Age Group Differences in the Experience of Gendered Microaggressions among Women  
Sarah Campbell & Dr. Sarah Murnen  
Kenyon College

Introduction

- Previous research has indicated that younger women report more sexist incidents than older women  
- Klonoff and Landrine (1995) developed the Schedule of Sexist Events, predicting scores would decrease linearly by age group  
- Found significant differences between different age groups and for different subscales  
- Birth-Cohort Hypothesis: Differences in awareness of gender discrimination rather than actual age differences in how women are treated - this might explain differences  
- In other research, sexism in the workplace has been reported more frequently by older women (Ohse & Stockdale)

Method

- Female participants recruited through Amazon’s Mechanical Turk to complete a survey about mental health and sexist experiences  
- N = 257 women in final analyses, ages 20 to 75  
- For final analyses, women divided into 4 groups, dividing by decade: 20-29: 78, 30-39: 91, 40-49: 42, 50+: 46  
- Gender Microaggression Scale developed by Capodilupo and Torino (2012)  
- 60 item 5-point Likert Scale (1=never, 5=always) that asks to note how often a particular sexist experience happened to them in the past year because they are a woman  
- Created using focus groups to find examples of microaggressions and reactions to such examples  
- Best divided into 7 explanatory factors/subscales  
- (See Table 1 for subscale names with sample items)  
- Criterion variable = Hopkins Symptom Checklist, developed in 1974 as a self report symptom inventory of mental health  
- 25 item-scale with higher scores = more symptoms

Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example items from the Gender Microaggression Scale by Subscale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Traditional Household Duty Expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel pressure to be a good cook.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objectification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have been whistled at on the street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harshly Labeled Assertiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I have enforced rules or policy, I have been called a bitch.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appearance Pressure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I experience daily reminders by advertisements that I need to be thinner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage and Childbearing Expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People have often asked me when I am getting married.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denial of Sexism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People have told me that women and men are treated equally in society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patriarchal Work Expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have been talked over during a meeting by a man.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1. Average frequency ratings of sexist experience by age. Differences between groups determined by one way, between subjects ANOVA’s (p<.05).  
Household = no differences; Objectification = 20's > 40's; Assertive = 20's > 40's, 50's; Appearance = no differences; Marriage/Child = 20's, 30's > 40's, 50's; Denied Sexism = 20's > 30's, 40's, 50's; Work = 20's > 40's

Bivariate Correlations between HSCL and Gender Microaggression Subscales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household</th>
<th>Objectification</th>
<th>Assertive</th>
<th>Appearance</th>
<th>Married Child</th>
<th>Denied Sexism</th>
<th>Work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Symptoms .197** .238** .310** .292** .329** .368** .395**

Discussion

- Younger women did report more sexist events, but the relationship was not linear  
- Women in their 20s almost always reported the most sexist microaggressions  
- Women in their 40s consistently reported the lowest frequency of sexist microaggressions  
- These data reflect the same conclusion as Klonoff and Landrine using the Schedule of Sexist Events, which includes more blatant examples of sexism  
- Patriarchal Work Expectations, Denial of Sexism and Marriage and Childbearing Expectations had the highest correlations with the Hopkins Symptom Checklist, though all subscales were significantly correlated  
- The validation of the Gender Microaggression Scale and its factors needs more work with larger and more representative samples  
- Why do women in their 40s report lower cases of sexist microaggressions in all categories?  
  - Birth-Cohort Hypothesis: something was significantly different in the childhoods of these women because of the atmosphere of the period when they were growing up  
  - The other three age groups were born during significant feminist movements  
- Future research could examine the relationship between feminist teachings, reporting of sexist events and age  
- Younger women may report more experiences of microaggressions because of the greater validation of microaggressions as a form of sexism

References


