#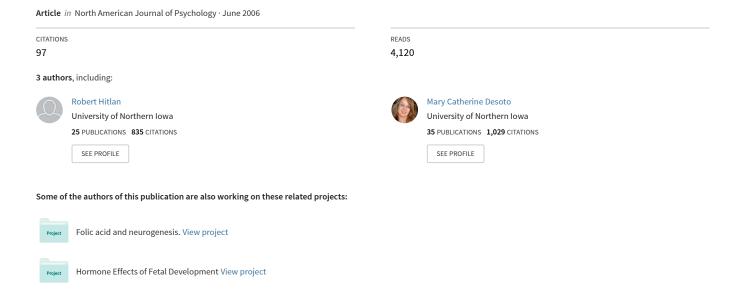 Perceived exclusion in the workplace: The moderating effects of gender on work- related attitudes and psychological health

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Perceived Exclusion in the Workplace: The Moderating Effects of Gender on Work-Related Attitudes and Psychological Health

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Research examining the nature and consequences of social exclusion indicates that such behavior is multifaceted and has deleterious effects on the intended targets. However, relatively little research has specifically assessed the impact of such behavior on employees who perceive of themselves as being excluded within their place of work. Even less has examined gender differences in relation to exclusionary behavior. The current research investigated the moderating effect of gender on the relation between perceived exclusion at work and work-related attitudes and psychological health. Participants included 223 working students (64 men and 159 women). Hierarchical moderated regression analyses on work attitudes (supervisor satisfaction, coworker satisfaction) and psychological health supported initial predictions. At higher levels of perceived exclusion men indicated lower satisfaction and psychological health compared to women. Findings are discussed in terms of potential workplace implications and limitations of the current research.

Exclusionary behaviors may take many forms, including giving another the silent treatment, unrequited love, being shunned, ignoring another, and outright rejection (Leary, 2001). Similarly, multiple definitions exist as to what constitutes exclusionary behavior. For example, Gruter and Masters (1986) note that ostracizing forms of behavior range from minor exclusionary tactics such as curt responses to more serious instances, with the most serious form of ostracism involving death. In his research on ostracism, Williams (2001) takes a moderate position, defining ostracism as "any act or acts of ignoring or excluding of an individual or groups by an individual or groups" (p. ix).

Drawing on previous organizational and social-psychological research (e.g., Duffy, Ganster, & Pagon, 2002; Gruter & Masters, 1986; Williams, 2001), we define workplace ostracism as the exclusion, rejection, or ignoring of an individual (or group) by another individual (or group) that, hinders one's ability to establish or maintain positive interpersonal relationships, work-related success, or favorable reputation within one's place of work. While we acknowledge than one can be

excluded for any number of reasons (e.g., stigma, disease, inability to contribute to group survival), the current focus is on the general perception of being excluded. In fact, Leary (2001) argues that the mere perception that one is being excluded or rejected is as important as the behavior itself. Given that people seek to establish a minimum number of fulfilling and stable relationships with others, such a perception may connote a decrease in relational evaluation: the degree to which an individual perceives that their relationship with another (or group) is valued (Baumeister & Leary, 1995).

Within the workplace realm, exclusionary behavior has been conceptualized as one form of workplace bullying (Workplace Bullying Taskforce, 2002), retaliatory behavior (Miceli & Near, 1986, 1989; Williams 2001), and as one component of ethnic harassment (Schneider, Hitlan, & Radhakrishnan, 2000). For example, the Task Force on the Prevention of Workplace Bullying, established by the Irish government in 2001, surveyed over 5,200 organizational employees and found that, on average, approximately 7% of respondents indicated being bullied in their place of work within the previous 6 months. Of those participants experiencing bullying behavior, 35% reported that their experience involved some form of exclusionary behavior (Workplace Bullying Taskforce, 2002)

In addition, whistle-blowing behavior has been associated with several forms of retaliatory behavior, several of which connote exclusion and/or rejection, including: poorer performance appraisals, denial of promotion, denial of training opportunities, assigned less important job duties and reassignment or transfer (Miceli & Near, 1989). Research also indicates that temporary workers may have an increased likelihood of being rejected by other "permanent" organizational employees (Williams, 2001).

