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Women's Microaggressions Scale (WoMenS): A Comprehensive Sexism Scale

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Abstract

Sexism is pervasive but often manifests as microaggressions against women, which are subtle, covert forms of gender discrimination. Thus, we developed the Women's Microaggressions Scale (WoMenS) based on an existing theoretical taxonomy and content analysis of social media data. Two separate studies were conducted for exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). EFA supported an eight-factor, correlated structure and CFA supported a bifactor model, with eight specific factors and one general WoMenS factor. Overall, reliability and validity of the WoMenS were mostly supported in two samples. Specifically, the WoMenS subscales and body surveillance were positively correlated; the general WoMenS was positively correlated with anxiety, depression, body surveillance, and another

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measure of sexism but not life satisfaction. Furthermore, general WoMenS explained variance in anxiety and body surveillance above and beyond that explained by an existing sexism measure.

Keywords
microaggressions, sexism, scale development, women

Significance of the Scholarship to the Public
The aim of the current study was to develop the Women's Microaggressions Scale (WoMenS) based on gender microaggressions theory. Findings demonstrated the scale can be used as one general factor to test for microaggressions against women or as eight specific factors related to gender microaggressions. The study also provided initial evidence as a valid and reliable measure of women's experiences with gender microaggressions.

Overt forms of sexism have become less commonplace (Sue & Capodilupo, 2008; Swim et al., 2001). The decreased prevalence of overt, explicit sexism may be in part due to changing beliefs about traditional gender roles and women's rights to equal opportunity and fair treatment (Capodilupo et al., 2010; Spence & Hahn, 1997). Nonetheless, scholars contend that sexism is still pervasive but manifests in different ways (Capodilupo et al., 2010). These contemporary forms of sexism are thought to be covert, subtle, and/or embedded into sociocultural norms, which increases the likelihood of their occurrence (e.g., because perpetrators do not identify these behaviors as sexist; Nadal et al., 2013). Indeed, Swim et al. (2001) found that women reported experiencing one to two distressing sexist experiences per week.

Although contemporary forms of sexism are often less explicit and noticeable, they can still be associated with psychological distress and mental health concerns among women (e.g., Feigt et al., 2022). For example, higher frequencies of experiences with everyday sexism (e.g., a man staring at your body) were positively correlated with anxiety, depression, low social self-esteem, and traumatic symptoms (Cherry & Wilcox, 2021; Swim et al., 2001), demonstrating that contemporary forms of sexism can have detrimental mental health consequences for women. Additional studies demonstrate that sexism has been associated with greater psychological distress and alcohol and drug related consequences (Scheer et al., 2022), self-silencing (Hurst & Beesley, 2013), and poorer mental health over time (Hackett et al., 2019).

Given the psychological consequences of sexism and more specifically covert forms of sexism, gender microaggressions theory contends that women experience subtle as well as hostile, overt forms of sexism in their everyday lives (Capodilupo et al., 2010; Sue, 2010). Gender microaggressions are intentional or unintentional common slights that target a person based on their marginalized gender identity (Capodilupo et al., 2010; Sue, 2010). Whereas previous theories on sexism have focused mainly on sexism within interpersonal interactions, gender microaggressions theory takes into account both interpersonal and environmental sexism (Sue, 2010). The seven themes outlined by the taxonomy and supported by qualitative analysis include: (1) sexual objectification, (2) second-class citizenship, (3) assumptions of inferiority, (4) assumptions of traditional gender roles, (5) denial of the reality of sexism, (6) use of sexist language, and (7) environmental (Capodilupo et al., 2010). The categories can be broken down further into specific experiences of sexism (e.g., being called a "slut") that reflect contemporary (i.e., sexism that is subtle and ubiquitous) and traditional conceptualizations of sexism (i.e., sexism that is blatant and hostile). Furthermore, the theory exclusively focuses on women's actual experiences of sexism versus endorsement of sexist beliefs, providing insight into women's direct experiences of sexism (Nadal et al., 2013).

There is evidence demonstrating women's experiences with the various types of microaggressions. First, *sexual objectification* occurs "whenever a woman's body, body parts, or sexual functions are separated out from her person, reduced to the status of mere instruments, or regarded as if they are capable of representing her" (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997, p. 175). For example, being stared at while walking down the street denies a woman's right to be treated as a whole person and treats her as a visually and/or sexually appealing stimulus. The term *second-class citizen* occur when men are provided affordances and opportunities that women are not. For example, women have reported being paid less than men for equitable positions and receiving less financial support than men (Capodilupo et al., 2010). *Assumptions of inferiority* relates to benevolent sexism in that it assumes that traditional female stereotypes often include perceptions that women are kind, warm, and helpful (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Although these traits might be viewed as positive and flattering, they are inversely related to attributions of intelligence and competence (i.e., warm but not competent; e.g., Cuddy et al., 2008). For example, women have reported incidents in which men treated them as intellectually and physically inferior (Capodilupo et al., 2010), and others have noted that men hold assumptions that women are not capable of engaging in sports activities (Swim et al., 2001). *Assumptions of traditional gender roles* contend that women likely face stereotypes regarding appropriate social roles they may occupy (Capodilupo et al., 2010; Glick & Fiske, 1996). For example, women report expectations related to being feminine, cooking and cleaning for men, and having children (Capodilupo et al., 2010). *Denial of*

the reality of sexism is most closely related to modern sexism in that it represents men's contention that sexism is no longer an issue in society and invalidates women's reports of sexist incidents (Capodilupo et al., 2010; Swim & Cohen, 1997). For example, men might respond by saying "that's not a big deal" in response to women describing an incident of harassment. *Use of sexist language* refers to language that degrades women during interpersonal interactions such as calling women "bimbos," "sluts," and "honey" (Capodilupo et al., 2010; Nielsen, 2002). Lastly, *environmental* microaggressions occur at the macro-level and are systemic in nature. Examples include the overly sexualized portrayal of girls and women in the media (American Psychological Association, 2007), or the gender wage gap (i.e., women earn 82 cents for every dollar men earn) that discriminates against women through institutional practices and policies (Maloney & Dingell, 2022).

To the authors' knowledge, no published scales exist that correspond to the gender microaggressions taxonomy outlined by Capodilupo et al. (2010), limiting research in this area that could further our understanding of women's experiences of sexism and their impact on mental health. The primary purpose of the present study was to develop a comprehensive measure of sexism, the Women's Microaggressions Scale (WoMenS), to address this gap. The development of this scale would help counseling psychologists to understand better the types of gender microaggressions that women face as well as how they might impact women's mental health.

Present Study

Diverse scales assessing sexism have advanced understanding of women's experiences of sexism, but these measures typically assess limited forms of sexism. For example, The Schedule of Sexist Events scale (SSE; Klonoff & Landrine, 1995) is one of the most widely utilized measures of sexism with four factors including sexist degradation, sexism in close and distant relationships, and sexism at work. However, most items ask women to indicate how frequently they have been treated unfairly by someone because of their gender. The Interpersonal Sexual Objectification Scale (ISOS; Kozee et al., 2007) assesses the frequency with which women experience incidents of being sexually objectified within the past year. However, these scales exclude diverse forms of sexism such as environmental sexism (i.e., structural forms) and invalidation of women's experiences of sexism. In addition, although there are gendered racial microaggressions scales specific for Black women (Lewis & Neville, 2015) and Asian American women (Keum et al., 2018), there is utility in measuring the frequencies of sexist experiences for women more generally and for a scale to be applied across various groups of women. The WoMenS represents an initial attempt to examine gender microaggression experiences across women of diverse backgrounds. At the same time, we

acknowledge the merit of viewpoints (e.g., transnational feminist theory) that aim to build transnational feminist perspectives and emphasize the importance of avoiding a universal approach to women globally (Enns et al., 2021).

The current study sought to develop a comprehensive sexism scale that integrates and adds to previous conceptualizations and measures of sexism by utilizing a microaggressions framework. Specifically, we developed the WoMenS utilizing seven themes supported by gender microaggressions theory and qualitative research. An eight-factor structural model was predicted based on theory, previous qualitative studies, and initial scale development of the WoMenS. The factors include: (a) Sexual Objectification, (b) Second-class Citizen, (c) Assumptions of Inferiority, (d) Traditional Gender Roles, (e) Denial of the Reality of Sexism, (f) Sexist Language, (g) Environmental Sexism, and (h) Threatened Physical Safety. Given that the theory (Capodilupo et al., 2010) suggests women may experience multiple forms of gender microaggressions, we expected the factors to be related to one another.

