certain symbols, such as the value of hard work or self-reliance, and believe that certain racial groups do not value these same symbols to the same degree and do not behave in accordance with them. In this way, modern racists do not directly reject others on the basis of race, but may be more likely to endorse practices and laws that indirectly put others of a particular race at a disadvantage. Although research on these topics has centered mainly on
leadership, much of it can be generalized to sexism (Swim, Aikin, Hall, & Hunter, 1995).

The concept of “everyday prejudice” has also garnered significant attention in the literature (e.g., Swim et al., 1995, 2001, 2003) and will serve as the main focus of this thesis. Everyday prejudice characterizes the often subtle, yet meaningful, expressions of prejudice and instances of discriminatory behavior that people encounter on a routine or daily basis. These encounters may take verbal, non-verbal, or visual forms, and incidents can range in severity from commonplace encounters that do not leave a lasting, conscious impact on targets, to explicit encounters that can be recalled by targets for months after the incident occurs (Swim et al., 2003). Although typically covert, everyday prejudice may or may not always be subtle. Regardless, this type of expression of prejudice is considered relatively commonplace and, thus, often goes unchallenged directly (Swim & Hyers, 1999). For example, street harassment or “cat calling” aimed toward women is a very blatant yet still common occurrence (Bowman, 1993) and can thus be considered a type of everyday sexism.

Just as the expression of prejudice can vary in intensity and overtness, the display of discriminatory behavior can similarly range in severity and intent. As previously discussed, some discriminatory behaviors can occur without being consciously chosen and may even be difficult to perceive from both the perspective of the perpetrator and the target (Schneider, 2004). When more specifically investigating the role of discrimination in the workplace,
Griffin (2004) proposed a model that explores individual and group level factors that influence discriminatory behavior. At the individual level, discrimination is explained through four dimensions: overt–covert, intentional–unintentional, stable–unstable, and conscious–unconscious. These dimensions vary along a continuum, with the most blatant forms of discrimination being overt, intentional, stable, and conscious. Conversely, the subtlest forms of discrimination are covert, unintentional, unstable, and unconscious. These individual factors are also influenced by group level factors (e.g., group norms, roles, values), organizational factors (e.g., organizational culture, policy, leadership), and societal and economic factors (e.g., social policy, and legal regulatory environment) (Griffin, 2004, p. 140).

All of these factors intersect to either promote or discourage discriminatory behaviors committed by individuals within an organization.

A broader way to consider the expression of prejudice and discrimination in the workplace is through the concept of workplace victimization. Aquino and Thau (2009) define workplace victimization as occurring when “an employee’s well-being is harmed by an act of aggression perpetrated by one or more members of the organization” (p. 716). An employee’s well-being is considered to be harmed when he or she is prevented from meeting psychological and physiological needs, including a sense of belonging, feelings of individual worthiness, perception of the ability to predict and control one’s environment, and ability to trust others (Stevens & Fiske, 1995). Various forms of workplace victimization include, but are not
limited to, workplace harassment, emotional abuse, identity threats, and bullying—all of which include the underlying assumption that the behavior in question is aversive and potentially detrimental to the target. Previous literature has not explicitly included discrimination under the broader category of workplace victimization; however, both subtle and overt forms of discrimination possess the potentiality to harm targets, suggesting that these behaviors do indeed qualify as victimizing behaviors.

**Sexism in the Workplace and its Consequences**

Although blatant sexism against women in the workplace steeply declined after the passing of civil rights legislation in the 1960s, women undoubtedly continue to face discrimination, often in the form of everyday sexism (Griffin, 2004; Swim et al., 2001). Everyday sexism consists of prejudiced attitudes toward and the stereotyping of traditional gender roles, condescending or degrading remarks or behaviors targeted toward a certain gender, or engaging in sexual objectification (Swim et al., 2001). Moreover, everyday sexism continues to occur alarmingly often; a diary study conducted by Swim and her colleagues (2001) revealed that women report typically experiencing one to two significant incidents of everyday sexism *every week*. Although sexism can certainly be directed negatively toward men, men experience significantly fewer instances of sexism than women (Swim et al., 2001); thus, the main focus of this thesis is to investigate sexism directed toward women. Similarly, it should be noted that other forms of discrimination, such as racism, also continue to have significant and far
reaching negative consequences (e.g., Griffin, 2004; Schneider, 2004; Swim et al., 2003). However, relatively little research has investigated more modern forms of sexism, such as everyday sexism, in comparison to modern racism, thus further guiding the focus of this thesis.

A national telephone survey conducted by NBC News and The Wall Street Journal in 2013 found that 35 percent of women (based on a nationally representative sample of 1,000 adults) reported experiencing discrimination at their job on the basis of sex (McCain Nelson, 2013). In this same survey, 84 percent of women agreed that men are paid more for similar work. Only 66 percent of men, however, agreed with this statement, potentially suggesting a difference in how men and women perceive discrimination against women (McCain Nelson, 2013). In a separate study conducted by ABC News and The Washington Post, 1 in 4 women reported experiencing sexual harassment at work, compared to 1 in 10 men (based on a national telephone survey including 1,018 adults) (Langer, 2011). Further suggesting that men and women perceive this discrimination differently, 69 percent of women reported seeing sexual harassment as a problem in the United States, while only 59 percent of men agreed. This disparity in perceptions of bias widens further when comparing Republican women (63 percent agree it is a problem) and Republican men (only 43 percent agree).

From polling data alone, it is unclear how much of this perceived discrimination was subtle versus blatant and how accurate these perceptions were. However, a number of objective economic outcomes also provide
evidence for continued gender inequality in the workplace. According to the 2010 United States Census, women continue to earn only 77 percent of what men earn (DeNavas-Walt, Proctor, & Smith, 2011). Even when controlling for work experience, union status, education, race, and the fact that women tend to work in different industries than men, 41 percent of the pay gap still cannot be explained, suggesting that some other factor (namely, gender discrimination) is likely at play (Blau & Kahn, 2007; Carnevale & Smith, 2014).

One prospective contributing factor to the wage gap is gender differences in negotiation. Women have been found to initiate negotiations up to 4.5 times less often than men (Small, Gelfand, Babcock, & Gettman, 2007), and, if they do make it to the bargaining table, typically achieve lower economic outcomes than men (Stuhlmacher & Walters, 1999). Scholars suggest these results may be due to the task of negotiation (and by extension, the role of a negotiator) being viewed as a masculine task. Thus, women who engage in negotiation are viewed as acting incongruously with their role as a woman, consequently leading to negative perceptions of women negotiators, which may limit their success (Stuhlmacher & Linnabery, 2013). These negative perceptions can do more than just thwart the negotiation itself; women who negotiate also run the risk of being seen as uncooperative and demanding by coworkers (Babcock & Laschever, 2008). Nevertheless, the cost of not negotiating can be huge. It is estimated that individuals who do not
negotiate their salary for a job at the beginning of their career stand to lose $1–1.5 million over the course of their lifetime (Babcock & Laschever, 2008).

Sexism can have more than just an economic impact; individuals who experience sexism are also likely to experience a number of negative psychological effects. Swim et al. (2001) conducted a series of diary studies investigating the occurrence of everyday sexism and the psychological impact of these occurrences. In one study, female and male participants were asked to complete a diary entry each time they observed an incident in which they, someone else, or a particular gender in general were treated differently on the basis of gender over the course of a two-week period. Results suggest that individuals who experience sexism (both female and male) report greater discomfort, increased feelings of anger and depression, and lowered self-esteem, and that women reported experiencing everyday sexism significantly more often than men. Further, women reported often encountering everyday sexism in the form of sexual objectification, while men reported rarely or virtually never experiencing this type of sexism. From a psychological perspective, this may partially explain the observer perspective that women tend to have on their own body and appearance, a perspective that has been linked to lower psychological well-being and increased levels of depression (Fredrickson & Roberts, 2006; Swim et al., 2001). Another study conducted by Major, Quinton, and Schmader (2003) found that women exposed to ambiguous prejudice cues (i.e., cues that could indicate prejudice, but could also be interpreted in other ways) reported lower self-esteem than women.
exposed to overt prejudice cues when receiving negative task performance
feedback. These results likely occurred because women exposed to ambiguous
prejudice cues when receiving negative feedback were likely more likely to
attribute this feedback to a fault in themselves, whereas women exposed to
blatant prejudice during the feedback session were more likely to attribute the
negative feedback to the prejudiced attitudes of the evaluator. This finding is
particularly meaningful when considering the current shift away from overt
sexism to more covert, ambiguous forms of prejudice and discrimination,
which in some ways may actually be even more psychologically damaging for
women.