In terms of its psychological impact, perceived exclusion is related to increased social anxiety (Baumeister & Tice, 1990), depression (Coie et al, 1995), loneliness (Jones, 1990), anger (Twenge, Baumeister, Tice, & Strucke, 2001), hurt feelings (Leary, Springer, Negal, Ansell, & Evans, 1998), and lower psychological health (Schneider et al., 2000). For example, in their research on ethnic harassment, Schneider et al. found that the worst self-reported health outcomes were reported under conditions of high exclusion and low verbal harassment. Additionally, experimental research indicates that excluded participants report liking group members less (Pepitone & Wilpizeski, 1961), increased aggression (Twenge, Baumeister, Tice & Strucke, 2001), and prejudice toward the rejecting group (Hitlan, Kelly, Schepman, Schneider, & Zarate, in press). In contrast, other research has found that exclusion results in attempts to

re-establish oneself as a group by conforming to group judgments and working harder during a group task (Williams & Zadro, 2001).

Using a social loafing paradigm, Williams and Sommer (1997) examined the effects of ostracism by coworkers on performance when performing a brainstorming task either coactively (individually identifiable output) or collectively (combined output) with other group members. Results indicated that men tended to socially loaf in the collective condition irrespective of whether they were previously included or ostracized by group members. In contrast, women worked harder in the collective condition after experiencing ostracism by coworkers (engaged in social compensation). The authors speculate that this may be due to gender differences regarding an individual versus collective orientation.

As a whole, however, the role of individual characteristics on workplace outcomes has received relatively less attention by psychologists. This trend may be traced to a historical tendency of organizational psychologists to downplay the effects of personality in the belief that focusing on person-level characteristics will lessen the connections between organizational behaviors and controllable situations (Hough & Schneider, 1996). Furthermore, Landy (1985) noted a strong tendency among publications on organizational behavior to emphasize situational antecedents and to deemphasize personality or person-level characteristics. Only within the past several years have person-level characteristics (and their relation to organizational outcomes) become the target of much empirical investigation (Vardi & Weitz, 2004).

Vardi and Weitz (2002) found that, as a group, males reported engaging in a greater number of workplace misbehaviors than females. Additional research has found that women are more likely to engage in organizational citizenship behaviors (Kidder, 2002), and are more sensitive to disempowering types of behaviors (Vance, Ensher, Hendricks, & Harris, 2004). Additionally, women perceive less utility in networking behaviors (Forret & Dougherty, 2004) and perceive of themselves as having less power and influence within organizational relationships (O'Neil, 2003). Women also tend to be less competitive (Walters, Stuhlmaker, & Meyer, 1998), influential within decision making contexts (Venkatesh, Morris, & Ackerman, 2000), engage in less political behavior (DuBrin, 1989), have lower self-efficacy in performance than men (Busch, 1995), and are more likely to leave their organization (Miller & Wheeler, 1992). In addition, research indicates that women are more apt to experience a greater number of workplace stressors and more intense work stress (Fielden & Cooper, 2002; Karambayya, 2002; Nelson & Burke, 2002). Research also indicates that women are more likely to have larger social networks and rely on them

more as a means to cope with workplace stressors as compared to men Greenglass, 2002). In fact, networks such as these have been shown to buffer the impact of workplace stress on outcomes (Perrewé & Carlson, 2002).