Furthermore, we predicted that the WoMenS would have no more than a small correlation ($r < |.1|$) with a measure of neuroticism (as an indication of discriminant validity) but medium to large correlations ($r > |.3|$) with measures of depression, anxiety, self-esteem, life satisfaction, body surveillance, and another measure of sexism (SSE; Klonoff & Landrine, 1995), as indications of convergent validity (Cohen, 1992). We used neuroticism as a measure of discriminant validity, because participants' perceptions of their experiences with gender microaggressions should not be highly related to their tendencies toward neuroticism (Swim et al., 2001). Previous research has found that everyday sexism experiences were not correlated to neuroticism (Swim et al., 2001). To support incremental validity within the current two samples, we predicted that the WoMenS would explain variance in depression, anxiety, global self-esteem, satisfaction with life, and body surveillance above and beyond that explained by the SSE scale (Klonoff & Landrine, 1995) and explain variance in depression, anxiety, and self-esteem above and beyond that explained by neuroticism. Previous research has demonstrated associations between everyday sexism and mental health outcomes (Swim et al., 2001), and between sexual objectification and body surveillance (Moradi et al., 2005). The WoMenS aims to measure a wide variety of experiences with microaggressive sexism; thus, it should explain unique variance in these constructs when compared to a general measure of sexism (i.e., the SSE; Klonoff & Landrine, 1995).

Study 1: Exploratory Factor Analysis

Participants

Seven hundred and twenty-two responses were collected. After removing participants with more than 10% of missing data, results showed that

23 participants responded incorrectly to one validity item, two participants provided incorrect responses to both validity items, and four participants did not provide responses to either validity question. Thus, individuals who responded incorrectly to both validity items (i.e., two participants) were removed and the final sample consisted of 582 participants. Participants' ages were 18 to 65 years or older ($M = 27.76$, $SD = 10.89$). Participants identified as White (62.5%), Asian/Asian American (10.3%), Hispanic/Latinx (10.1%), Multiracial or "Other" (10.1%), Black/African American (3.6%), Middle Eastern/Arab American (2.2%), American Indian/Alaska Native (0.9%), and Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander (0.3%). Participants identified as heterosexual (78.8%), bisexual (14.2%), other (e.g., asexual, queer, 3.8%), lesbian (3.1%), and gay (0.2%). The majority of participants reported completing some college (37.2%), having a graduate or professional degree (35.1%), having a bachelor's degree (22.4%), having an associate's degree (4.1%), and completing primary school or high school (1.2%). Furthermore, 15.2% reported a household income below $15,000, 30.3% reported a household income between $15,000 and $49,999, 28.4% reported a household income between $50,000 and $99,999, 25.3% reported a household income over $100,000, and four participants (0.7%) did not report their household income. Additionally, 38.4% had a full-time job, 43.7% worked part-time, 17.0% were unemployed, and 1% were retired. The majority of participants reported that they were born in the United States (87.8%). With regard to relationship status 38.2% were single, 39.7% were in a relationship but not married, 20.4% were married, and 1.7% reported they were "other" (e.g., widow, divorced, engaged).

Procedures

The study was approved by the Institutional Review Board. Individuals who identified as a woman and were at least 18 years old were eligible for the study. Flyers and announcements were distributed to various academic programs and departments, university listservs, Craigslist, and social media to ensure adequate representation and a diverse sample. A diverse representation of individuals from academic programs or departments and professional organizations that correspond to often male-dominated (e.g., engineering); female-dominated (e.g., education); and gender-equivalent (e.g., business) disciplines were targeted. Participant compensation included raffle entry for a $25 gift card and/or extra credit for the first sample, and one of ten $25 gift cards and/or extra credit for the second sample. This study was not preregistered, and data will be made available by emailing the first author.

Item Development

A deductive approach to scale development was utilized, which is characterized as the creation of items based on an existing taxonomy or typology (Hinkin, 1998). The goal of the study was to develop items based on the extant gender microaggressions framework. The first author, a counseling psychology doctoral student at the time, and a master's student in counseling, developed initial items by examining the first 1,000 tweets from #YESALLWOMEN on the global social media platform Twitter, which was a thread that began in reaction to the murder of six and injury of 13 individuals by a man whose actions were motivated by misogyny (Serna, 2015). The thread provided a medium for women to express their everyday experiences of sexism, including gender microaggressions, which the current study sought to capture. Utilizing a content analysis approach (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005), the coders coded each tweet independently by determining whether it reflected one of seven themes outlined by Capodilupo et al.'s (2010) taxonomy. If a tweet did not reflect one of seven themes, it was coded into an "other" category. After coding the first 100 tweets, the coders noted that many tweets involved women's fears and/or anxiety about their physical safety during interactions with men, so a "threatened physical safety" category was added. Although the category is not theorized by Capodilupo et al.'s (2010) taxonomy, previous research has indicated that women endorse frequent experiences of implicit and explicit threats of violence (e.g., see review by Hoor-Ul-Ain, 2020), supporting the importance of examining and including this form of sexism. Furthermore, the items developed for this subscale can be conceptualized as microaggressions, as they capture behaviors that may be denied and/or viewed as covert or benign (e.g., not "intended" to be threatening) by the perpetrator but cause the target psychological and/or physical distress. After coding the remaining 900 tweets, the coders met to discuss and resolve any discrepancies in coding. In addition, the coders developed additional items independently based on extant theory on microaggressions against women (Capodilupo et al., 2010), ambivalent sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996), everyday sexism (Swim et al., 2001), objectification theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997), and modern sexism (Swim et al., 1995), empirical findings, and personal experiences. Four expert reviewers, who were doctoral-level scholars and have expertise in research and literature related to microaggressions, sexism, multicultural issues, and/or scale development, examined the items and provided feedback. Utilizing an online survey, a list of items was provided under each theme, and expert reviewers were asked to rate each item in terms of clarity from 1 (*unclear*) to 3 (*clear*) and provide any additional feedback for each item (e.g., additional items that could be included). Five items were deleted and others were revised based on this input and a final list of 83 items was identified.

Measures

Demographics. Participants were asked to provide information on their race/ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, major or graduate program (if applicable), highest level of education, future or current occupation, current employment status, mother's and father's occupation, country of origin (if applicable, year of arrival to the United States), household income, and relationship status.

Women's Microaggressions Scale. The initial WoMenS consisted of 83 items. Participants were asked to indicate how often an event has occurred within their lifetime. Possible response choices were: 1 = *never*, 2 = *a little/rarely*, 3 = *sometimes/a moderate amount*, and 4 = *often/frequently*. This response scale was chosen because frequency scaling is consistent with previous conceptualizations of microaggressions against women as potentially pervasive in women's daily lives (e.g., Lewis & Neville, 2015).

Sexist Events. The SSE (Klonoff & Landrine, 1995) assesses past year and lifetime sexist incidents. The scale contains 20 items and asks participants to indicate how frequently they have encountered each sexist experience on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*the event never happened*) to 6 (*the event happens almost all of the time*), with higher scores indicating more frequent experiences of sexism. An example item included "Treated unfairly by your family because one is a woman." Internal reliability (lifetime: $\alpha = .92$ and past year: $\alpha = .90$) were acceptable in a sample of undergraduate female students (Klonoff & Landrine, 1995). In the current study, internal reliability was good (lifetime: $\alpha = .94$ and past year: $\alpha = .93$).

Anxiety Symptoms. The General Anxiety Disorder-7 (GAD-7; Spitzer et al., 2006) is a brief screening measure assessing generalized anxiety disorder. Participants were asked to indicate how strongly they experienced each symptom during the past two weeks on a Likert-type scale ranging from 0 (*not at all)* to 3 (*nearly every day*). An example item included: "Feeling nervous, anxious, or on edge." Responses were summed, and higher scores indicate greater anxiety symptoms. Internal consistency estimates in a clinical sample was .92 (Spitzer et al., 2006) and was .86 and .91 with first year women college students (Carey et al., 2018). In the clinical sample, the GAD-7 was also correlated with the Beck Anxiety Inventory (Beck et al., 1988), supporting convergent validity (Spitzer et al., 2006). Internal reliability was acceptable in the current study ($\alpha = .92$).