**Perceiving Discrimination: Influential Factors and Individual Differences**

As demonstrated by the above-mentioned study by Major et al. (2003),
perceiving prejudice and discrimination is not always a straightforward
matter. Individuals often fail to recognize discrimination for what it truly is,
particularly when it is subtle (Sue et al., 2007). Members of the majority
group (who are also typically non-targets) are especially unlikely to recognize
subtle discrimination (Schneider, 2004; Sue et al., 2007). This is perhaps
because majority group members are usually also more powerful in
comparison to minorities and, as such, do not stand to lose as much if they fail
to recognize discrimination, even if they are the target (Schneider, 2004).
Simply put, majority members are usually not as affected by discrimination in
comparison to minorities (either by being targeted less often, or by being less
impacted as a target) and, as a result, are less attuned to its occurrence.
However, this is not always the case, as the perception of discrimination often also lies in the specific context of the situation. Elkins, Phillips, and Konopaske (2002), for example, found that group members are more likely to perceive discrimination against their own group in situations that are traditionally threatening to their group. More specifically, they found that women were more likely to perceive discrimination in the context of the workplace (an environment traditionally more threatening to women), while men were more likely to perceive discrimination in child custody cases (a context traditionally more threatening to men). Thus, differences in perceiving discrimination were not necessarily a function of being a minority or majority per se, but rather a function of being in a situation that is perceived to be particularly threatening. That being said, minority group members are likely to find themselves in threatening contexts more often than majority group members (Schneider, 2004). Results from these studies may also partially explain the disparate results found by the previously discussed recent polling data, in which more women than men agreed that men were paid more for the same work and that sexual harassment in the workplace is a problem (Langer, 2011; McCain Nelson, 2013). Another contextual factor in the perception of sexism is the sex of the perpetrator: men who discriminate against women are typically seen as more sexist than women who similarly discriminate against other women (Baron, Burgess, & Kao, 1991).

A number of individual differences are also likely to influence perceptions of and reactions to discrimination. For example, women who
identify very strongly with their gender as a group (i.e., are highly gender-identified) are more likely to perceive behavior as sexist than women who are weakly gender-identified (Major et al., 2003). Additionally, women who are high (versus low) in stigma consciousness—the extent to which an individual anticipates being stereotyped—are more likely to expect to be stereotyped and behave more negatively toward men who they believe to be sexist (Pinel, 1999, 2002). Surprisingly, research has not found a relationship between perceptions of discrimination and measures of one’s sexist beliefs (both traditional and modern sexist beliefs) or activism against sexism (Swim et al., 2001).

Of course, although many individuals may admirably strive to recognize discrimination and injustice, seeing discrimination everywhere, especially when it is not actually there, can be very damaging both intra- and interpersonally. Major and her colleagues (2003) found that attributing negative outcomes to discrimination in the face of overt prejudice cues can act as a self-protective strategy to guard self-esteem, and blaming discrimination in these instances is likely to be reinforced by others. However, blaming discrimination in cases in which prejudice cues are absent or when prejudice cues are ambiguous was not found to be a protective strategy. In the latter types of instances, blaming negative outcomes on discrimination was negatively related to self-esteem. Further, Major and her colleagues suggested that attributing negative outcomes to prejudice and discrimination in the absence of situational prejudice cues “may reflect chronic tendencies to
perceive oneself as a victim, to be sensitive to rejection, or to blame others for one’s misfortune” (Major et al., 2003, p. 230). From an interpersonal standpoint, individuals who report experiencing discrimination are often viewed negatively as complainers, regardless of the likelihood that discrimination actually occurred (Kaiser, Hagiwara, Malahy, & Wilkins, 2009). Consequently, the social cost of claiming to experience discrimination may—in the eyes of the target—outweigh any benefits. Additional potential interpersonal costs of perceiving and speaking out against prejudice and discrimination are further discussed in later sections of this paper.

**Social Information Processing Theory**

In general terms, social information processing theory proposes that individuals seek feedback from their social environment and, along with knowledge of past behavior, use this information to adjust their beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors to fit the social context (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978).

Individuals form and express attitudes based on the information available at the time of each expression. The expression and content of the attitude itself is shaped by the purpose of the attitude and any other information that is salient to the person forming the attitude (that is, any information that the person is immediately attuned to). The social environment in which an individual operates serves as a major source—perhaps even the *most* influential source—of information during attitude formation (Robinson & O’Leary-Kelly, 1998; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). For example, Bhave, Kramer, and Glomb (2010) demonstrated that group attitudes
toward work–family conflict at a group level can influence individual perceptions and attitudes beyond actual job demands and shared work environment. Salancik and Pfeffer (1978) posit that workplace attitudes are shaped by the individual’s perception and judgment of the affective elements of the job, socially derived information regarding appropriate attitudes, and the individual’s self-perception (driven, in part, by past behavior). The social context provides cues to guide one’s interpretation of events and can even suggest what one’s attitudes should be by providing information on what are considered by others in the work environment to be socially acceptable beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978).

Social information can directly influence individual attitudes through statements that are overt and relevant to the attitude in question (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). Thus, coworkers who complain loudly and often about working conditions may negatively influence a new employee’s attitude toward the work environment. The more ambiguous the information provided by the environment, and/or the more unsure the individual is of how to interpret situations, the more likely he or she is to rely on coworkers to inform his or her own attitudes (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978; Samnani & Singh, 2013). Since many aspects of the workplace are often ambiguous and multidimensional, individual attitudes can often be strongly influenced by the expressed attitudes of others (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). Conversely, if an individual is very certain about his or her own attitude, or if the situational information is unambiguous, then he or she may choose to reject the attitudes
shared by their coworkers if these attitudes are very disparate from his or her own (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978).

The social environment can also influence individual attitudes indirectly by guiding attention toward specific, and thus more salient, information (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). For example, regular discussion of certain aspects of a job or work environment are likely to draw increased attention to these aspects, which can in turn affect an individual’s attitudes. Thus, coworkers who regularly point out how repetitious their tasks are may make work seem tedious and dull. However, workers who regularly mention the greater importance of their tasks may make the job seem more admirable and worthwhile.

As suggested previously, in situations where information is ambiguous or even absent, individuals often seek to communicate with others to form stable, socially sanctioned interpretations of the situation (Festinger, 1954). Further, sources of social information are often prioritized in terms of personal relevance or similarity (Festinger, 1954). Thus, an individual is more likely to seek information from and conduct social comparisons with someone whom they see as similar to themselves. In a work context, this means that low-level employees are more likely to gather information about their specific job and draw comparisons between themselves and other employees with the same job, rather than gather information from a top-level manager (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978).
Past behavior also serves as a determinant of job attitudes. Information regarding one’s own past attitudes, the expression of these attitudes by oneself, and behavioral responses to these attitude expressions by oneself and others are taken into account during the formation of new attitudes (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). When an individual engages in a behavior that is personally chosen (rather than forced), public, and explicit, they become committed to this behavior and often to attitudes that align with it (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1977, 1978). Thus, individuals tend to rationalize committed behavior (an unchangeable piece of information) by using supporting and congruent information from their environment. Social information, then, is often drawn upon when rationalizing behavior, as an individual often considers social norms and expectations when explaining his or her own behavior.

Because the discriminatory behaviors that occur in the workplace are normally ambiguous, targets of these behaviors may find that these incidents in question are open to various forms of interpretation (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Sue et al., 2007). Thus, one potential way to examine how targets perceive and respond to ambiguous discriminatory situations is to consider social information processing theory.

Samnani and Singh (2013) propose a social information processing model in which group pressures, facilitated by organizational leaders, influence individual perceptions of ambiguous victimizing behaviors (such as discrimination). D’Cruz and Noronha (2011) found that after encountering a victimizing behavior, the initial reaction of a target is usually confusion.
According to Samnani and Singh (2013), when targets experience confusion after encountering an ambiguous victimizing behavior perpetrated by an organizational leader, they rely on social information provided by other members of the group to interpret the behavior. Group attitudes themselves are shaped by particular characteristics of the leader (which will be discussed in greater detail below). The group, in turn, may pressure the target to conform their perception of (and, consequently, their attitude toward) the behavior in question to match the group’s perspective of the leader. Thus, if the group is accepting of victimizing behavior (e.g., discrimination) enacted by the leader, then the target is also likely to accept it. Further, the more ambiguous the victimizing behavior, the more heavily the target is likely to rely on social information and the stronger the group’s pressure on the target to conform his or her attitude often becomes (Samnani & Singh, 2013).

Even when targets correctly identify discrimination, they may often feel helpless speaking out against it due to fear of the negative consequences often associated with addressing these incidents, particularly the potential negative interpersonal consequences (Sue et al., 2007). Regardless of the role of an organizational leader, non-targets (usually the majority of a group) are typically less adept at recognizing ambiguous forms of prejudice and discrimination and, as such, may more readily accept discriminatory behaviors (Schneider, 2004; Sue et al., 2007). In turn, the majority group members are likely to pressure targets to readjust their attitudes to fit with that of the group to maintain cohesiveness and a sense of unity in the workplace (Samnani &
Singh, 2013). Targets are likely to struggle to identify an appropriate response to perceived injustice due to the ambiguity of the situation and the fear of negative consequences related to speaking out against discrimination. This struggle is then compounded by group pressures to conform, which can pose a threat to the well-being and stress levels of targets and ultimately result in the targets’ maintained silence on the issue. In fact, the power of group norms and pressure to conform to them has been shown to be a significant precursor in the acceptance of discrimination at work (Brief, Dietz, Cohen, Pugh, & Vaslow, 2000). These group pressures inform targets of what an accepted response to certain situations is, and what responses (such as speaking out against discrimination) will draw complaints and perhaps even dismissal from the group (Griffin, 2004). Targets are often highly motivated to avoid negative interpersonal consequences and may subsequently choose to ignore or reevaluate the situation in order to escape group conflict (Meyer, Becker, & Van Dick, 2006). Thus, targets may rationalize that responding will not actually achieve desired outcomes and/or engage in self-deception by actually changing their own perception of what occurred (Samnani & Singh, 2013; Sue et al., 2007).