To our knowledge, however, the ability of gender to moderate the relation between antecedent variables and work-related outcomes has received less direct investigation. For example, the moderating effects of gender are consistently found in sexual harassment research (Rotundo, Nguyen, & Sackett, 2001). Gender has also been found to moderate the relation between procedural justice and intent to stay with an organization (Sweeney & McFarlin, 1997). In addition, research by Lovell and colleagues (1999) examined the relation between gender, organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB's), and job performance evaluations. Specifically, this research investigated whether the relationship between job performance and OCB's might be moderated by the gender of the employee. Results indicated that the effects of OCB's on perceived job performance was not the same for men and women. Women who performed the same level of OCB's were not rated as highly as men (c.f. Heilman, & Chen, 2005).

In terms of exclusion, women tend to report their workplace as being less inclusive and fair as compared to men (Mor Barak, Cherin, & Berkman, 1998). Research also indicates that perceived exclusion predicts job satisfaction and psychological well-being even after controlling for factors such as gender, ethnicity, age, education, and management status (Mor Barak, Finder, & Wind, 2003; Mor Barak, & Levin, 2002). Similarly, previous research has found a relation between an employee's perceived acceptance by coworkers and psychological well-being (Greenglass, Fiksenbaum, & Burke, 1996).

However, there is reason to suspect that gender may function to moderate the impact of exclusion on outcomes. Lopez (1982) found that males relied less on others for approval in terms of job-satisfaction and placed more value on their intrinsic feelings of ability. However, Schwalbe, Gecas & Baxter (1986) reported the opposite: women relied more on their own perceptions of competence in the workplace compared to men in terms of work related self-esteem. Although the specifics of gender differences in sources of workplace esteem have been contradictory, there does seem to be a consensus that as a whole, men define themselves more in terms of workplace performance as compared to women (Nelson & Burke, 2002; Kimmel, 1996).

Moreover, according to the sociometer hypothesis advanced by Leary and his colleagues (Leary, Tambor, Terdal, & Downs, 1995), self-esteem is innately involved in the assessment and maintenance of interpersonal relations. More specifically, self-esteem functions as a sociometer in

detecting one's perception of being included by others. As such, the self-esteem system continually monitors one's environment and provides information regarding one inclusionary status. To the extent to which one's inclusionary status in important social groups is threatened, self-esteem ought to be negatively impacted. Leary (1995) suggests that such exclusionary events are perceived as aversive in that they are both ego-threatening and convey relational devaluation. Consistent with the notion that men define themselves more in terms of their workplace performance than women, perceived exclusion in this context should exert a stronger threat to men's self-esteem compared to women. It is predicted that exclusion will exert a stronger threat to the self-esteem of men compared to women.

In addition, the perceived inability to define oneself in terms of one's expected gender role combined with men's more limited social support networks for actively coping with their exclusion is expected to produce greater threats to the psychological health of men as compared to women (Greenglass, 2002; Pleck, 1995). The current study was designed to specifically test this prediction. It is hypothesized that gender will moderate the impact of exclusion on psychological well-being. Greater exclusion will be related to lower levels of psychological well-being and this relationship is expected to be stronger for males than for females.

Research also indicates that self-esteem threats are related to increased affiliative tendencies (Brown, 1993; Leary, 1995). However, it is not clear whether such tendencies manifest themselves equally across genders. For example, Kelly (2001) suggests that men appear to be more likely to attribute their being rejected to external factors (e.g., the rejecting individuals). In addition, results from Sommer and Williams (1997) indicated that, in response to exclusion, men act in ways that will save their self-esteem, such as by withdrawing or disengaging from previously rejecting group members. Thus, it is hypothesized that gender will moderate the impact of exclusion on coworker and supervisor satisfaction ratings. Greater exclusion will be related to lower levels of reported coworker satisfaction (supervisor satisfaction) and this relationship should be stronger for males than for females.

In designing the current study, we acknowledge the fact that individual differences in negative affect have been found to impact the strength of workplace stressor-strain relationships (Breif, Burke, George, Robinson & Webster, 1988; Jex & Spector, 1996). We agree with Jex, Adams and Ehler (2002) on the importance of considering negative affect when designing research to test for relationships between situational workplace stressors (in this case exclusion) and various outcomes. By including a measure of negative affect as a control variable, the current research aims to reduce the impact of a potentially important confound

evident in previous research examining gender differences and organizational outcomes (Kessler et al., 1994).