Depressive Symptomology. The 9-item Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9; Kroenke et al., 2001) screens for depressive symptomatology and asks participants to rate how frequently they have experienced each concern within

the past 2 weeks on a Likert-type scale ranging from 0 (*not at all*) to 3 (*nearly every day*), with items such as "feeling down, depressed, or hopeless." Higher scores indicated greater depressive symptomatology. Within primary care and obstetrics-gynecology patient samples, internal reliability was good (α = .89; Kroenke et al., 2001). As indications of convergent validity, the PHQ-9 was significantly correlated with mental health and social functioning; Kroenke et al. (2001). Internal reliability was adequate in the current study (α = .86).

Self-Esteem. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES; Rosenberg, 1965) is a 10-item measure of global self-esteem. Participants indicated their level of agreement with 10 items (e.g., "On the whole, I am satisfied with myself") on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*). Higher scores on the RSES indicated greater self-esteem. Among a sample of undergraduate students, Cronbach's alpha was .88, and RSES scores were positively correlated with life satisfaction, providing evidence of convergent validity (Robins et al., 2001). In the current study, internal reliability was acceptable (α = .91).

Neuroticism. The neuroticism subscale of the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire-Revised (EPQ-Revised; Eysenck et al., 1985) consists of 12 items (e.g., "Does your mood often go up and down?"). A dichotomous response format is provided (i.e., 1 = *yes* and 0 = *no)*, with higher scores indicating higher levels of neuroticism. Internal reliabilities have been found to range from .78 to .83 among a large undergraduate sample (Francis et al., 1992). Kuder-Richardson 20 was .80 in the current study.

Results

Missing Data

A Little's Missing Completely At Random (MCAR) test was conducted for missing data. Results indicated that data were not MCAR ($\chi^2(2698) = 2913.30$, $p = .002$). As such, Little's MCAR tests were run on each scale, separately. The Schedule of Sexist Events-past year ($\chi^2(53) = 100.31$, $p < .001$) and PHQ-9 ($\chi^2(8) = 25.86$, $p = .001$) had significant results, indicating the data were not MCAR. For the SSE-past year, there were seven missing cases and a maximum of two missing cases per question. There was one missing case in the PHQ-9. Expectation-maximization was chosen as the imputation method given the limited amount of missing data for scales not deemed MCAR. This approach involves creating scores for missing data by estimating parameters via observed data (Schlomer et al., 2010). Expectation-maximization is deemed appropriate when data are MCAR or Missing at Random and for factor analysis (Schlomer et al., 2010).

Exploratory Factor Analysis

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were conducted to determine the factorability of the WoMenS. Regarding KMO, the following criteria are suggested: .90 = "marvelous," .80 = "meritorious," .70 = "middling," and less than .60 = "mediocre" (Kaiser, 1974, p. 35). Bartlett's Test of Sphericity tests the null hypothesis that there are no correlations among the items (Pett et al., 2003), so a significant result indicates that the items are appropriate for factor analysis. In the current study, KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy was .97 and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant $\chi^2(3403) = 29586.94$, $p < .001$, indicating the data were factorable.

In order to examine the factor structure of the scale, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) utilizing principal axis factoring (PAF) was conducted. Due to the uncertainty of correlations between the factors and the possibility of higher-order factors, an oblique rotation was applied (Fabrigar et al., 1999). If correlations between the factors do not exist, an oblique rotation will produce results similar to those obtained from an orthogonal rotation (Fabrigar et al., 1999). The study utilized Minimum Average Partial tests (MAP; Velicer, 1976), Parallel Analysis tests (O'Connor, 2000), and theoretical propositions to determine the number of factors that were retained. Minimum Average Partial test supported a nine-factor solution while Parallel Analysis supported 12 possible factors. As such, nine- and 12-factor solutions were examined.

The 12-factor solution did not make theoretical sense and had three factors with two items or less with a factor loading of more than .30. The nine-factor solution also had one factor with only one item with a factor loading above .30. Thus, an eight-factor solution was examined. As suggested by Pett et al. (2003), if an item had a communality (i.e., amount of variance in the item explained by all the factors) less than .30, then the item was removed ($n = 2$). Additionally, through an iterative process, items with low factor loadings (less than |.30|) were removed ($n = 12$) and we reran an EFA. This resulted in four to 11 items per factor. In order to reduce the number of items per factor, items that did not fit theoretically with a given factor ($n = 11$), items with low variance ($n = 5$), and items that were deemed too similar conceptually to another item in a given factor ($n = 19$; e.g., "A man interacted with me in a threatening way" and "A man stared at me in a threatening manner") were removed and EFA was rerun. The final version of the WoMenS was comprised of eight factors with a total of 34 items and no additional changes were made to the items (see Table 1).

Final 34-Item Women's Microagressions Scale Factor Loadings

The first factor, Traditional Gender Roles, included four items that reflected others' assumptions regarding appropriate social roles for women (e.g.,

Table 1. Final Exploratory Factor Analysis 34-Item WoMenS Factor Loadings

Factors/Items	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Factor 1: Traditional gender roles (α = .84)								
1. Someone assumed that I want children because of my gender	**0.74**	0.04	0.06	0.09	−0.15	0.08	0.02	−0.02
2. Someone assumed that I want to get married because of my gender	**0.69**	−0.08	0.11	−0.02	0.02	−0.02	0.06	0.06
3. Someone assumed that I am nurturing because of my gender	**0.52**	−0.02	0.05	−0.04	−0.02	−0.22	0.00	0.11
4. Someone expected that I should cook and clean because of my gender	**0.47**	−0.06	−0.07	0.10	0.02	−0.18	0.16	0.01
Factor 2: Sexist language (α = .84)								
5. Someone called me a "whore"	0.03	**−0.89**	−0.09	0.03	−0.05	0.03	−0.00	0.00
6. Someone called me a "slut"	0.00	**−0.82**	0.02	0.09	0.03	0.03	0.06	−0.01
7. Someone called me a "bitch"	−0.00	**−0.61**	0.04	0.03	−0.14	−0.03	0.04	−0.02
8. Someone called me a "tease"	0.03	**−0.48**	0.17	0.05	0.10	−0.10	−0.02	0.13
Factor 3: Implicit threatened physical safety (α = .79)								
9. Someone told me to watch my drink when I am in a social setting	0.03	−0.15	**0.66**	−0.10	−0.05	0.01	−0.04	0.05
10. Someone told me to have some form of self-defense (e.g., pepper spray) when going out in a public place	0.06	−0.03	**0.61**	−0.00	−0.00	−0.11	−0.09	0.05
11. Someone told me that I should have a safety plan when going on a first date (e.g., tell a friend where I am going)	0.06	−0.03	**0.61**	−0.00	−0.00	−0.11	−0.09	0.05
12. Someone told me not to walk alone because I might be raped or assaulted	0.00	0.06	**0.61**	0.18	−0.03	−0.02	0.17	−0.05

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

Factors/Items	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Factor 4: Explicit threatened physical safety (α = .83)								
13. A man said something to me that made me feel unsafe	0.03	−0.07	0.09	**0.60**	−0.01	−0.03	0.07	0.04
14. A man (a stranger) followed me in a public place	0.11	−0.08	0.01	**0.59**	−0.05	−0.10	−0.12	0.10
15. A man stared at me in a threatening manner	0.04	−0.04	0.11	**0.59**	−0.03	−0.11	0.00	0.05
16. Someone touched me without my consent	−0.04	−0.14	−0.04	**0.59**	0.00	−0.05	0.02	0.06
Factor 5: Invalidation of the reality of sexism (α = .83)								
17. Someone told me that men also experience discrimination when we were discussing sexism	−0.05	−0.01	0.04	0.01	−**0.68**	−0.01	0.04	0.12
18. Someone told me that sexism is no longer an important social issue	−0.01	−0.02	0.05	0.11	−**0.65**	−0.13	0.07	−0.06
19. Someone told me that women have the same opportunities as men	0.08	−0.04	0.02	−0.06	−**0.62**	0.02	−0.05	−0.02
20. Someone told me that women are being too sensitive when they say they experience gender discrimination	0.09	−0.04	−0.01	0.12	−**0.51**	−0.16	0.15	0.00
21. Someone told me that "not all men are like that" (or something similar) when we were discussing sexism	0.05	−0.12	0.14	−0.05	−**0.31**	−0.07	0.20	0.16
Factor 6: Assumptions of Inferiority/Second-Class citizen (α = .84)								
22. Someone assumed that I am not good at math because of my gender	0.00	−0.02	0.10	0.02	−0.03	−**0.72**	−0.00	−0.10