The Role of Organizational Leaders: Likability, Idiosyncrasy Credit, and the Ability to Shape Organizational Culture

Although social information processing theory suggests individuals may seek out and prioritize social information sources most similar to themselves (i.e., employees rely more heavily on social information provided
by other employees on the same organizational level) (Festinger, 1954; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978), the social information provided by organizational leaders should not be undervalued, as it also has the potential to be highly influential on individual perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors in the workplace (e.g., Hollander, 1992a, 1992b; Samnani & Singh, 2013).

To understand the behavior of others, individuals attempt to determine the underlying intentions of these behaviors (Thomas & Pondy, 1977). The behavioral intentions determined by the observer are then used to interpret the behavior and draw conclusions about the performer. These conclusions can shape perceptions of the behavior itself, which in turn influence observer behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). For instance, Fedor (1991) investigated the role of subordinate perceptions of supervisor intentions and found that these perceptions played a significant role in determining subordinate receptiveness to feedback from their supervisor, such that subordinates who viewed their supervisors’ intentions as favorable were also more accepting of negative feedback.

Engle and Lord (1997) found that a subordinate’s liking of their supervisor is positively correlated with evaluations of the quality of their relationship with their supervisor. Bitter and Gardner (1995) suggest that both the quality of the leader/member relationship and personality characteristics of the leader can strongly influence the attributions followers make for the behavior of the leader. Consequently, Dasborough and Ashkanasy (2002) argued that follower affect toward leaders (i.e., operationalized as how likable
the leader is) can influence follower attributions of leader behavior. They predicted that followers with positive affect toward their leader will attribute leader behavior to positive intentions (i.e., the leader is behaving with honest and respectable organizational intentions), while followers with negative affect toward their leader will more likely make negative behavioral attributions (i.e., the leader’s behavior is a result of manipulative, selfish intentions). These attributions, in turn, influence followers’ perceptions of the leader’s behavior. In support of this, Furst and Cable (2008) found that leader behavior—even negative behavior—is more likely to be viewed as well-intentioned by followers who view their leader otherwise favorably.

Perceptions of, and reactions to, leader behavior can also partially be explained by the idea of “idiosyncrasy credits,” which are defined as “an accumulation of positively disposed impressions residing in relevant others” (Hollander, 1958, p. 120). According to Hollander (1958), when considering social conformity and status, an individual (such as an organizational leader) can acquire idiosyncrasy credits to allow him or her to deviate from social norms within a group. Subsequently, the amount of credits one has determines the extent to which one can diverge from group expectations. In other words, the amount of idiosyncrasy credits an individual has earned with a group is directly related to how much “permission” he or she has to engage in idiosyncratic behavior. While credit is earned through favorable impressions, violations of group norms deplete the amount of idiosyncrasy credit the
individual has with the group. So long as an individual maintains a positive credit balance, he or she will continue to be an accepted member of the group.

Hollander’s original hypothesis supposes that, in order to violate group norms without being rejected by the group, one must first conform in order to build up one’s credit with the group. However, Wahrman and Pugh (1972) demonstrated that early non-conformers (that is, individuals who violated group norms before establishing idiosyncrasy credit) are still accepted by their group so long as they are also perceived as being competent. In fact, results found by Wahrman and Pugh suggest that non-conformity actually increases one’s ability to influence a group when the non-conformer is viewed as competent. Further, they hypothesize that high-status individuals (e.g., organizational leaders) who successfully violate a norm may indeed have the potential to actually negate the norm itself, subsequently allowing other group members to also behave in that manner. Conversely, norm violations by high-status individuals may continue to be seen as such, with violations considered “a matter of taste,” or the violation may be perceived as accidental or as an acceptable matter of circumstance (Warhman & Pugh, 1972, p. 385).

**Rationale**

Considering likability and idiosyncrasy credits in conjunction, then, it seems reasonable to postulate that leaders who are likeable and/or have built up idiosyncrasy credits with their group (perhaps through acting otherwise favorably or by being perceived as competent) may be given greater latitude to perform discriminatory behaviors, particularly those that are ambiguous and
thereby open to interpretation. Thus, positive views of a leader may have the potential to eclipse discriminatory behaviors enacted by the leader and ultimately shape follower perceptions of these behaviors.

Perhaps of greater importance, this latitude given to leaders can subsequently translate into group pressures on targets to accept discriminatory behaviors. If the group views the leader positively, then they are likely to interpret him or her as well intentioned. Consequently, the group may actually establish a norm of accepting these behaviors and of viewing them positively. Targets are then likely to be pressured to conform to the group’s perspective toward the leader and also interpret the leader’s behavior as positively intentioned (e.g., “I’m sure he didn’t mean it that way”). Indeed, Samnani and Singh (2013) speculate that leaders who are typically considered to be charming and persuasive likely have the ability to facilitate group pressures to accept victimizing behaviors in the workplace. Of course, this can also work in the reverse direction, with leader behaviors being viewed as particularly negatively intentioned if the leader is not well liked by others (Dasborough & Ashkanasy, 2002).

Hence, the leader has the potential to play a major role in shaping organizational culture regarding the tolerance of discrimination (Samnani & Singh, 2013). A leader who engages in unfair practices at work can “set the tone” for what is acceptable behavior for other members of the organization to engage in (Griffin, 2004, p. 146). For example, a top-level executive who makes derogatory remarks about women or who, directly or indirectly,
endorses traditional gender roles that put women at a disadvantage (e.g., a male executive who conducts a significant amount of informal business on golf outings, but only invites men to join because women are not expected to play sports) may be ultimately communicating to the rest of the organization that this behavior is acceptable or even encouraged. Discriminatory behavior perpetrated by a generally likeable, credible, and seemingly competent leader, then, can be especially impactful on organizational culture and particularly damaging for targets negatively affected by and pressured to accept such behavior.

**Statement of Hypotheses**

This thesis aims to look specifically at the ability of leader characteristics (namely, likability of the leader) to influence individual perceptions of everyday sexism.

Based on the preceding theory, the following hypotheses are made:

**H1:** Followers perceive a leader who engages in everyday sexism to be more biased than a leader who does not engage in everyday sexism.

**H2:** Followers perceive a leader who is likable and engages in everyday sexism to be less biased than a leader who is not likeable and engages in everyday sexism.

Additionally, considering individual differences in perceptions of discrimination discussed previously, the following hypotheses are proposed:

**H3a:** Gender identification influences perceptions of leader bias in situations in which the leader engages in everyday sexism, such that
high gender-identified women perceive the leader as more biased than low gender-identified women.

H3b: Gender identification does not influence perceptions of leader bias in situations in which the leader does not engage in everyday sexism.

H4a: Stigma consciousness influences perceptions of leader bias in situations in which the leader engages in everyday sexism, such that women who have high stigma consciousness perceive the leader as more biased than women with low stigma consciousness.

H4b: Stigma consciousness does not influence perceptions of leader bias in situations in which the leader does not engage in everyday sexism.

Research Questions

1. Do perceptions of leader competence vary as a function of leader likability?

2. Do perceptions of leader competence vary due to the presence or absence of sexism?

3. Does leader likability moderate the relationship between the presence of sexism and perceptions of leader competence?

4. Does the presence of sexism influence how women believe another woman should react?
Method

Pilot Testing

Prior to conducting the main study, data from 20 participants (70% female; $M_{age} = 26.65, SD_{age} = 8.30$) were collected to check the experimental manipulations (likability and sexism). Participants were acquaintances and colleagues of the researcher, and were recruited through advertisement of the study on the social media site Facebook. The pilot study itself was hosted on Qualtrics (a survey hosting website). Prior to completing this task, participants completed an informed consent form.

Participants were asked to rate 15 trait-words on a five-point scale (ranging from 1 = ”very unlikable” to 5 = ”very likable”) according to how likable they considered each trait to be. The trait-words that were rated were chosen from a list of personality trait-words that had been previously rated in terms of likableness as a personality characteristic (Anderson, 1968). Five of the chosen words had previously received high likableness ratings (sincere, helpful, reliable, pleasant, friendly), five of the words had received low likableness ratings (insincere, unhelpful, unreliable, unpleasant, disagreeable), and the remaining five words received relatively neutral likableness ratings (ordinary, unpredictable, average, quiet, and cautious) in Anderson’s study. These specific high and low likableness words were chosen because all of them were also included in a subscale of 200 trait-words considered to be of particularly high quality in terms of word meaning clarity to raters (Anderson, 1968). The neutral words were included to prevent
biasing responses toward the extremes of the scale. Results confirmed the expected likeableness ratings of the trait words chosen to manipulate likability of the leader. Mean likableness ratings of high-likable words ranged from 4.40 to 4.79 on a 5-point Likert scale, while mean likableness ratings of low-likable words ranged from 1.55 to 2.65. The consistently high ratings for trait words intended to be perceived as likable and consistently low ratings for trait words intended to be perceived as unlikable suggested that all of the chosen high- and low-likableness trait words were appropriate for the likability of the leader experimental manipulation.