METHOD

Participants

Participants included 223 working students from a mid-sized Midwestern university. Men comprised 28.7% of the sample ($n = 64$) and women comprised 71.3% ($n = 159$). Participant ages ranged from 18-53 years ($M = 19.98$, $SD = 7.31$, Median = 19). The majority of the sample identified as Caucasian (92.8%) followed by African-American (2.7%), Asian-American (1.8%), and "Other" (2.7%). One participant failed to indicate his or her ethnicity. The vast majority reported being single (95.5%) and working part-time (93.7%). Participants received partial credit in a psychology course for their participation.

Procedure and Measures

All participants completed computer-based surveys assessing their workplace experiences including the extent to which they perceived themselves as being excluded from work-related activities and discussions by supervisors and/or coworkers. Surveys were administered during small group sessions. The number of participants in each group ranged from 2 to 8. The survey was described to participants as a work relations survey that addressed various aspects of their work environment. All participants read and signed an IRB-approved informed consent sheet detailing their rights as research participants.

Workplace Exclusion Scale (WES; Hitlan, 2005). Previous research investigating the dimensionality of the WES suggests it is comprised of two factors: a 10-item General Workplace Exclusion and a 3–item Language-based Exclusion factor (Hitlan, 2005). Due to the low base rate for the language-based exclusion subscale within the current sample, current analyses are limited to using the General Exclusion subscale. The response scale for the WES asked participants to indicate how often they have experienced different behaviors during the past 12 months at their place of employment (e.g., "*Coworkers giving you the 'silent treatment.'", "Coworkers shutting you out of their conversations.", "Supervisors not replying to your requests/questions within a reasonable period of time.*"). All responses were obtained on a 5-point response scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*most of the time*). Composite scores were created by reserve coding where necessary, and averaging across items. The WES has been found to be reliable, with reliability coefficients ranging from .79-.85 across studies. Initial validation research suggests the WES is distinct from other theoretically related constructs such as organizational justice, perceptions of fair treatment, and neuroticism

(Hitlan, 2005). For the current research, the reliability coefficient for the WES was indicative of good overall reliability ($\alpha = .82$).

Job–related attitudes.   Measures of job attitudes included the Satisfaction with Supervision and the Satisfaction with Coworkers subscales from the revised *Job Descriptive Index* (JDI; Roznowski, 1989; Smith, Kendall, & Hulin, 1969). For each subscale respondents are presented with a series of adjectives describing their supervision and coworkers. Participants indicate whether each adjective is descriptive of their workplace on a 3-point response scale ("*Yes*", "*?*", "*No*"). Meta-analytic research attests to the reliability and validity of the JDI subscales (Kinicki, McKee-Ryan, Schriesheim, & Carson, 2002). Additional research also supports the validity of the response scale (Hanisch, 1992). Scale composites were created by averaging across subscale items. Reliability analysis indicated acceptable reliability estimates for both supervisor satisfaction ($\alpha = .79$) and coworker satisfaction ($\alpha = .80$).

Psychological well-being. To assess psychological well-being participants completed 13-items from the *Mental Health Index* (Veit & Ware, 1983). Participants indicated how frequently they felt anxious, lonely, and depressed during the past month using a 6-point response scale from 1 (*all of the time*) to 6 (*none of the time*) (e.g., "*How much of the time have you felt relaxed and free of tension?", "How often have you felt cheerful and lighthearted?*"). Scale scores were computed by reverse coding where necessary, and averaging across scale items. The reliability coefficient for this scale was .90.