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

Factors/Items	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
23. Someone assumed that I am not intelligent because of my gender	−0.03	−0.11	−0.05	0.06	−0.08	**−0.68**	0.04	0.02
24. Someone did not ask me about my career or accomplishments when first meeting me because of my gender	0.09	−0.02	−0.11	−0.02	−0.00	**−0.66**	0.06	0.14
25. Someone assumed that I am not athletic because of my gender	0.08	0.04	0.04	0.07	0.04	**−0.62**	0.03	−0.50
26. Someone incorrectly attributed my work to a man	−0.03	0.03	0.02	0.03	−0.09	**−0.59**	0.02	0.08
Factor 7: Environmental (α = .77)								
27. I Observed that men hold more leadership positions in society than women	−0.09	−0.04	0.04	−0.02	−0.02	−0.07	**0.69**	0.03
28. I Observed in the media that women are not believed when they report being sexually harassed	0.12	0.00	−0.02	0.11	−0.14	−0.01	**0.54**	−0.01
29. I Observed in the media that people excuse men's behavior by saying "boys will be boys" (or something similar)	0.17	0.01	−0.02	0.05	−0.10	−0.02	**0.53**	0.04
30. I Observed women portrayed as housewives on T.V.	0.20	−0.10	0.05	−0.09	0.07	−0.08	**0.51**	0.03
Factor 8: Sexual objectification (α = .73)								
31. Someone gave me compliments about my appearance before talking about something else	0.05	−0.02	0.08	0.01	−0.01	−0.03	0.02	**0.57**
32. Someone catcalled me (e.g., whistled at me) while I was walking down the street	0.00	−0.05	−0.02	0.29	−0.01	0.06	0.05	**0.49**

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

Factors/Items	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
33. Someone told me that I am too pretty to look unhappy	0.09	−.016	−0.06	0.07	−0.14	−0.11	−0.12	**0.47**
34. I Observed someone staring at a woman's body	0.02	0.04	0.13	0.08	−0.05	−0.00	0.22	**0.40**

Bolded are the items that loaded onto each subscale.

"Someone assumed that I want children because of my gender"). The factor accounted for 32.80% of the variance. The second factor, Sexist Language, was comprised of four items that capture words that are denigrating and demeaning to women (e.g., "Someone called me a whore") and accounted for 5.56% of the variance. The third factor, Implicit Threatened Physical Safety, included four items that captured implications or indirect messages that a woman's physical safety is at risk (e.g., "Someone told me to watch my drink when I am in a social setting") and accounted for 4.34% of the variance. The fourth factor, Explicit Threatened Physical Safety, involved more direct or explicit actions that threaten a women's sense of physical safety. The factor was comprised of four items (e.g., "Someone touched me without my consent") and accounted for 2.85% of the variance. The fifth factor accounted for 2.77% of the variance and was labeled Denial of the Reality of Sexism. The five items captured invalidation of women's experiences of sexism and gender discrimination (e.g., "Someone told me that men also experience discrimination when we were discussing sexism"). The sixth factor, Assumptions of Inferiority/Second-Class Citizen, was comprised of five items and accounted for 2.45% of the variance. The factor captured others' expectations that women have inferior abilities in traditionally male domains or individuals ignoring women's accomplishments and abilities (e.g., "Someone assumed that I am not good at math because of my gender"). The seventh factor, Environmental, included structural implicit and explicit messages in the environment (e.g., in the media) that perpetuate the oppression and marginalization of women (e.g., "I observed that men hold more leadership positions in society than women"). The factor was comprised of four items and accounted for 1.86% of the variance. The final factor, Sexual Objectification, was comprised of four items and captured individuals perceiving and treating women as objects or body parts, instead of whole human beings (e.g., "Someone gave me compliments about my appearance before talking about something else"). The factor accounted for 1.30% of the variance.

Table 2. EFA: Correlations Between the WoMenS, Anxiety, Depression, Satisfaction With Life, and Body Surveillance, Means, and Standard Deviations

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	*M*	*SD*
1.Tradit		.57***	.47***	.47***	.58***	.61***	.42***	.50***	.79***	.17***	.18***	−.11***	.13***	.53***	.48***	2.95	.82
2.Denial			.49***	.50***	.53***	.56***	.46***	.51***	.80***	.24***	.23***	−.15***	.22***	.56***	.53***	2.68	.74
3.Implic				.42***	.32***	.40***	.36***	.41***	.66***	.25***	.22***	−.19***	.24***	.35***	.41***	3.01	.77
4.Explic					.53***	.41***	.57***	.61***	.76***	.31***	.28***	−.19***	.19***	.69***	.59***	2.23	.69
5.Assum						.48***	.42***	.45***	.76***	.24***	.19***	−.11***	.11***	.63***	.55***	2.06	.77
6.Envir							.33***	.42***	.70***	.16***	.17***	−.11***	.16***	.53***	.44***	3.41	.60
7.Lang								.54**	.69***	.29***	.24***	−.17***	.22***	.54***	.47***	2.02	.72
8.Object									.74***	.20***	.13**	−.03	.10*	.58***	.53***	2.89	.65
9.WoMeNS										.32***	.28***	−.18***	.24***	.75***	.68***	2.64	.53
10.Anx											.72***	−.55***	.63***	.31***	.36***	1.96	.78
11.Dep												−.66***	.54***	.31***	.35***	1.74	.62
12.Self													−.60***	−.22***	−.25***	3.03	.59
13.Neu														.17***	.26***	1.49	.27
14.SSE-L															.81***	2.59	.80
15.SSE-P																2.13	.74

Note. Tradit = Traditional Gender Roles, Denial = Denial of the Reality of Sexism, Implic = Implicit Threatened Physical Safety, Explic = Explicit Threatened Physical Safety, Assum = Assumptions of Inferiority/Second-Class Citizen, Envir = Environmental, Lang = Sexist Language, Object = Sexual Objectification, WoMenS = general WoMenS, Anx = Anxiety, Dep = Depression, Self = Self-esteem, Neu-Neuroticism, SSE-L = SSE-lifetime, SSE-P = SSE-past year.
*$p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, ***$p < .001$.

Reliability. Internal reliabilities for all subscales within the current sample were acceptable. Cronbach's alphas of the subscales ranged from .73 to .84 (see Table 1 for specific internal consistency estimates). Additionally, all subscales were significantly positively correlated with each other ($r = .21$ to $r = .62$; see Table 2).

Validity. To examine validity, the general WoMenS and subscales were included in analyses, because scholars have emphasized the overall cumulative effect of microaggressions (i.e., general WoMenS) and the possible unique effects of specific forms of microaggressions (i.e., WoMenS subscales) on individuals' psychosocial functioning (e.g., Sue et al., 2007). As indications of convergent validity, the WoMenS (general scale and each subscale) was significantly correlated with the SSE-past year and SSE-lifetime. Correlations ranged from $r = .35$ to $r = .75$. Furthermore, the WoMenS was significantly positively correlated with depression, anxiety, and self-esteem, except for a nonsignificant correlation between the Sexual Objectification factor and self-esteem. The WoMenS was positively correlated with neuroticism, but all correlations were within the small range ($r = .13$–$.24$), supporting discriminant validity.