Participants also rated a number of statements in terms of how sexist they would perceive them to be if they were to occur in the workplace on a five-point scale (ranging from 1 = “not at all sexist” to 5 = ”very sexist”) (Appendix A). The statement “My supervisor has a rule that the newest girl in the office has to make the coffee in the break room” was perceived as the most sexist ($M = 4.65, SD = 0.75$). However, this comment was not included in the later manipulation since such strong negative reactions were thought to potentially limit variability in individuals’ perceptions of the leader (i.e., participants, regardless of the condition, may find such a strong statement to be very biased against women). Rather, the statements “My supervisor asked me to make cookies for the company holiday party, because he assumed I was good at that sort of thing” ($M = 3.65, SD = 1.27$) and “My supervisor has hosted a few employee golf-outings, but really only the men were expected to join” ($M = 4.00; SD = 0.92$), were chosen to be included in conditions in
which sexism is present, as both received an mean sexism score above 3.00.
Conversely, in conditions in which sexism is absent, the statements “Everyday
when I walk into work, my supervisor tells me hello” ($M = 1.00$, $SD = 0$) and
“My supervisor has hosted a few employee get-togethers, and everyone was
welcome to join” ($M = 1.00$; $SD = 0$) were included in the main study.

**Research Participants**

Data were collected from a total of 243 participants. Participants who
reported being male ($N = 3$) and those who incorrectly answered the sexism
manipulation check items ($N = 22$) were removed from subsequent analyses,
resulting in a final sample size of 216 women. Participant age ranged from 18
to 72 years, with a mean of 35.78 years ($SD = 12.19$). Mean full-time work
experience was 12.46 years ($SD = 10.55$) and mean part-time work experience
was 4.73 ($SD = 4.97$). In addition, 116 participants (53.7%) reported having
supervisory experience. A breakdown of participant demographics by
experimental condition is presented in Table 1.

Participants were recruited online using Amazon’s Mechanical Turk
(MTurk), an online crowdsourcing tool that allows for anonymous task
participation of subjects who meet specific criteria set by the researcher in
exchange for compensation. Research suggests the subject pool made
available by MTurk is more representative of the U.S. population (e.g., has
greater cultural diversity) than traditional university subject pools, potentially
allowing for greater generalizability of results (Paolacci, Chandler, &
Ipeirotis, 2010). Further, a number of studies suggest that the data collected
through MTurk is at least of equal quality to data collected through university
subject pools (e.g., Mason & Suri, 2012; Paolacci et al., 2010). Indeed, data
collected through MTurk may actually have higher internal validity than data
collected through more traditional recruitment methods, as the participants
and researchers are not required to interact when using MTurk, which reduces
the chance of introducing experimenter bias or other confounding factors
(Paolacci et al., 2010).

Participants were randomly assigned to their condition in a 2 (Leader
Likability: high vs. low) × 2 (Sexism: absent vs. present) between-subjects
design. Of the participants retained for analyses, 51 were assigned to the high-
likability/sexism-absent condition, 54 were assigned to the high-
likability/sexism-present condition, 54 were assigned to the low-
likability/sexism-absent condition, and 57 were assigned to the low-
likability/sexism-present condition.

**Procedure**

Participants accessed the study through MTurk after locating the
request for participation on the MTurk site and accepting the request. Once
accepted, participants selected a link that connected them to the study on
Qualtrics. On the Qualtrics site, participants were asked to complete an
informed consent form including general description of the study’s purpose.
Participants were told the purpose of the study was to investigate how
employees describe their supervisors and how individuals react to and
Table 1. Demographic Breakdown by Condition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Variables</th>
<th>Experimental Condition</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Likability/Sexism Absent</td>
<td>High Likability/Sexism Present</td>
<td>Low Likability/Sexism Absent</td>
<td>Low Likability/Sexism Present</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>44</td>
<td></td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic, Latino/a</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian, Pacific Islander</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American/Alaskan Native</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
evaluate supervisors based on the descriptions provided to them by one of the supervisor’s employees. Additionally, participants were told that researchers were interested in investigating how an individual’s identification with certain social groups influences these reactions and evaluations.

After providing informed consent, participants received instructions for the first step of the study. Participants were told that researchers had created a number of videos of employees confidentially describing their supervisors, and that these descriptions can vary greatly from each other. They were then told that the video they were about to view had been selected at random from this collection and, following the video, they would answer questions regarding the video’s content. In reality, participants were shown one of four short videos (approximately 2 minutes in length) of a female employee describing her male supervisor. The content of the video varied according to the participant’s randomly assigned condition.

After watching the video, participants were asked to complete a survey measuring their perceptions of the leader, including leader likability, perceived leader bias, and perceived leader competence based on the description provided by the employee. Subsequently, participants responded to a number of items regarding how they believe the employee in the video should respond to her supervisor’s behavior (i.e., behavioral response items). Next, participants provided demographic information regarding age, race, years of full- and part-time work experience, and supervisory experience. Once these items were completed, participants were prompted to respond to
items measuring gender identification and stigma consciousness. Though demographic questions would typically be asked last in the course of a study, they were presented before the individual difference measures so as to increase the delay between participant response to measures pertaining to leader perceptions (which involve items that prompt consideration of bias) and response to individual difference measures (which involve items pertaining to personal feelings regarding bias against women). This was done in an attempt to limit the priming effects of earlier measures subsequent responses to individual difference measures.

Finally, participants were asked to complete a sexism manipulation check. Once this stage of the study was completed, debriefing information appeared on the screen and participants received payment for participation.

Materials

**Employee testimony video.** Each of the four videos featured the same female actor portraying a non-managerial employee at an organization and included both experimental manipulations (likability and everyday sexism). During the video, the actor describes her boss (a man) and typical interactions she has with him on a daily basis (Appendix B).

Likability of the leader was manipulated by varying which personality trait words the employee used to describe her boss. In high-likability conditions, the employee described her boss using high-likeableness words (*reliable, pleasant, friendly, sincere, helpful*); in the low-likability conditions,
she used low-likeableness words in (unreliable, unpleasant, disagreeable, insincere, unhelpful).

The sexism manipulation was also included in the employee’s description of her boss. In conditions in which everyday sexism cues were present, the employee included two statements describing her boss’s behavior that were considered to be examples of sexism in pilot testing (“My supervisor asked me to make cookies for the company holiday party, because he assumed I was good at that sort of thing” and “My supervisor has hosted a few employee golf-outings, but really only the men were expected to join”). In conditions where everyday sexism cues were absent, the employee included two statements describing her boss’s behavior that were considered to be neutral in terms of sexism in pilot testing (“Everyday when I walk into work, my supervisor tells me hello” and “My supervisor has hosted a few employee get-togethers, and everyone was welcome to join”).

Gender identification. Participants completed the Identity subscale of the Collective Self-Esteem (CSE) scale, which consists of four items measured on a seven-point Likert scale (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992). Items were worded to measure identification with women as a social group (Appendix C). Previous research suggests this measure has reasonable reliability, with alpha levels ranging from .73 to .80 (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992). Level of gender identification was determined by averaging across items, after reverse-coding negative items. Alpha of the scale was .88.
**Stigma consciousness.** Stigma consciousness was measured using the Stigma Consciousness Questionnaire (SQC) for women (Pinel, 1999, $a = .72$) (Appendix D). Level of stigma consciousness was calculated by averaging across items, after reverse-coding negative items. With all items of the measure included, alpha was .61. However, after removing items 5 and 8, alpha increased to .86. Thus, these items were removed from further analyses.

**Perceptions of the leader.** Participants rated their impressions of the leader described in the video using a measure similar to one used by Rasinski, Geers, and Czopp (2013) (Appendix E). Responses to “How [biased, fair, offensive] is the supervisor?” were averaged to determine perceptions of leader bias after reverse-coding the “fair” item (so that a higher composite score on this measure represents a higher level of bias). Responses to “How [intelligent, competent] is the supervisor?” were averaged to determine perceptions of leader competence. Alpha for the perceptions of leader bias measure was .93, and alpha for the perceptions of leader competence measure was .86.

**Behavioral response items.** Participants were asked to complete a number of behavioral response items examining how they believed the employee in the video should respond to her supervisor (e.g., “The employee should report the supervisor’s behavior to Human Resources”) as well as an item measuring their own behavioral intentions (i.e., “Would you accept a job at this organization if it meant you would have the same supervisor as described in the video?”) (Appendix F).
Sexism manipulation check. Participants were asked to complete two items to determine that they can correctly identify whether or not sexism cues (per the manipulation) were present in the video they viewed (Appendix G).

Demographic variables. Participants were asked to provide demographic information regarding age, race, years of work experience, and supervisory experience (Appendix H).

See Table 2 for information regarding scale reliability, and variable means, standard deviations, and correlations of the experimental measures and Table 3 for variable means and standard deviations per condition.

Results

Likability Manipulation Check

An independent measures t-test was conducted as a likability manipulation check by comparing likability scores between high-likability and low-likability conditions. As expected, likability scores were significantly higher in high-likability conditions ($M = 5.77; SD = 1.09$) than in low-likability conditions ($M = 2.23; SD = 1.12; t = -23.43; p < .001$).