Self-esteem threat. Self-esteem threat was assessed with two questions similar to those used in previous social ostracism research (Faulkner, 1998). The questions assess two aspects of self-esteem, a) the extent to which an individual's self-esteem is threatened and b) participants' desire to fortify that particular need (*To what extent do you feel like you don't feel good about yourself?", "To what extent do you feel a need to increase the perception that you are a good and worthy person?"*). Responses were obtained on 9-point scales from 1 (*Not at all*) to 9 (*constantly/extremely*). Composite scores were obtained by averaging across items ($\alpha = .68$).

Specific Experiences. Participants experiencing at least one type of exclusionary behavior during the past 12-months at their organization also completed a specific experience section where participants completed several additional questions probing the one exclusionary experience that had the greatest impact on them (e.g., frequency, duration, upsettingness, stress, gender of perpetrator, status of perpetrator, and age of perpetrator). Consistent with the goals of this research we examined the specific experience section separately for males and females.

Affective disposition. Affective disposition was assessed with the *Satisfaction with Neutral Objects Questionnaire* (Weitz, 1952; as revised by Judge, 1990). The scale consists of 13 items asking respondents to indicate their satisfaction with a series of neutral objects (e.g., *first name, public transportation, the color of stop signs*). Participants are asked to indicate their satisfaction with each item on a 3-point response scale the extent to which they felt satisfied, neutral, or dissatisfied with each object. A composite scale score was computed by summing and then averaging across scale items. A reliability coefficient indicated acceptable scale reliability ($\alpha = .85$).

RESULTS

Specific Experiences

For those men who completed the specific experience section ($n = 37$), the majority (81.1%) indicated that the experience involved being excluded in the physical presence of others; whereas, 13.5% indicated their experience involved being excluded by others physically leaving their presence and 5.4% indicated their experience involved some combination of the two. In addition, 30.2% reported the experience occurred at least 2-4 times a month or more, 25.7% indicated the experience lasted at least several weeks, 61% were at least slightly upset by their experience, 53.7% found the experience at least slightly stressful, and 62.5% reported being at least slightly angry. A large percentage of male respondents (48.8%) also indicated being excluded by other men, that the behavior was perpetrated by either supervisors and/or coworkers (79.6%), and that the perpetrator(s) were older than the victim (56.1%). Furthermore, 73.2% indicated that it was necessary for them to continue interacting with the perpetrator(s) frequently on the job.

For the women who completed the specific experience section ($n = 84$), the majority (69.5%) indicated that the experience involved being excluded in the physical presence of others; whereas, 22% indicated their experience involved being excluded by others physically leaving their presence and 8.5% indicated their experience(s) involved both types of exclusionary behavior. In addition, 21.4% reported the experience occurred at least 2 times a month, 29.8% indicated the experience lasted at least several weeks, 69% were at least slightly upset by their experience, 56% found the experience at least slightly stressful, and 66.7% reported being at least slightly angry. The majority of female respondents (54.8%) also indicated being excluded solely by other females, that the behavior was perpetrated by either supervisors and/or coworkers (72.4%), and that the perpetrator(s) were older than the victim (60.2%). Furthermore, 56.6% indicated that it was necessary for them to interact frequently with the perpetrator(s).

Correlates of Perceived Exclusion

Table 1 displays the means, standard deviations, scale reliability estimates and correlations among study variables. For men, perceived

TABLE 1 Means, Standard Deviations, Reliability Estimates and Correlations among Study Variables for Men and Women.