Hierarchical multiple regressions were conducted to examine the incremental validity of the WoMenS for the current sample (see Table 3). Specifically, the SSE-lifetime was entered in the first step and the WoMenS (general WoMenS) was entered during the second step to predict depression, anxiety, and self-esteem. The same analyses were conducted with neuroticism replacing the SSE-lifetime in the first step (i.e., with depression, anxiety, and self-esteem as outcome variables). The WoMenS (general WoMenS) predicted unique variance in anxiety above and beyond that explained by the SSE-lifetime ($R^2_{\text{change}} = .016$, F_{change} (581) = 10.58, $p < .001$). However, the WoMenS did not predict unique variance in depression ($R^2_{\text{change}} = .005$, F_{change} (581) = 3.31, $p = .069$) or self-esteem ($R^2_{\text{change}} = .001$, F_{change} (581) = .467, $p = .495$) above and beyond that explained by the SSE-lifetime. Furthermore, the WoMenS predicted unique variance in anxiety ($R^2_{\text{change}} = .030$, F_{change} = (581) = 30.50, $p < .001$) and depression ($R^2_{\text{change}} = .024$, F_{change} = (581) = 20.84, $p < .001$) above and beyond that explained by neuroticism. The WoMenS did not explain unique variance in self-esteem above and beyond that explained by neuroticism ($R^2_{\text{change}} = .002$, F_{change} = (581) = 1.45, $p = .229$).

Study 2: Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Participants

The methods for recruitment utilized in Study 1 were followed in Study 2. A total of 437 subjects participated, and the final sample consisted of

Table 3. Study 1 Sample Hierarchical Multiple Regression

Variables	B	*SE*	β	R^2	Δ R2
DV: Anxiety					
Step 1				.10	.10
SSE-lifetime	.31	.04	.31***		
Step 2				.11	.02**
SSE-lifetime	.17	.06	.17**		
General WoMenS	.28	.09	.19**		
DV: Depression					
Step 1				.10	.10
SSE-lifetime	.24	.03	.31***		
Step 2				.10	.005
SSE-lifetime	.18	.05	.23***		
General WoMenS	.12	.07	.11		
DV: Self-esteem					
Step 1				.05	.05
SSE-lifetime	−.16	.03	−.22		
Step 2				.05	.001
SSE-lifetime	−.14	.05	−.18		
General WoMenS	−.05	.07	−.04		
DV: Anxiety					
Step 1				.40	.40
Neuroticism	−.18	.09	−.63***		
Step 2				.43	.03***
Neuroticism	−.17	.09	−.59***		
General WoMenS	.26	.05	.18***		
DV: Depression					
Step 1				.30	.30
Neuroticism	−1.23	.08	−.54***		
Step 2				.32	.02***
Neuroticism	−.15	.08	−.51***		
General WoMenS	.19	.04	.16***		
DV: Self-esteem					
Step 1				.36	.36
Neuroticism	1.28	.07	.60***		
Step 2				.36	.002
Neuroticism	1.26	.07	.59***		
General WoMenS	−.05	.04	−.04		

Note. ***$p < .001$.
SSE = Schedule of Sexist Events, WoMenS = Women's Microaggressions Scale, DV = dependant variable.

325 subjects after participants with more than 10% of missing data, and individuals who incorrectly responded to both validity questions were removed. Ages ranged from 18 to 65 years and older table 4 fied as lesbian, and 2.4% identified as "other" (e.g., pansexual). Participants reported having some college (33.7%), graduate/professional degree (26.8%), bachelor's degree (24.1%), primary school or high school (8.7%), and associate's degree (6.6%). Furthermore, 38.9% had a full-time job, 31.0% had a part-time job, 28.6% were unemployed or not working, and 1.5% were retired. Participants reported household incomes below $15,000 (15.8%), between $15,000 and $49,999 (35.2%), $50,000 and $99,999 (26.7%), and over $100,000 (22.2%). Three participants did not report their income. The majority of participants were born in the United States (88.3%). Regarding relationship status, 36.4% were single, 32.2% were in a relationship but not married, 30.1% were married, and 1.2% were "other" (e.g., divorced, legally separated, widowed).

Measures

Demographics. Participants were asked to provide information on their race/ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, major or graduate program (if applicable), highest level of education, future or current occupation, current employment status, mother's and father's occupation, country of origin (if applicable, year of arrival to the United States), household income, relationship status, and body mass index (i.e., height and weight).

Women's Microaggressions Scale. Following the Study 1 EFA, the WoMenS consisted of 34 items. As in Study 1, participants were asked to indicate, on a Likert-type scale, how often an event had occurred in their lifetime, with responses ranging from 1 (*never*) to 4 (*often/frequently*).

Sexist Events. The 20-item SSE (Klonoff & Landrine, 1995) demonstrated good internal reliability in Study 2 (past year: $\alpha = .94$, lifetime: $\alpha = .95$).

Generalized Anxiety Disorder. The GAD-7 (Spitzer et al., 2006) yielded acceptable reliability in Study 2 ($\alpha = .91$).

Depressive Symptoms. Study 2 Reliability for the PHQ-9 (Kroenke et al., 2001) was .88.

Satisfaction With Life. Satisfaction with life was assessed using the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener et al., 1985). The scale consists of five items (e.g., "In most ways my life is close to ideal"), utilizing a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Higher scores indicated greater satisfaction with life. The scale has been

shown to have good test-retest reliability and internal reliability (Diener et al., 1985). In the current study, internal reliability was acceptable (α = .88).

Body Surveillance. Body surveillance was measured through the body surveillance subscale of the Objectified Body Consciousness Scale (McKinley & Hyde, 1996). The subscale is assessed on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 6 (*strongly disagree*) and is comprised of eight items (e.g., "During the day, I think about how I look many times"). Higher scores indicated higher levels of individuals treating themselves as objects and monitoring their appearance. Internal reliability was acceptable (α = .89) among a sample of undergraduate women (McKinley & Hyde, 1996). Furthermore, supporting divergent validity, the Body Surveillance subscale was negatively associated with body esteem (McKinley & Hyde, 1996). Internal reliability in the current study was acceptable (α = .85).

Results

Missing Data

Data were screened for missing cases. Participants with more than 10% of missing data were removed from analyses (N = 105; Schlomer et al., 2010). Participants who provided incorrect responses to both validity questions were removed (n = 7). After removing these cases, Little's MCAR test was conducted on the entire dataset to determine whether data were missing completely at random. Little's MCAR indicated that data were not MCAR ($\chi^2(1186) = 1392.17$, $p < .001$). After running analyses on each measure, the SSE-lifetime was the only subscale that was not MCAR ($\chi^2(84) = 120.66$, $p = .005$). There was a total of 12 missing cases, with only one variable having two missing cases. Furthermore, two participants did not provide any responses to the Body Surveillance scale. Expectation-maximization was chosen as the imputation method for data deemed MCAR and was used for the SSE-lifetime because of the limited amount of missing data.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

To confirm the factor structure of the WoMenS, confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) were conducted using Mplus (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2012). Maximum Likelihood with robust estimation (MLR) was utilized. This approach can determine the statistical significance of factor loadings and correlations between the factors and corrects for non-normality in indicator variables (Brown, 2015; Fabrigar et al., 1999). The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA; Steiger, 1990); CFI (Bentler, 1990); and Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR; Hu & Bentler, 1999) were

utilized as indices of model fit. For RMSEA, Browne and Cudeck (1993) suggested the following guidelines: .05 or lower = good fit, .05–.08 = fair fit, .08–.10 = mediocre fit, and .10 and above = poor fit. Hu and Bentler (1999) suggested a CFI close to or greater than .95 and SRMR ≤ .08 indicates acceptable model fit.

The EFA supported eight factors (i.e., Traditional Gender Roles, Assumptions of Inferiority/Second-Class Citizen, Sexist Language, Explicit Threatened Physical Safety, Implicit Threatened Physical Safety, Denial of the Reality of Sexism, Sexual Objectification, and Environmental), and microaggressions theory has indicated that various experiences of microaggressions might also be captured by a general microaggressions factor (Sue et al., 2007). Thus, a bifactor model with eight specific factors and a general WoMenS factor (Hypothesized model) was expected to fit the data best. The first alternative model theorized one factor underlying all items (Model 1). The second alternative model proposed eight correlated first-order latent factors based on results from the EFA (Model 2). The third alternative model posited one general second-order latent variable and eight first-order latent variables (i.e., a hierarchical model; Model 3). Given significant correlations between the factors in the EFA, a higher-order model seemed plausible.