Hypothesis Testing

To test H1 (Followers perceive a leader who engages in everyday sexism to be more biased than a leader who does not engage in
Table 2. Scale Reliability and Variable Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>$M$</th>
<th>$SD$</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Perceptions of Leader Bias</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>1.76</td>
<td>(.93)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Perceptions of Leader Competence</td>
<td>5.15</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>-.66**</td>
<td>(.86)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Gender Identification</td>
<td>5.07</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>(.88)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Stigma Consciousness</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>.29**</td>
<td>-.22**</td>
<td>.26**</td>
<td>(.86)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. $N$ varies from 213 to 216 due to missing values. All scales used a 7-point scale. Scale reliability as Cronbach’s alpha is presented in the diagonal. $M = \text{mean.} \ SD = \text{standard deviation.} \ ** = p < .001.$
Table 3. Variable Means and Standard Deviations by Condition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Perception of Leader Bias</th>
<th>$M$</th>
<th>$SD$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High Likability/Sexism Absent</td>
<td>Perceptions of Leader Bias</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perceptions of Leader Competence</td>
<td>5.87</td>
<td>0.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gender Identification</td>
<td>5.05</td>
<td>1.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stigma Consciousness</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>0.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Likability/Sexism Present</td>
<td>Perceptions of Leader Bias</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>1.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perceptions of Leader Competence</td>
<td>5.79</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gender Identification</td>
<td>4.88</td>
<td>1.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stigma Consciousness</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Likability/Sexism Absent</td>
<td>Perceptions of Leader Bias</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perceptions of Leader Competence</td>
<td>4.85</td>
<td>1.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gender Identification</td>
<td>4.96</td>
<td>1.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stigma Consciousness</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Likability/Sexism Present</td>
<td>Perceptions of Leader Bias</td>
<td>5.77</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perceptions of Leader Competence</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>1.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gender Identification</td>
<td>5.39</td>
<td>1.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stigma Consciousness</td>
<td>4.46</td>
<td>0.57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. All scales used a 7-point scale.*
everyday sexism) and H2 (Followers perceive a leader who is likable and engages in everyday sexism to be less biased than a leader who is not likeable and engages in everyday sexism), a 2 (Leader Likability: high vs. low) \times 2 (Sexism Cues: absent vs. present) between-subjects ANOVA was conducted with perceptions of leader bias as the dependent variable.

It should be noted that, in hindsight, the wording of H2 was identified as not adequately conveying the concept it actually intended to predict. Thus, although this hypothesis was worded ambiguously as though it may predict a moderating effect of likability on the relationship between the presence of sexism and perceptions of leader bias, it was actually intended to predict a main affect of likability on perceptions of leader bias, such that followers perceive a leader who is likable to be less biased than a leader who is not likable, regardless of whether this leader engages in everyday sexism. Therefore, the following analyses will be conducted in regards to the intended meaning of H2, rather than according to the ambiguous phrasing originally proposed.

Using the above mentioned ANOVA procedure, H1 was supported, as a significant main effect of sexism was found, \( F(1,213) = 120.16; p < .001, \text{ partial } \eta^2 = .37, \) such that perceptions of bias were higher in conditions in which everyday sexism cues were present (\( M = 4.77; SD = 1.65 \)) than in conditions in which everyday sexism cues were absent (\( M = 3.03; SD = 1.38 \)). H2 was also supported, as there was a significant main effect of likability, \( F(1,213) = 165.06, p < .001, \text{ partial } \eta^2 = .44, \) such that perceptions of bias were
higher in low-likability conditions ($M = 4.88; SD = 0.11$), than in high-likability conditions ($M = 2.86; SD = 0.11$). The interaction term (likability*sexism) was not significant, $F(1,213) = 0.25, p = .615$ (Figure 1).

![Figure 1. Main Effects of Sexism and Likability on Perceptions of Leader Bias](image)

To test H3a (Gender identification influences perceptions of leader bias in situations in which the leader engages in everyday sexism, such that high gender identified women perceive the leader as more biased than low gender identified women) and H3b (Gender identification does not influence perceptions of leader bias in situations in which the leader does not engage in everyday sexism), regression analyses predicting perception of bias was conducted after dummy coding the sexism variable (0 = absent, 1 = present). The regression equation included sexism and gender identification as main
effect variables and the interaction variable sexism*gender identification. The model had a significant interaction effect, $b = .37$, $t (213) = 2.25$, $p = .026$ (Table 4).

**Table 4.** Regression Analysis of the Effects of Sexism and Gender Identification on Perceptions of Leader Competence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>$b$</th>
<th>$SE$</th>
<th>$t$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>8.08**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexism</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>-.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Identification</td>
<td>-.28</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>-2.72*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexism X Gender Identification</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>2.25*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. $N = 213$. $R^2 = .27$, $p < .001$. $M =$ mean. $SD =$ standard deviation. $* = p < .05$; $** = p < .001$

Somewhat interestingly, in conditions in which sexism was absent, women low in gender identification (i.e., 1 SD below the mean) actually perceived the leader as more biased than women high in gender identification (i.e., 1 SD above the mean). However, when sexism was present this difference reversed, as women high in gender identification perceived the leader to be slightly more biased than women low in gender identification. This specific split of the data (i.e., 1 SD above and below the mean of gender identification) was chosen for the interaction plot not because those numbers serve as particularly significant points, *per se*, but rather because graphing these points provides a clear visualization of the nature of interaction effect. Nonetheless, examination of the interaction plot simple slopes revealed that although there was a positive relationship between the presence of sexism and
perceptions of leader bias (that is, perceptions of bias were higher when sexism was present) across all levels of gender identification, women high in gender identification (i.e., 1 SD above the mean) exhibited a stronger positive relationship between the presence of sexism and perceptions of leader bias, $b = 2.25$, $t = 7.60$, $p < .001$, than women low in gender identification (i.e., 1 SD below the mean), $b = 1.22$, $t = 3.74$, $p < .001$ (Figure 2). Thus, when considering the simple slopes analysis, H3a is supported. However, H3b is not supported as there were differences in bias perceptions between women who were high and low in gender identification when sexism was absent.

![Figure 2. Gender Identification as a Moderator of the Presence of Sexism Cues and Perceptions of Bias](image-url)
To test H4a (Stigma consciousness influences perceptions of leader bias in situations in which the leader engages in everyday sexism, such that women who have high stigma consciousness perceive the leader as more biased than women with low stigma consciousness.) and H4b (Stigma consciousness does not influence perceptions of leader bias in situations in which the leader does not engage in everyday sexism), a regression analysis similar to the analyses described above was conducted, but substituting stigma consciousness for gender identification. As predicted, there was a significant interaction term, $b = 1.23$, $t(213) = 5.13$, $p < .001$ (Table 5). This indicated that the relationship between the presence of sexism cues and perceptions of bias was moderated by stigma consciousness. Examination of the interaction plot revealed that moderation occurred as predicted, such that when sexism was absent, women perceived virtually the same level of leader bias. However, when sexism was present, women high in stigma consciousness (i.e., 1 SD above the mean) perceived the leader as much more biased than

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>$b$</th>
<th>$SE$</th>
<th>$t$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>4.26**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexism</td>
<td>-3.48</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>-3.36**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stigma Consciousness</td>
<td>-0.044</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>-.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexism X Stigma Consciousness</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>5.13**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 211. $R^2 = .38$, $p < .001$. $M = mean. SD = standard deviation. ** = p < .001*
women low in stigma consciousness (i.e., 1 SD below the mean). Moreover, examination of interaction plots simple slopes revealed a strong positive relationship between the presence of sexism perceptions of leader bias for women high in stigma consciousness, $b = 2.62, t = 10.08, p < .001$, while only a weak positive relationship was found for women low in stigma consciousness, $b = .72, t = 2.61, p = .01$ (Figure 3). These analyses supported H4a and H4b.

**Figure 3.** Stigma Consciousness as a Moderator of the Presence of Sexism Cues and Perceptions of Bias
Research Questions

To answer Research Questions 1 (Do perceptions of leader competence vary as a function of leader likability?), 2 (Do perceptions of leader competence vary due to the presence or absence of sexism?), and 3 (Does leader likability moderate the relationship between the presence of sexism and perceptions of leader competence?), a 2 (Leader Likability: high vs. low) × 2 (Sexism Cues: absent vs. present) between-subjects ANOVA was conducted with perceptions of leader competence as the dependent variable. The analysis revealed a significant main effect of likability on perceptions of leader competence, \( F(1, 212) = 78.21, p < .001, \) partial \( \eta^2 = .27 \), such that perceptions of competence were higher in high-likability conditions (\( M = 5.83; SD = .11 \)) than in low-likability condition (\( M = 4.52; SD = .10 \)). Additionally, a significant main effect of sexism on perceptions of competence was found, \( F(1, 212) = 7.35, p = .007, \) partial \( \eta^2 = .034 \), such that perceptions of competence were higher in conditions in which sexism cues were absent (\( M = 5.37; SD = .11 \)) than in condition in which sexism cues were present (\( M = 4.97; SD = .10 \)). There was no significant interaction of sexism and likability on perceptions of leader competence, \( F = 3.37; p = .068 \) (Figure 4).
To investigate Research Question 4 (Does the presence of sexism influence how women believe another female should react?), a two-way MANOVA (Likability X Sexism) was conducted with ratings on the behavioral response items as the dependent variables. Significant main effects for both Likability and Sexism were found for all items (reported below). Means and standard deviations of ratings for each behavioral response items can be found in Table 6.