	Men	Women	1	2	3	4	5	6
	M (SD)	M (SD)						
1. Exclude	2.03 (.61)	1.82 (.64)	(.82)	**-.55**	**-.35**	**-.59**	**.35**	-.22
2. JDISup	2.41 (.63)	2.47 (.62)	**-.38**	(.79)	**.45**	**.33**	-.14	-.02
3. JDICow	2.45 (.62)	2.54 (.58)	**-.23**	**.45**	(.80)	**.36**	-.09	.10
4. Psych. Health	4.09 (.73)	4.18 (.76)	-.13	.08	.12	(.90)	**-.36**	**.38**
5. S-E Threat	2.77(1.57)	3.38(1.96)	.13	-.14	-.08	**-.51**	(.68)	-.12
6. Disp.	2.57 (.33)	2.57 (.32)	-.10	.13	.11	**.28**	-.06	(.85)

Note. Reliability estimates are displayed in parentheses along diagonal. Correlations for males are displayed above diagonal ($N = 64$). For men, $r \geq |.25|$, $p < .05$, $r \geq |.32|$, $p < .01$. Correlations for females are displayed below diagonal ($N = 159$). For women, $r \geq |.16|$, $p < .05$, $r \geq |.21|$, $p < .01$. Exclude = Workplace Exclusion Scale , JDISup = Supervisor Satisfaction, JDICow = Coworker Satisfaction, Psych. Health = Psychological Health, S-E Threat = Self-esteem Threat, Disp. = Affective Disposition.

exclusion was negatively related to supervisor satisfaction ($r = -.55$, $p < .001$), coworker satisfaction ($r = -.35$, $p < .01$), and psychological health ($r = -.59$, $p < .001$), and positively related to self-esteem threat ($r = .35$, $p < .01$). Thus, for men, as perceived exclusion increased, supervisor satisfaction, coworker satisfaction, and psychological well-being all decreased. In addition, as self reported experiences with exclusion increased, threat to men's self-esteem increased.

For women, perceptions of being excluded were negatively related to supervisor satisfaction (r = -.38, p < .001), and coworker satisfaction (r = -.23, p < .01). No relations emerged between perceived exclusion and psychological health (r = -.13, p = .10), or self-esteem threat (r = .13, p = .10). Thus, higher levels of perceived exclusion led to low satisfaction levels but not psychological health. In addition, for women, higher levels of exclusion did not produce significant threats to one's self-esteem.

To further examine the impact of gender on work attitudes and psychological health a series of t-tests were computed using gender as the grouping variable and supervisor and coworker satisfaction, psychological health, and self-esteem threat as the outcome variables. Table 1 displays the means and standard deviations for each of the outcome variables as a function of gender. Results indicated a significant effect for exclusion, $t(221)$ = 2.16, p = .032. On average, men reported higher levels of perceived exclusion than women. In addition, overall, men reported less threat to their self-esteem than women. However, a comparison of the two independent correlation coefficients indicated that, as predicted, for men self-esteem threat was significantly related to exclusion in the predicted direction; in addition, for women, higher levels of exclusion did not produce a significant threat to self-esteem.

Moderated Hierarchical Regression Analyses

To test whether gender moderated the relationship between exclusion and outcomes, we conducted a moderated hierarchical regression analysis on work attitudes (supervisor satisfaction, coworker satisfaction) and psychological health. For each analysis we entered affective disposition in the first step as a control variable. In the second step, we entered the main effects for exclusion and gender. In the third step, we entered the interaction term between exclusion and gender. Based on recommendations by Aiken and West (1991), the exclusion variable was standardized prior to creating the interaction term and entering this term into the regression equation.

Workplace satisfaction

As displayed in Table 2, for coworker satisfaction, after controlling for affective disposition, the addition of the main effects to the regression equation accounted for a significant proportion of additional variance in coworker satisfaction, ΔR^2 = .09, p = .001. Consistent with predictions, the addition of the interaction also resulted in a significant change in R^2 (ΔR^2 = .03, p = .033). To illustrate this interaction, a low workplace exclusion group and a high workplace exclusion group were created for each gender (defined as persons scoring at least one standard deviation below and above the mean, respectively). At low levels of exclusion men

reported approximately equal levels of coworker satisfaction (M = 2.56, SD = .98) as women (M = 2.61, SD = .56). At high levels of exclusion, the difference between men (M = 1.95, SD = .76) and women (M = 2.37, SD = .59) was exacerbated. Coworker satisfaction decreased for both men and women but the regression slope for men was steeper than for women.