CFA model fit results can be found in Table 4. The hypothesized model had a significant chi-square test, but other fit indices indicated good model fit. Although a significant chi-square test can indicate poor model fit, scholars have argued that chi-square tests are often significant with large sample sizes (Kenny, 2015). Furthermore, in the hypothesized model, all items had significant factor loadings on anticipated factors. The first alternative model (Model 1), which included one general latent factor, produced a significant chi-square test and other goodness-of-fit indices also indicated poor fit. The second alternative model (Model 2) consisted of eight correlated first-order latent factors. The chi-square was significant, but the RMSEA, SRMR, and CFI indicated good model fit. Furthermore, all items had significant factor loadings on anticipated factors. The third alternative model (Model 3), which posited one higher-order general latent factor and eight specific latent factors, also had a significant chi-square test but the other indices indicated fair to good model fit. Satorra-Bentler scaled chi-square difference tests, which are appropriate when utilizing MLM or other ML robust estimation methods, were calculated to compare the hypothesized model and the second alternative model, and the hypothesized model and the third alternative model (Satorra & Bentler, 2010). The chi-square difference test between the hypothesized and second alternative model was $\chi^2_{\text{diff}}(12) = 31.75$. Given that the critical chi-square value with 12 degrees of freedom is 21.03, the results indicated the two models significantly differed from each other, and the hypothesized model is a better fit to the data than the second alternative model. The result from the

Table 4. Confirmatory Factor Analysis: WoMenS Goodness-of-Fit Summary

Index	Hypothesized	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
CFI	.93	.66	.92	.90
SRMR	.05	.08	.06	.07
RMSEA	.04	.09	.04	.05
90% CI	[.04, .05]	[.09, .10]	[.04, .05]	[.05, .06]
AIC	26072.19	27282.69	26114.89	26205.34
BIC	26609.49	27668.64	26606.79	26617.78
χ^2	772.51***	1916.46***	816.24***	937.52***

Note. The hypothesized model represents the bifactor model with a general WoMenS factor and eight specific latent factors, Model 1 represents the general factor model, Model 2 represents the eight-factor, correlated model, and Model 3 represents the hierarchical model (one second-order latent variable and eight first-order latent variables). CFI = comparative fit index, SRMR = standardized root mean square residual, RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation, CI = confidence interval, AIC = Akaike information criteria, BIC = Bayesian Information Criterion. ***$p < .001$.

chi-square difference test comparing the hypothesized model and the third alternative model was $\chi^2_{diff}(33) = 135.11$. The critical value for 33 degrees of freedom is 47.40, indicating a significant difference and supporting that the hypothesized model fits the data better than the third alternative model. Taken together, the hypothesized model fit the data better than the second and third alternative models and had good fit indices (see Figure 1). Furthermore, the hypothesized model was consistent with conceptualizations of microaggressions that emphasize the cumulative impact of a broad range of microaggressions on individuals' psychosocial functioning and also the possible effects of specific forms of microaggressions (e.g., Capodilupo et al., 2010; Sue et al., 2007). In addition, we calculated the Explained Common Variance (ECV), Percent of Unconstrained Correlations (PUC), and the Average Relative Parameter Bias (ARPB) using the Bifactor Indices Calculator (Dueber, 2017). We found a PUC of .90, ECV of the General Factor of .56, and an ARPB of .09. The ECV suggests that 56% of the variance can be attributed to the general factor and the PUC suggests most of the correlations load onto the general factor. Using the guidelines from Reise et al. (2013), we can conclude that our model is multidimensional. See Table 5 for factor loadings.

Reliability. Internal reliabilities for all factors were in the acceptable range. Cronbach's alphas were: Traditional Gender Roles = .79, Denial of the Reality of Sexism = .74, Implicit Threatened Physical Safety = .75, Explicit Threatened Physical Safety = .79, Assumptions of Inferiority/Second-Class Citizen = .80, Environmental = .80, Sexist Language = .83, and Sexual

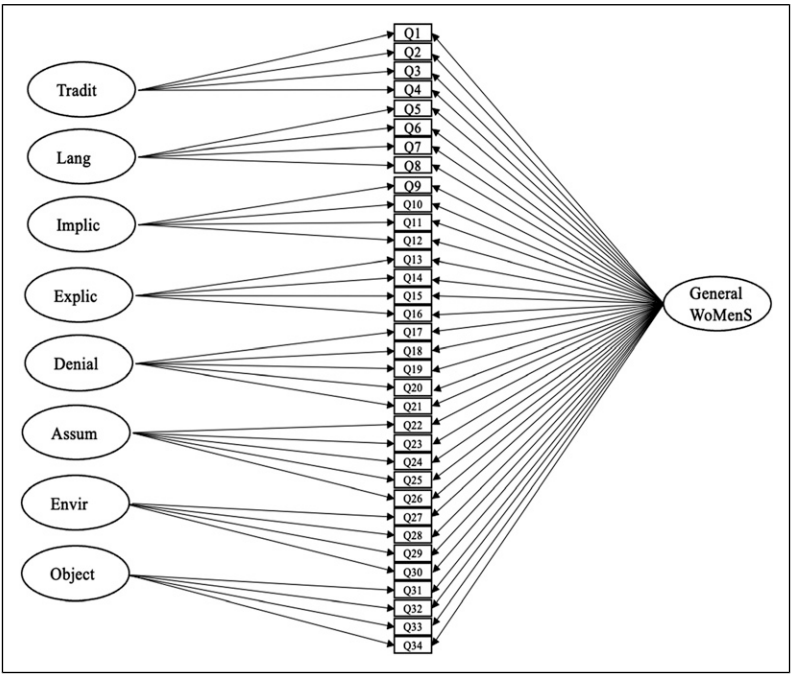


Figure 1. Bifactor model

Note. Tradit = traditional gender roles, Lang = sexist language, Implicit = implicit threatened physical safety, Explic = explicit threatened physical safety, Denial = invalidation of the reality of sexism, Assum = assumptions of inferiority/second-class citizen, Envir = environmental, Object = sexual objectification.

Objectification = .74. Furthermore, all factors were significantly correlated with each other (r = .22 to r = .60, see Table 6).

Validity. See Table 6 for correlations between the WoMenS (general WoMenS and each subscale) and the SSE, anxiety, depression, satisfaction with life, and body surveillance. The WoMenS (general WoMenS and each subscale) was significantly correlated with the SSE-past year and SSE-lifetime. Additionally, the general WoMenS had small to medium correlations with anxiety (r = .18), depression (r = .14), and body surveillance (r = .26), supporting convergent validity. The general WoMenS was not significantly associated with life satisfaction. Further supporting convergent validity, all WoMenS subscales were positively correlated with body surveillance, ranging from .14 to .26. Nonetheless, there were mixed results regarding correlations between each of the subscales and depression, anxiety, and satisfaction with life. (Table 6).