For the item “The employee should continue to work for the supervisor,” there was a significant main effect of sexism, $F(1, 208) = 17.18$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .076$, such that subjects agreed more strongly with this statement when sexism was absent ($M = 5.273$; $SD = 0.13$) than when it was present ($M = 4.52$; $SD = 0.13$). There was also a significant main effect of likability, $F(1, 208) = 89.88$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .30$, such that subjects agreed more
Table 6. Behavioral Response Item Means and Standard Deviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rate the extent to which you agree the employee in the video should…</th>
<th>$M$</th>
<th>$SD$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Continue to work for the supervisor.</td>
<td>4.87</td>
<td>1.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk to the supervisor about the impact of the supervisor’s behavior.</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>1.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk to coworkers about the impact of the supervisor’s behavior.</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>1.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report the supervisor’s behavior to the supervisor’s own boss.</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>1.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report the supervisor’s behavior to Human Resources.</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>1.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>File a lawsuit regarding the supervisor’s behavior.</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>1.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Would you accept a job at this organization if it meant you would have the same supervisor as described in the video? | 1.40 | .49 |

*Note.* The first 6 items used a 7-point scale; the last item used a 2-point scale (1=Yes, 2 = No)
strongly with this statement when and when the leader was high in likability (M = 5.74; SD = 0.13) compared to low in likability (M = 4.05; SD = 0.13). The interaction effect was not significant, F(1, 208) = 1.96, p = .163.

For the item “The employee should talk to the supervisor about the impact of the supervisor’s behavior,” there was a significant main effect of sexism, F(1, 208) = 8.53, p = .004, partial η^2 = .039, such that subjects agreed more strongly with this statement when sexism was present (M = 3.32; SD = 1.62) than when it was absent (M = 3.32; SD = 1.61). There was also a significant main effect of likability, F(1, 208) = 34.51, p < .001, η^2 = .14, such that subjects agreed more strongly with this statement when and when the leader was low in likability (M = 4.24; SD = 1.59) compared to high in likability (M = 3.01; SD = 1.48). The interaction effect was not significant, F(1, 208) = .18, p = .67.

For the item “The employee should talk to coworkers about the impact of the supervisor’s behavior,” a significant main effect of sexism was found, F(1, 208) = 4.21, p = .041, partial η^2 = .020, such that participants agreed more strongly with this statement when sexism was present (M = 3.34; SD = .15) than when sexism was absent (M = 2.93; SD = .15). A significant main effect of likability was also found, F(1, 208) = 4.53, p = 0.034, partial η^2 = .021, such that participants agreed more strongly with this statement when the leader was low in likability (M = 3.36; SD = 0.15) as compared to when the leader was high in likability (M = 2.90; SD = 0.15). The interaction effect was not significant, F(1, 212) = 0.004, p = .95.
For the item “The employee should report the supervisor’s behavior to the supervisor’s own boss,” there was a significant main effect of sexism, $F(1, 208) = 21.77, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .095$, such that participants agreed with the statement more strongly when sexism was present ($M = 3.62, SD = .152$) than when it was absent ($M = 2.60, SD = .15$). Additionally, there was a significant main effect of likability, $F(1, 208) = 55.78, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .21$, such that participants agreed more strongly when the leader was low in likability ($M = 3.92, SD = .15$) compared to high in likability ($M = 2.31, SD = .15$). The interaction effect was not significant, $F(1, 208) = .58, p = .45$.

For the item “The employee should report the supervisor’s behavior to Human Resources,” there was a significant main effect of sexism, $F(1, 211) = 49.90, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .19$, such that participants agree more strongly with the statement when sexism was present ($M = 3.87, SD = 2.45$) than when it was absent ($M = 2.45, SD = .14$). There was also a significant main effect of likability, $F(1, 208) = 96.29, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .32$, such that participants agreed more strongly when the leader was low in likability ($M = 4.15, SD = .14$) compared to high in likability ($M = 2.18, SD = .14$). Additionally, there was a significant interaction effect between sexism and likability, $F(1, 208) = 6.03, p = .015$, partial $\eta^2 = .03$. The interaction occurred such that if sexism was present, participants agreed more strongly that the behavior should be reported to Human Resources when the leader was also low in likability ($M = 5.13; SD = .20$) than when the leader was also high in likability ($M = 2.62; SD = .20$) (Figure 5).
The item “The employee should file a lawsuit regarding the supervisor’s behavior” had similar results to the previous item. There was a significant main effect of sexism, $F(1, 208) = 18.35, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .081$, such that participants agreed more strongly with the statement when sexism was present ($M = 2.07, SD = .10$) than when sexism was absent ($M = 1.47, .10$). There was also a main effect of likability, $F(1, 208) = 10.66, p = .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .049$, such that participants agreed more strongly when the leader was low in likability ($M = 2.10, SD = .10$) compared to high in likability ($M = 1.54, SD = .10$). Additionally, there was a significant interaction of likability and sexism, $F(1, 208) = 8.91, p = .003$, partial $\eta^2 =$
.041. The interaction occurred such that if sexism was present, participants agreed more strongly when the leader was also low in likability (\( M = 2.52, SD = 1.40 \)) than when the leader was also high in likability (\( M = 1.62, SD = .74 \)). However, when sexism was absent, participants did not differ in their agreement with the statement regardless of leader likability (Figure 6).

![Figure 6](https://via.placeholder.com/150)

**Figure 6.** Main Effects and Interaction Effect of Sexism and Likability on Agreement that the Employee Should File a Lawsuit Regarding the Supervisor's Behavior

For the item “Would you accept a job at this organization if it meant you would have the same supervisor as described in the video,” responses were coded as 1 = ”Yes” and 2 = “No.” There was a significant main effect of likability, \( F(1,208) = 77.00, p < .001 \), partial \( \eta^2 = .27 \), such than participants were more likely to report that they would accept the job when the leader was high in likability (\( M = 1.14, SD = .35 \)) than when the leader was low in
likability ($M = 1.64$, $SD = .48$). A significant main effect of sexism was also found, $F(1, 208) = 17.37, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .077$, such that participants were more likely to report that they would accept the job when sexism was absent ($M = 1.27$, $SD = .45$) than when sexism was present ($M = 1.51$, $SD = .45$). The interaction effect was not significant, $F(1, 208) = .179, p = .67$.

**Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to examine how particular characteristics of an organizational leader (namely, how likable the leader is) can impact targets’ perceptions of everyday sexism perpetrated by that leader. Both the presence of sexism and likability of the leader had a strong effect on perceptions of leader bias. ($\eta^2 = .37$ and $.44$, respectively). As predicted, women perceived a leader who reportedly engaged in everyday sexism (e.g., only inviting men to an office golf outing) to be more biased than a leader who did not engage in such behaviors. However, as further predicted, a leader who was likable and reportedly engaged in sexist behaviors was seen as much less biased than an unlikable leader who reportedly engaged in the exact same behaviors. These results suggest that leaders who are considered to be likable are given greater latitude to behave inappropriately than unlikable leaders. In fact, results found that an unlikable leader who did not engage in sexism (i.e., a leader who was not described as being potentially biased against women) was perceived to have about the same amount of bias (or slightly more) as a likable leader who was described as engaging in potentially sexist behaviors.
This suggests that leaders can, generally speaking, get away with sexist behavior so long as they are otherwise well-liked by those with whom they interact.

These results are consistent with social processing theory (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978), which posits that social information can shape individual perceptions and interpretations of events. In the case of this study, the employee in the video served as a relevant source of social information regarding the leader in question. When ambiguous forms of sexism were described (i.e., behaviors that were open to some interpretation in terms of sexist intent), participants—likely unsure of how exactly this information should be interpreted—relied on other social information provided by the employee to interpret the intentions behind the leader’s behaviors. Thus, when potentially sexist behaviors were involved, the interpretation of these behaviors depended in large part on other available information (i.e., how likable the leader was described as being). Consequently, when the leader was described as otherwise likable, potentially sexist behaviors were interpreted more positively (e.g., “He probably didn’t mean it that way”), while the same behaviors perpetrated by an unpleasant leader were interpreted more negatively (e.g., “He probably did mean it that way”). Thus, social information provided by the employee that was arguably irrelevant to the issue of leader bias (i.e., how likable the leader was) had the distinct ability to impact perceptions of sexist behaviors. These results are also consistent with previous research regarding follower affect and favorability toward leaders.
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(i.e., positive affect is related to attribution of positive leader intentions) 
(Dasborough & Ashkanasy, 2002; Furst & Cable, 2008).

Sexism cues and likability had similar effects on perceptions of leader competence compared to perceptions of bias in terms of directionality. However, while these variables both had strong effects on perceptions of bias, only likability had a strong effect on perceptions of competence ($\eta^2 = .27$) while sexism exhibited a much smaller effect ($\eta^2 = .034$). The difference in effect sizes suggests participants likely weighed leader likability more heavily than sexist behaviors perpetrated by that leader when judging their competence.

Gender identification had a moderating effect on the relationship between perceptions of leader bias and the presence of sexism, such that women high in gender identification exhibited greater sensitivity to the presence of sexism (as evidenced by a comparatively steeper incline in bias perceptions between sexism conditions) relative to women low in gender identification. Hence, although high gender identified women perceived a leader to be less biased than low gender identified women when sexism was absent, women high in gender identification perceived the leader as more biased when sexism was present. These results partially supported hypotheses, which predicted no differences when sexism was absent (not supported), and that women high in gender identification would have higher bias perceptions when sexism was present (supported). These findings contradicted past research somewhat, as women who identified strongly with their gender as a
group were not more likely than women low in gender identification to perceive sexism when sexism cues were absent and instead perceived less bias in these instances. However, findings were consistent with past research in instances in which sexism cues were present (Major et al., 2003). In this study, it could be the case that women high in gender identification were better able to separate social information relating to how likable an individual is from information relating to how biased they are against women. Therefore, in instances when no sexism occurred, women high in gender identification may have been more attuned to this than women low in gender identification and, consequently, perceived less bias. Conversely, when sexism was present, women high in gender identification may have reacted to this social information more strongly than women low in gender identification and, as a result, perceived higher levels of bias. An exploration of the mechanism underlying this interaction could be a topic of future research. Nonetheless, despite the somewhat contrary results obtained when looking at absolute values of bias perceptions across levels of gender, analyses did still support that the relationship between bias perceptions and the presence of sexism was stronger for women high in gender identification versus low, which consistent overall with what was predicted.