TABLE 2 Moderated Hierarchical Regression Results

Step	Criterion Variable Predictor	R^2	ΔR^2	B	SE B	β
	Supervisor Satisfaction					
1	Disposition	.01	.01	.04	.14	.02
2	Exclusion	.25	.24***	-.78	.15	-.81***
	Gender			-.01	.11	-.01
3	Exclusion x Gender	.28	.03*	.25	.11	.35*
	Coworker Satisfaction					
1	Disposition	.01	.01	.10	.13	.06
2	Exclusion	.10	.09**	-.53	.14	-.61***
	Gender			.01	.11	.01
3	Exclusion x Gender	.13	.03*	.22	.10	.35*
	Psychological Health					
1	Disposition	.09	.09***	.63	.18	.27***
2	Exclusion	.12	.03*	-.62	.20	-.52**
	Gender			-.07	.14	-.04
3	Exclusion x Gender	.15	.03*	.32	.14	.37*

Note. *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.

A similar pattern of findings emerged for supervisor satisfaction (see Table 2). After controlling for affective disposition, the addition of

exclusion and gender main effects accounted for a significant proportion of additional variance in supervisor satisfaction, $\Delta R^2 = .24$, $p < .001$. Overall, higher levels of exclusion were associated with lower levels of coworker satisfaction, $t = -5.35$, $p < .001$. After entering the interaction term, R^2 again significantly increased, $\Delta R^2 = .03$, $p = .02$. These results support the predicted moderating effect of gender and are similar to the results with coworker satisfaction. At lower levels of exclusion, men ($M = 2.69$, $SD = .25$) and women ($M = 2.66$, $SD = .50$) reported approximately equal levels of supervisor satisfaction; however at higher levels of exclusion men reported lower supervisor satisfaction ($M = 1.73$, $SD = .91$) than women ($M = 2.07$, $SD = .87$). Similar to the interaction effects with coworker satisfaction, results indicated that, at high levels of exclusion, the decrease in supervisor satisfaction was more pronounced for men as compared to women.

Psychological well-being

Results of the moderated hierarchical regression analysis on psychological well-being indicated that after controlling for affective disposition, the addition of the exclusion and gender main effects produced a significant increase in R^2, $\Delta R^2 = .03$, $p < .05$. This effect was driven by a significant main effect for exclusion on psychological well-being, $t = -3.19$, $p = .002$. After controlling for affective disposition, women reported higher levels of psychological well-being ($M = 4.34$, $SE = .14$) than men ($M = 4.10$, $SE = .32$). Consistent with predictions, with the addition of the interaction term, $R2$ again significantly increased, $\Delta R2 = .03$, $p = .023$. At low levels of exclusion, males reported higher levels of psychological well-being ($M = 4.85$, $SD = .65$) than women ($M = 4.32$, $SD = .74$). However, at high levels of exclusion males reported lower levels of psychological well-being ($M = 3.40$, $SD = .69$) compared to women ($M = 4.31$, $SD = 1.04$).

DISCUSSION

These findings offer preliminary evidence that the effects of exclusion are, in fact, moderated by gender. It was predicted that the impact of exclusion on work attitudes and psychological health would be moderated by gender. More specifically, higher levels of exclusion were predicted to have a stronger negative impact on work attitudes and psychological health of men compared to women. These predictions were based, in part, on the premise that males define themselves more in terms of their workplace performance as compared to women (Kimmel, 1996). Results provided support for each of these predictions. At higher levels of perceived exclusion, men reported lower levels of supervisor satisfaction, coworker satisfaction, and psychological well-being. Also

consistent with predictions, the relation between perceived exclusion and self-esteem threat was significant for men but not women. For men, higher levels of perceived exclusion were associated with higher levels of self-esteem threat. These results also bolster earlier findings suggesting that exclusion is handled differently by men and women (Kelly, 2001; Williams & Sommer, 1997).