Table 5. Standardized Loadings From Exploratory and Confirmatory Factor Analyses

Factors/Items	EFA	CFA Bi-factor	
Traditional gender roles (α = .84)	F1	G	S1
1. Someone assumed that I want children because of my gender	0.74	0.62	0.66
2. Someone assumed that I want to get married because of my gender	0.69	0.58	0.64
3. Someone assumed that I am nurturing because of my gender	0.52	0.58	0.25
4. Someone expected that I should cook and clean because of my gender	0.47	0.48	0.25
Sexist language (α = .84)	F2	G	S2
5. Someone called me a "whore"	−0.89	0.34	0.76
6. Someone called me a "slut"	−0.82	0.41	0.75
7. Someone called me a "bitch"	−0.61	0.42	0.49
8. Someone called me a "tease"	−0.48	0.51	0.35
Implicit threatened physical safety (α = .79)	F3	G	S3
9. Someone told me to watch my drink when I am in a social setting	0.66	0.32	0.53
10. Someone told me to have some form of self-defense (e.g., pepper spray) when going out in a public place	0.61	0.52	0.50
11. Someone told me that I should have a safety plan when going on a first date (e.g., tell a friend where I am going)	0.61	0.43	0.57
12. Someone told me not to walk alone because I might be raped or assaulted	0.61	0.61	0.27
Explicit threatened physical safety (α = .83)	F4	G	S4
13. A man said something to me that made me feel unsafe	0.60	0.59	0.39
14. A man (a stranger) followed me in a public place	0.59	0.50	0.42
15. A man stared at me in a threatening manner	0.59	0.52	0.46
16. Someone touched me without my consent	0.59	0.40	0.37
Invalidation of the reality of sexism (α = .83)	F5	G	S5
17. Someone told me that men also experience discrimination when we were discussing sexism	−0.68	0.53	0.33
18. Someone told me that sexism is no longer an important social issue	−0.65	0.43	0.43
19. Someone told me that women have the same opportunities as men	−0.62	0.34	0.24
20. Someone told me that women are being too sensitive when they say they experience gender discrimination	−0.51	0.65	0.39
21. Someone told me that "not all men are like that" (or something similar) when we were discussing sexism	−0.31	0.53	0.20

(continued)

Table 5. (continued)

Factors/Items	EFA	CFA Bi-factor	
Assumptions of Inferiority/Second-Class citizen (α = .84)	F6	G	S6
22. Someone assumed that I am not good at math because of my gender	−0.72	0.53	0.55
23. Someone assumed that I am not intelligent because of my gender	−0.68	0.59	0.51
24. Someone did not ask me about my career or accomplishments when first meeting me because of my gender	−0.66	0.53	0.41
25. Someone assumed that I am not athletic because of my gender	−0.62	0.59	0.23
26. Someone incorrectly attributed my work to a man	−0.59	0.46	0.40
Environmental (α = .77)	F7	G	S7
27. I Observed that men hold more leadership positions in society than women	0.69	0.54	0.36
28. I Observed in the media that women are not believed when they report being sexually harassed	0.54	0.61	0.35
29. I Observed in the media that people excuse men's behavior by saying "boys will be boys" (or something similar)	0.53	0.61	0.40
30. I Observed women portrayed as housewives on T.V.	0.51	0.53	0.23
Sexual objectification (α = .73)	F8	G	S8
31. Someone gave me compliments about my appearance before talking about something else	0.57	0.53	0.32
32. Someone catcalled me (e.g., whistled at me) while I was walking down the street	0.49	0.54	0.57
33. Someone told me that I am too pretty to look unhappy	0.47	0.53	0.26
34. I Observed someone staring at a woman's body	0.40	0.63	0.16

Note. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) (n = 582). Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) bi- factor model (n = 325). G = General factor. S = Specific Factor. All items loaded significantly for CFA proposed factors ($p < .05$).

Hierarchical multiple regressions were conducted to examine the incremental validity of the general WoMenS (see Table 7). Specifically, in separate analyses, the SSE-lifetime was entered in the first step and the general WoMenS was entered during the second step to predict unique variance in anxiety, depression, and body surveillance. Hierarchical multiple regressions were not run with life satisfaction as an outcome given its nonsignificant correlation with the general WoMenS. The general WoMenS did not predict unique variance in anxiety ($R^2_{\text{change}} = .002$, F_{change} (322) = .67, $p = .41$) or depression ($R^2_{\text{change}} = .008$, F_{change} (322) = 2.82, $p = .09$) above and beyond that explained by the SSE-lifetime. However, the general WoMenS predicted

Table 6. CFA Correlations Between the WoMenS, Anxiety, Depression, Satisfaction With Life, and Body Surveillance, Means, and Standard Deviations

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	*M*	*SD*
1.Tradit		.52***	.44***	.38***	.57***	.56***	.33***	.49***	.75***	.07	.02	−.03	.15**	.51***	.43***	2.85	.84
2.Denial			.43***	.48***	.56***	.52***	.36***	.49***	.75***	.14*	.08	.01	.16**	.47***	.43***	2.80	.64
3.Implic				.36***	.36***	.44***	.37***	.45***	.66***	.12*	.06	.04	.26***	.35***	.39***	2.96	.75
4.Explic					.52***	.39***	.56***	.60***	.73***	.24***	.21***	−.17**	.20***	.59***	.54***	2.34	.67
5.Assum						.50***	.42***	.51***	.79***	.16**	.12*	−.03	.15**	.64***	.58***	2.22	.77
6.Envir							.22***	.53***	.70***	−.00	−.02	−.08	.14*	.48***	.38***	3.41	.64
7.Lang								.50***	.65***	.21***	.25***	−.15**	.22***	.56***	.50***	2.10	.79
8.Object									.77***	.12*	.08	−.14**	.23***	.51***	.47***	2.89	.71
9.WoMeNS										.18**	.14*	−.09	.26***	.71***	.65***	2.69	.53
10.Anx											.68***	−.32***	.26***	.30***	.35***	2.29	.83
11.Dep												−.45***	.14*	.29***	.36***	1.97	.70
12.Satisf													−.14*	−.23***	−.22***	4.67	1.38
13.Body														.18**	.21***	4.65	1.19
14.SSE-L															.84***	2.61	.90
15.SSE-P																2.16	.89

Note. Tradit = Traditional Gender Roles, Denial = Denial of the Reality of Sexism, Implic = Implicit Threatened Physical Safety, Explic = Explicit Threatened Physical Safety, Assum = Assumptions of Inferiority/Second-Class Citizen, Envir = Environmental, Lang = Sexist Language, Object = Sexual Objectification, WoMenS = general WoMenS, Anx = Anxiety, Dep = Depression, Satisf = Satisfaction with life, Body = Body surveillance, SSE-L = SSE-lifetime, SSE-P = SSE-past year.
*$p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, ***$p < .001$.

Table 7. Study 2 Sample Hierarchical Multiple Regression

Variables	B	*SE*	β	R^2	Δ R^2
DV: Anxiety					
Step 1				.09	.09
SSE-lifetime	.28	.05	.30***		
Step 2				.09	.002
SSE-lifetime	.32	.07	.35***		
General WoMenS	−.10	.12	−.06		
DV: Depression					
Step 1				.08	.08
SSE-lifetime	.21	.04	.29***		
Step 2				.09	.008
SSE-lifetime	.29	.06	−.38***		
General WoMenS	−.17	.10	−.13		
DV: Body surveillance					
Step 1				.03	.03
SSE-lifetime	.24	.07	.18		
Step 2				.07	.03***
SSE-lifetime	−.01	.10	−.004		
General WoMenS	.59	.17	.26***		

Note. ***$p < .001$.
SSE = Schedule of Sexist Events, WoMenS = Women's Microaggressions Scale, DV = dependant variableee.

unique variance in body surveillance above and beyond that predicted by SSE-lifetime ($R^2_{\text{change}} = .034$, F_{change} (327) = 11.52, $p < .001$). Furthermore, results indicated that for every one-unit increase in the general WoMenS, there was a .26 unit increase in body surveillance (β = .26, t (321) = 3.39, $p < .001$).

Discussion

Research indicates that subtle, covert forms of sexism are linked to negative mental health outcomes (e.g., Capodilupo et al., 2010; Feigt et al., 2022; Swim et al., 2001), supporting the need to examine this type of sexism as distinct from overt, hostile forms of sexism. Previous published sexism scales have not focused on subtle events of sexism or have not encapsulated both interpersonal and larger environmental forms of sexism (Klonoff & Landrine, 1995; Kozee et al., 2007). In addition, a scale that focuses on a broad range of microaggressions that women from varied sociocultural identities may experience has not been published, limiting research in this area. As such, the primary aim of the current study was to develop and validate the WoMenS,

which captures a broad range of microaggressions that women from various sociocultural backgrounds may navigate.