Stigma consciousness moderated the relationship between women’s perceptions of leader bias and the presence of sexism cues as expected, such that when sexism cues were present, women high in stigma consciousness perceived the leader to be much more biased than women low in stigma
consciousness. Conversely, when sexism cues were absent, perceptions of bias were virtually the same across levels of stigma consciousness. These findings suggest that women high in stigma consciousness (similar to those low in stigma consciousness) did not generally perceive bias when none existed. However, when sexism was present, women high in stigma consciousness were more sensitive to it, and consequently perceived instances of everyday sexism as more biased and/or offensive than women who were low in stigma conscious. This is consistent with past research suggesting that stigma consciousness is positively related to how strongly women react to sexist behaviors (Pinel, 2002).

Examination of participant endorsement of behavioral response items also revealed some interesting findings. Although both the presence of sexism and leader likability generally impacted how strongly participants endorsed behaviors meant to address the leader’s behavior (e.g., discuss the leader’s behavior with others, file a complaint with Human Resources), likability of the leader had a consistently stronger effect on endorsement of these behaviors than the presence of sexism. Likability had a medium to strong effect for five of the seven behavioral items ($\eta^2$ ranging from .14 to .32), and a small effect for two items (The employee should discuss the impact of the leader’s behavior with coworkers and the employee should file a lawsuit). Contrastingly, the presence of sexism exhibited only a small effect for six of the items ($\eta^2$ ranging from .02 to .10) and a medium effect for one item (The employee should report the supervisor’s behavior to Human Resources). In
fact, the only item for which sexism had a markedly stronger effect than likability on endorsement of a behavioral response was the item pertaining to filing a lawsuit regarding the leader’s behavior.

These findings are interesting for a number of reasons. First, they suggest that endorsement of many behavioral responses that could be taken against the leader were impacted much more strongly by whether or not the leader was considered likable than by whether or not the leader displayed sexist behaviors. This differential impact was also present regarding perceptions of bias and competence, though to a lesser degree. These results suggest that individuals maybe be more driven to take action against leaders whom they simply dislike rather than leaders who are potentially prejudiced. This could perhaps be explained by the social stigma and potential interpersonal costs associated with speaking out against prejudice (e.g., Kaiser et al., 2009). An alternative explanation could be that ambiguous sexism cues are more difficult to interpret than social information pertaining to how likable an individual is, and are consequently subject to more variable and/or less extreme interpretations. Therefore, it could be the case that individuals were generally less comfortable making definitive judgments about a leader’s bias against women than they were in making judgments about likability, which in turn informed how strongly they believed action should be taken against the leader.

It is also important to note that the presence of sexism did have a stronger effect than likability on endorsement for filing a lawsuit against the
leader, which was the most extreme behavioral response. This suggests that although having a dislikable leader may be considered cause enough to complain to coworkers or talk to upper management, it was the presence of actual potentially illegal actions (i.e., sexist behavior) that served as a stronger driver of the desire to take legal action.

**Theoretical Implications and Directions for Future Research**

This research theoretically expands our knowledge of how individuals use social information (e.g., social cues from relevant sources of information) to shape perceptions of everyday sexism. It also provides some individual-level support for the social information-processing model proposed by Samnani and Singh (2013) regarding follower perceptions of victimizing leader behaviors. Although their model was catered specifically toward the ability of charismatic leaders to impact interpretations of victimizing behaviors (and subsequent group pressures to accept these behaviors), substituting leader charisma for likability in this study produced results congruent with their model. However, the examination of higher-level factors such as group interpretations, group pressure to conform, group culture, or organizational culture were beyond the scope of this study and should be examined in future research.

Findings in this study also provided further support that particular individual differences (i.e., gender identification and stigma consciousness) do impact perceptions of sexist behavior. Future research can explore a greater
variety of individual differences in relation to prejudice perceptions, such as personality and trait-affectivity.

It should also be noted that gender identification (unlike stigma consciousness) was not significantly related to perceptions of leader bias or competence. Although the reason for this is not entirely clear from this study, it could be the case that identifying strongly as a woman does not automatically correlate to one’s feelings toward prejudiced attitudes against women or even their own attitudes toward women. Thus, it could be possible that a woman who relates very strongly to her gender still holds stereotypic beliefs regarding traditional gender roles. In this case, such a woman may not perceive certain forms of sexism as being biased if the type of sexism in question still conforms to her own beliefs and attitudes. Future research could explore this topic further, and perhaps examine how attitudes toward modern forms of sexism interacts with gender identification to shape perceptions of bias.

Moreover, future research can investigate how perceptions differ between targets and non-targets of prejudice and discrimination, and how perceptions are influenced by who is targeted. Thus, for instance, researchers could investigate how a leader who engages in sexism is perceived by both sexes, and how these perceptions (and/or differences in perceptions) are impacted by whether sexism is targeted against women or men.

Though not the primary intent of this research, the findings herein also provided additional support for the great importance of interpersonal justice
perceptions in the workplace. Interpersonal justice refers to “the degree to which people are treated with politeness, dignity, and respect by authorities or third parties involved in executing procedures or determining outcomes” (Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, & Ng, 2001; p. 427). With this definition in mind, it seems reasonable to suggest that leader likability served as a proxy for interpersonal justice perceptions. Thus, a leader described as “pleasant” and “sincere” was likely perceived not only as more likeable than one described as “unpleasant” and “insincere” but also as treating followers with more dignity and respect (i.e., interpersonal justice). The large effects of likability on a variety of outcomes may therefore be considered further evidence of the robust impact of interpersonal justice perceptions on several individual and higher level outcomes (e.g., Colquitt et al., 2001; Simons & Roberson, 2003).

Enhancing our knowledge of the contextual and individual factors that influence perceptions of prejudice and discrimination can improve our theoretical understanding of how these attitudes and behaviors are perpetuated in today’s workforce. While researchers may not be able to change many of the factors that impact perceptions of prejudice and discrimination (e.g., it is difficult to change an individual’s stigma consciousness or make a likeable leader unlikeable), researchers can work to identify potential interventions to improve the correct identification of inappropriate workplace behaviors and enhance the likelihood that action will be taken against them. Therefore, another valuable track of future research is to expand methods to increase the
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recognition of prejudice and discrimination when they occur. Improving recognition is important because, once recognized, prejudice and discrimination can then be confronted, and their occurrence ultimately reduced (Ashburn-Nardo, Morris, & Goodwin, 2008; Czopp, Monteith, & Mark, 2006).

Practical Implications

This study has important practical implications for organizations. First, it highlights the importance of selecting leaders who are respectful of and well-liked by their followers and who do not engage in prejudiced or discriminatory behaviors. The prospect of having a leader who did not meet these standards had a considerable negative impact on individuals’ willingness to accept a job at the organization and increased the chances of employee turnover intentions, willingness to formally or informally complain about the leader, and even endorsement of litigation pursuits. Positioning individuals who are well regarded into leadership roles may also enhance interpersonal justice perceptions, which are positively associated with an array of outcomes including fairness perceptions, job satisfaction, evaluation of authority, organizational commitment, and organizational citizenship behaviors (Colquitt et al., 2001; Simons & Roberson, 2003).

Additionally, this study highlights the importance of fostering an inclusive workplace environment. It is important for managers to be aware of the impact their actions can have on organizational culture and the well-being of the employees around them, and to be cognizant of the appropriateness of
their behaviors. Though some actions that could potentially be interpreted as biased may seem trivial (e.g., the telling of an inappropriate joke), they have the potential to reinforce the acceptance of discrimination in the workplace, which can create a culture of victimization that is harmful to targets. Many followers are likely placed in a disadvantageous position to either recognize and/or speak out against inappropriate leader behaviors. Therefore it is important that organizations work to create an environment in which individuals feel comfortable expressing their concerns about perceived prejudice and discrimination. Additionally, all levels of management must take responsibility in striving to accurately recognize the more subtle forms of prejudice and discrimination that exist in today’s work environment, such as everyday sexism, and take action to reduce their occurrence.

**Limitations**

There are a number of limitations to the current study, which are important to consider. First, although a lab study enhances the internal validity of the phenomena being investigated, it could not, in this case, fully capture the often-complex relationships between a leader and his or her followers. The design of this study did not allow participants to experience the full richness of this relationship (e.g., quality of leader-member exchange, past experiences with the leader), which in reality may actually increase the level of ambiguity experienced by followers in situations in which the leader engages in potentially sexist behaviors. Consequently, we may find lower effect sizes of the variables manipulated in this study, as a variety of other factors may also
differentially impact leader perceptions. Therefore, field research investigating the relationships found in this study is encouraged.