According to Kelly (2001), men seem more apt to make external attributions for exclusion. As such, we would expect males who perceive of themselves as being excluded to be less satisfied with those thought to have perpetrated such behavior. Because the current measure of exclusion included behaviors perpetrated by both supervisors and coworkers, the current research focused on attitudes concerning these two groups. In addition, the reason that men responded more negatively to perceived exclusion, in terms of their psychological well-being, may relate to males historical tendency to define themselves more in terms of their profession and performance in the workplace (Kimmell, 1993, 1996). Thus, exclusion in this arena may be particularly salient to males and represent a stronger threat to their self-concept as compared to women.

Moreover, research indicates that during childhood and adolescence, females appear more likely to experience relational aggression by peers including being socially ostracized(Espelage, Mebane, & Swearer, 2004; Ostrov, Woods, Jansen, Casas, & Crick, 2004). Although relational aggression was not specifically examined in the current research, such behaviors could serve to inoculate females against some of the negative effects associated with such behavior.

Overall, we consider this to be a preliminary investigation aimed at determining how men and women respond to the perception that they are being excluded within their place of work. The ability of researchers to better understand how such behavior differentially impacts employees may have important implications for the success of organizations on a number of different levels. For example, at the individual level, understanding how men and women respond to perceived exclusion may allow for a better understanding of interpersonal and intergroup relations at work. At the organizational level, lower satisfaction is linked to lower perceptions of fairness, organizational justice, organizational commitment, and higher levels of intentions to leave one's organization (Aamodt, 2004). Proactive management training programs that specifically address how exclusionary behavior may impact employees along with techniques for creating an inclusive workplace may serve to create a more cohesive work environment. Although tentative, the current findings do support the notion that a person's gender does moderate the relation between perceived exclusion at work and work-related attitudes

and psychological health. Although tentative, the current findings do support the notion that a person's gender does moderate the relation between perceived exclusion at work and work-related attitudes and psychological health.

Limitations of the Current Research

While we view the current research as representing an important step to better understanding the relations among perceived exclusion, gender, and work outcomes, some limitations are worth mentioning. As with the majority of survey research, all measures were completed at a single point in time, prohibiting any firm conclusions regarding cause and effect. In addition, while producing statistically meaningful results, perceived exclusion seems to represent a low base-rate behavior that may engender social desirability responding in participants. After all, most people do not like to acknowledge the fact that they are viewed as an outcast or that their effort (if not existence) is marginalized by others. Nonetheless, even with relatively low base-rates on some items within this measure, sizable percentages of both men and women felt that they had been excluded during the past 12-months at their workplace. In addition, the sample reported being primarily Caucasian (over 90%) and working part-time. Further research in this area would benefit from examining other ethnicities and a larger sample of full time employees. Doing so would help to answer the following questions; do the results presented here generalize to participants of other ethnicities and/or cultures? How robust are the current research findings? In addition, would a similar pattern emerge among a sample of full-time employees? Also of interest would be whether differences emerge as a function of occupation.

In summary, the primary goal of the current research was to investigate if and how gender moderates the impact of perceived exclusion on work-relates attitudes and psychological health. Indeed, results support the initial hypotheses and suggest gender to be one variable worthy of study by future researchers investigating the outcomes associated with workplace exclusion. Nevertheless, there is much research that still needs to be done in this area. For example, how does personality interact with exclusion to produce work outcomes? This seems especially important for areas of selection and placement given that many managers sent on overseas assignments fail to complete their assignments (Muchinsky, 2002). One possible reason for such failure may involve managers perceiving that they are being ignored, rejected, or excluded by members of the host country. Moreover, how does workplace exclusion relate to other work attitudes and behaviors such as job satisfaction, work withdrawal, antisocial behavior, and workplace

violence? Only through continued research in this area will we be able to better understand the etiology and consequences of such behavior.

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