Results of the EFA supported an eight-factor structure with the following factors: Assumptions of Traditional Gender Roles, Sexist Language, Implicit Threatened Physical Safety, Explicit Threatened Physical Safety, Invalidation of the Reality of Sexism, Assumptions of Inferiority/Second-Class Citizen, Environmental, and Sexual Objectification. We found that all themes were consistent with Capodliupo et al. (2010) gender microaggressions taxonomy and the theme of Explicit Threatened Physical Safety was added. Furthermore, results of a CFA indicated that a bifactor model, with eight specific factors and a general WoMenS factor, was the best fit. Thus, both the whole scale and individual subscales can be used in future research. The bifactor structure is congruent with previous research that has found positive associations between women's experiences of a broad range of sexist events and mental health concerns (e.g., Klonoff & Landrine, 1995) and positive associations between specific forms of sexism and mental health (e.g., sexual objectification and body shame; Kozee et al., 2007).

Results also provide support for convergent and divergent validity of the WoMenS. Specifically, in Study 1, both the general WoMenS and each subscale were correlated with the SSE, depression, anxiety, and self-esteem (except for a nonsignificant correlation between the Sexual Objectification factor and self-esteem), supporting convergent validity. Furthermore, the general WoMenS and each subscale had small significant correlations with neuroticism, providing support for divergent validity. In Study 2, the general WoMenS and each subscale were significantly correlated with the SSE (lifetime and past year) and body surveillance. The general WoMenS was also significantly correlated with anxiety and depression but not satisfaction with life. The subscales had differing correlations with depression, anxiety, and life satisfaction. Specifically, Invalidation of the Reality of Sexism, Implicit Threatened Physical Safety, Explicit Threatened Physical Safety, Assumptions of Inferiority/Second-Class Citizen, Sexist Language, and Sexual Objectification were significantly correlated with anxiety. Explicit Threatened Physical Safety, Assumptions of Inferiority/Second-Class Citizen, and Sexist Language were significantly correlated with depression. Explicit Threatened Physical Safety, Sexist Language, and Sexual Objectification were significantly correlated with life satisfaction. Results indicate that each WoMenS subscale may be utilized to predict differing outcomes for women. In addition, the associations between the WoMenS and SSE demonstrate that there is conceptual overlap between sexism and gender microaggressions. However, the WoMenS focuses on more subtle, everyday forms of sexism and touches upon both interpersonal and environmental facets of sexism. Although the SSE focuses largely on interpersonal experiences of gender

discrimination, the WoMenS covers a larger spectrum of gender microaggressions such as women's portrayal in the media and being invalidated for their experiences.

Supporting incremental validity, within the two samples, the general WoMenS predicted unique variance in anxiety and body surveillance but not depression or self-esteem above and beyond that explained by the SSE-lifetime. In addition, the general WoMenS explained unique variance in anxiety and depression but not self-esteem above and beyond that explained by neuroticism. These results indicate that the WoMenS (general WoMenS) may be used in research that seeks to understand associations between women's experiences of a broad range of gender microaggressions (versus broad experiences of general sexist events that are captured by the SSE-lifetime) and anxiety and body surveillance.

Limitations

There were a number of limitations of the current study. First, the diversity of the sample was limited, particularly in terms of education and income. The majority of the samples reported completing at least some college. Women from higher socioeconomic statuses might experience gender microaggressions at different frequencies and/or their perceptions of experiencing gender microaggressions may be different than women from lower socioeconomic statuses (e.g., Watson et al., 2002). In addition, most participants were heterosexual and born in the United States, so further research is needed to examine whether the measure would be applicable for non-U.S. born women (e.g., women born in other countries may experience different forms of gender microaggressions) and with women of diverse sexual orientations. Moreover, items may not reflect specific sexist events that women from certain sociocultural identities with intersectional identities (e.g., transwomen, gender fluid) may experience. Additionally, the majority of participants identified as White and more research focused on racially diverse samples will be needed to support the WoMenS as a general index of sexist events. Although we examined gender microaggressions among all women, Enns et al. (2021) suggest that research on feminism should examine gendered experiences within and across the Global North and Global South and rather than one gendered theory across the globe, research must recognize the variability in gendered experiences. Further, it is possible that the composition of the sample influenced the factor structure and convergent validity. The majority of the sample had at least some college education, which could possibly suggest greater opportunities to increase awareness of sexism (Morgan & Rhoden, 1995). Perhaps a different sample may not have endorsed some of the items that require more knowledge of gender microaggressions, and that the scale may not have demonstrated convergent validity with mental health

outcomes if participants are not aware that some behaviors may be due to gender microaggressions.

Furthermore, our study relied on retrospective data and asked participants to indicate how frequently they experienced microaggressions in their lifetime. Participants may have provided inaccurate estimates with regards to how frequently they experienced a certain event. Nevertheless, this psychometric study provides initial support for the WoMenS scale as an index of a broad range of contemporary gender microaggressions that women experience which can be used in future research to investigate the longitudinal impact of both overt and covert forms of sexism on psychological outcomes.

Implications for Theory, Practice, Education and Training, Advocacy, and Research

The current study provides support for gender microaggressions theory (Capodilupo et al., 2010; Sue, 2010) through an initial development and validation of the WoMenS scale with support for the existing theoretical taxonomy. Future researchers could use either the general WoMenS scale or specific subscales depending on the goal and questions of the study. In a scoping review of measures assessing gender microaggressions against women, Gartner et al. (2020) noted that the current measure, which includes both blatant and subtle forms of discrimination, may be useful in determining the differential effects of the various types of gender microaggressions. For example, researchers may choose to focus on the environmental sexism subscale as a measure of structural sexism and examine its effects on the internalization of sexist beliefs. For a comprehensive understanding of the impact of sexism experiences, researchers could use a general WoMenS score.

In practice, both career/vocational counselors and mental health practitioners could use the scale to assess clients' experiences with sexism during initial assessments. If relevant to their presenting concerns, mental health therapists could explore specific domains of sexism and their impact on mental health, including body surveillance, depression, and anxiety. For example, if clients report symptoms associated with monitoring their body and appearance, clinicians might ask about possible factors that may have influenced their symptoms, including gender microaggressions. Mental health providers can then acknowledge and validate the impact of microaggressions toward women. In addition, it will be important for mental health therapists to be aware of their own sexist beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. The WoMenS scale could be used for therapists to be aware of what sexism may look like and in turn, to be able to acknowledge and validate clients' experiences of sexism. Therapists for example, may be more aware of certain forms of sexism, such as sexual objectification, that have received more attention in the media via the #MeToo movement compared to other forms of sexism. This

scale can be an opportunity for therapists to raise their awareness or serve as a reminder of the multiple forms of gender microaggressions while working with women.

Counseling psychology training programs should teach clinicians-in-training to be aware of sexism and the impact that it has on women, as well as help them to be aware of their own gender biases. Counseling psychologists should move beyond the individual level by engaging in advocacy efforts for women. For example, systems and organizations can identify their biases against women, provide training to essential key people, and provide psychoeducation about the impact of gender microaggressions to the public (Schwartz & Lindley, 2009).

In terms of research, scholars should conduct measurement invariance testing to examine the scale's equivalence across racial, gender, and sexual identity groups. In addition, given that age was negatively correlated with Implicit Threatened Physical Safety and the Invalidation of the Reality of Sexism, and positively correlated with assumptions of Inferiority/Second-Class Citizen, future research should also conduct measurement invariance with different developmental age groups. For example, the scale may be more relevant for emerging adult or younger women. Previous research has found that women under 30 years old reported more frequent experiences of sexist names and jokes (Lott et al., 2001), highlighting a possible link between age and experiences of sexism. On the other hand, older women may experience other forms of sexism in addition to ageism, such as being less likely to receive preventative care and healthcare procedures, due to being viewed as too weak or frail to receive treatment (Chrisler et al., 2016). In addition, future research might examine associations between the WoMenS and data from daily diary studies examining women's experiences of gender microaggressions to further support convergent validity of the WoMenS. Further, given that there may be different experiences of gender microaggressions dependent on location, future research should examine whether gender microaggression experiences differ based on geographical region and across the globe.

Finally, given the associations between experiences of microaggressions and psychological outcomes, advocacy efforts should be aimed to reduce gender-based microaggressions towards women both at the individual level and larger environmental level. For example, counseling psychologists may consider writing opinion editorials to shed light on the various forms of microaggressions and how they impact women. Counseling psychologists should consider advocating for more women in leadership positions within organizations, condemn violence and aggression towards women, and call for government leaders to develop policies that support women's experiences.

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