Additionally, it is possible that priming effects could have partially influenced participant responses to some items. More specifically, it is possible that exposure to sexism cues may have not only influenced perceptions of the leader (as intended) but may have also primed women to respond differently to subsequent items regarding gender identity and stigma consciousness. The original study design consisted of two steps, spaced one week apart: one step in which participants viewed the video and recorded their perceptions of the leader and agreement with behavioral response items, and a second step which included individual difference measures. This spacing was intended to mitigate the potential effect of priming on later responses. However, this design proved to be too restrictive for recruiting efforts. Rather, the study was combined into one single step (as described in the procedure section) to allow for more successful recruitment of participants. Nonetheless, analyses found no significant differences in levels of gender identity and stigma conscientious across conditions, suggesting that priming effects were unlikely to have had a meaningful impact on subsequent responses to these measures.

Last, it is important to keep in mind that how participants respond to behavioral items regarding how they believe an individual *should* respond to a certain situation may not necessarily match how a person actually *does* respond in that situation (Ashburn-Nardo et al., 2008). Thus, although this
study provides insight into how participants feel a person should respond to a sexist leader, the actual occurrence of actions taken against such a leader may differ.
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Appendix A

Pilot test

Please rate how likable you consider the following traits to be in terms of an individual’s personality:
1. Reliable
2. Pleasant
3. Insincere
4. Friendly
5. Unhelpful
6. Disagreeable
7. Unreliable
8. Sincere
9. Helpful
10. Unpleasant

*Note.* Response choices include 1=very unlikable, 2=unlikable, 3=neither unlikable nor likable, 4=likable 5=very likable

Please rate to what extent you consider the following statements to be examples of sexism if they were to occur in the workplace. Rate these statements as if it were a female employee describing her male supervisor:
1. Everyday when I walk into work, my supervisor tells me how nice I look.
2. My supervisor has hosted a few golf outings, but really only the men in the office were expected to join.
3. My supervisor has a rule that the newest employee in the office has to make the coffee in the break room.
4. My supervisor asked me to make cookies for the company holiday party, because he assumed I was good at that sort of thing.
5. Everyday when I walk into work, my supervisor tells me hello.
6. My supervisor has hosted a few employee get-togethers, and everyone was welcome to join.
7. My supervisor has a rule that the newest girl in the office has to make the coffee in the break room.
8. At work the other day, my supervisor asked me how my latest project was going.

*Note.* Response choices include 1=not at all sexist, 2=slightly sexist, 3=somewhat sexist, 4=moderately sexist, 5=very sexist
Appendix B

Script of employee videos

**Condition: High likability, sexism absent**

Employee: Hi, my name is Diane. I work at a mid-sized communications company in the Midwest and I’m an administrator. That means I make a lot of phone calls to clients to set up meetings, that kind of thing, and I also spend a lot of time planning and organizing projects and events for the company. I’ve worked here for a little over a year, and have had the same supervisor the whole time.

Interviewer (off camera): Can you tell me a little about what your supervisor is like?

Employee: Sure. My supervisor’s name is John. I think he’s been at the company for almost ten years now. To be honest, overall I would say he is a pretty friendly, pleasant guy. When I’m working on a project and need input or support, he is reliable in giving me feedback. So he’s generally helpful with projects. He’s a pretty vocal guy, he likes to give his opinions in meetings, that sort of thing. He’s held his job for a while, so I guess he must know how to get things done.

Interview: If you were to describe your supervisor in one word, what would it be?

Employee: Hmm, if I had to describe him in one word, it would probably be “sincere.”
Interviewer: Can you describe what an average day working with your supervisor is like?

Employee: Well, everyday when I come in to work my boss usually tells me hello when I walk by because I always pass him on the way to my desk. Later in the day, if I’m working on a big project or something I might ask him to take a look at it since my projects also reflect on him since he’s my boss. He usually has a lot of meetings throughout the week, so the amount of time I see him any given day varies a lot. If I run into him, he may try to make some small talk. For example, at work the other day he asked me how my latest project was going. But he’s usually really busy so we don’t chat for long very often. Sometimes he’ll plan events and things for the staff. Like, he’s hosted a few employee get-togethers, and everyone was welcome to join.

But, yeah I think that about covers what it’s like to work with him.

**Condition: Low likability, sexism absent**

Employee: Hi, my name is Diane. I work at a mid-sized communications company in the Midwest and I’m an administrator. That means I make a lot of phone calls to clients to set up meetings, that kind of thing, and I also spend a lot of time planning and organizing projects and events for the company. I’ve worked here for a little over a year, and have had the same supervisor the whole time.

Interviewer (off camera): Can you tell me a little about what your supervisor is like?
Employee: Sure. My supervisor’s name is John. I think he’s been at the company for almost ten years now. To be honest, overall I would say he is a pretty disagreeable and unpleasant guy. When I’m working on a project and need input or support, he is unreliable in giving me feedback. So he’s generally not very helpful with projects. He’s a pretty vocal guy, he likes to give his opinions in meetings, that sort of thing. He’s held his job for a while, so I guess he must know how to get things done.

Interview: If you were to describe your supervisor in one word, what would it be?

Employee: Hmm, if I had to describe him in one word, it would probably be “insincere.”

Interviewer: Can you describe what an average day working with your supervisor is like?

Employee: Well, everyday when I come in to work my boss usually tells me hello when I walk by because I always pass him on the way to my desk. Later in the day, if I’m working on a big project or something I might ask him to take a look at it since my projects also reflect on him since he’s my boss. He usually has a lot of meetings throughout the week, so the amount of time I see him any given day varies a lot. If I run into him, he may try to make some small talk. For example, at work the other day he asked me how my latest project was going. But he’s usually really busy so we don’t chat for long very often. Sometimes he’ll plan events and things for the staff. Like, he’s hosted a few employee get-togethers, and everyone was welcome to join.
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Condition: Low likability, sexism present

Employee: Hi, my name is Diane. I work at a mid-sized communications company in the Midwest and I’m an administrator. That means I make a lot of phone calls to clients to set up meetings, that kind of thing, and I also spend a lot of time planning and organizing projects and events for the company. I’ve worked here for a little over a year, and have had the same supervisor the whole time.
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Interviewer: If you were to describe your supervisor in one word, what would it be?

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Appendix C

Measure of Gender Identification

Please rate to what extent you agree with the following statements:

1. Overall, being a woman has very little to do with how I feel about myself.
2. Being a woman is an important reflection of who I am.
3. In general, being a woman is an important part of my self-image.
4. Being a woman is unimportant to my sense of what kind of person I am.

Note. Response choices include 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=somewhat disagree, 4=neutral, 5=somewhat agree, 6=agree, 7=strongly agree.

Items 1 and 4 should be reverse coded.
Appendix D

Measure of Stigma Consciousness

1. Stereotypes about women have not affected me personally.
2. I never worry that my behaviors will be viewed as stereotypically female.
3. When interacting with men, I feel like they interpret all my behaviors in terms of the fact that I am a woman.
4. Most men do not judge women on the basis of their gender.
5. My being female does not influence how men act with me.
6. I almost never think about the fact that I am female when I interact with men.
7. My being female does not influence how people act with me.
8. Most men have a lot more sexist thoughts than they actually express.
9. I often think that men are unfairly accused of being sexist.
10. Most men have a problem viewing women as equals.

Note. Response choices include 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=somewhat disagree, 4=neutral, 5=somewhat agree, 6=agree, 7=strongly agree.

Items 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 8 and 9 should be reverse coded.

Due to low reliability, items 5 and 8 were removed from analyses.
Appendix E

Perception of the Leader Measure

Please rate to what extent you agree with the following statements regarding the supervisor described in the video:

1. The supervisor is intelligent.
2. The supervisor is likable.
3. The supervisor is biased.
4. The supervisor is competent.
5. The supervisor is fair.
6. The supervisor is offensive.

Note. Response choices include 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=somewhat disagree, 4=neutral, 5=somewhat agree, 6=agree, 7=strongly agree.

Item 5 should be reverse coded when calculating Perception of Bias composite scores.
Appendix F

Behavioral Response Items

Please rate to what extent you believe the employee in the video should perform each of the following:

1. The employee should continue to work for the supervisor.

2. The employee should talk to the supervisor about the impact of the supervisor’s behavior.

3. The employee should talk to coworkers about the impact of the supervisor’s behavior.

4. The employee should report the supervisor’s behavior to the supervisor’s own boss.

5. The employee should report the supervisor’s behavior to Human Resources.

6. The employee should file a lawsuit regarding the supervisor’s behavior.

Note. Response choices include 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=somewhat disagree, 4=neutral, 5=somewhat agree, 6=agree, 7=strongly agree.

7. Would you accept a job at this organization if it meant you would have the same supervisor as described in the video? (Yes/No)
Appendix G

Sexism Manipulation Check

Please indicate whether the following statements are true or false regarding the video you watched.

1. The woman in the video said her supervisor asked her to make cookies for the company holiday party, because he assumed I was good at that sort of thing.

2. The woman in the video said that her supervisor has hosted a few gold outings, but really only the men in the office were expected to join.
Appendix H
Demographic Variables

Please answer the following demographic questions:

1. What is your age (in numerical years)?

2. How many years of part-time work experience do you have?

3. How many years of full-time work experience do you have?

4. Do you have any supervisory experience? (Yes/No)

5. Please indicate the ethnicity with which you identify. Please select all that apply.
   • White or Caucasian
   • Black or African American
   • Hispanic or Latino/a
   • Asian or Pacific Islander
   • Native American or Alaskan Native
   • Other (please identify)