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Age Group Differences in the Experience of Gendered Microaggressions among Women

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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

Example items from the Gender Microaggression Scale by Subscale

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

Results

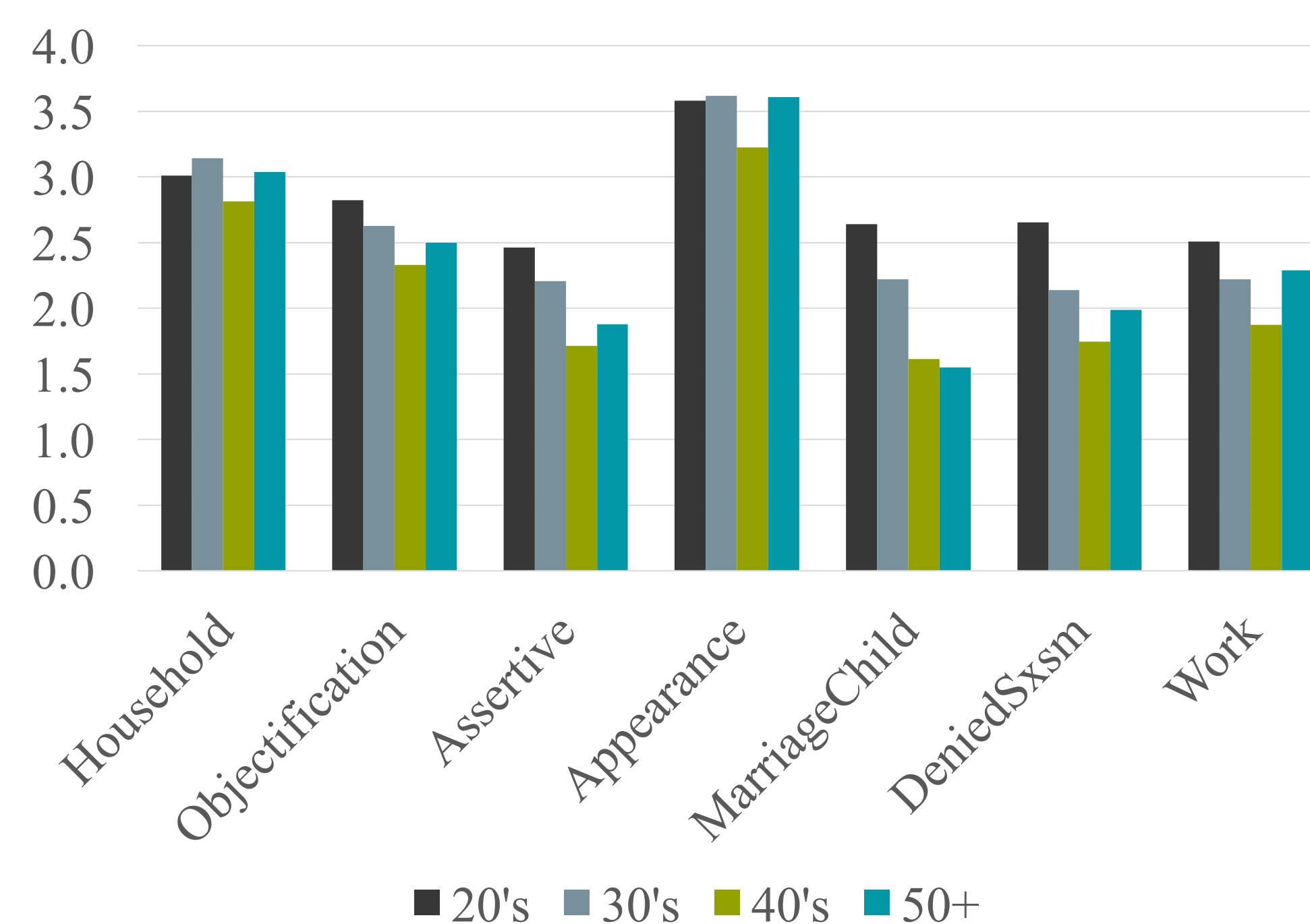


Figure 1. Average frequency ratings of sexist experience by age. Differences between groups determined by one way, between subjects ANOVA's ($p < .05$).

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

	Household	Objectification	Assertive	Appearance	Married Child	Denied Sexism	Work
Symptoms	.197**	.238**	.310**	.292**	.329**	.368**	.395**

** $p < .01$

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

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