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Self-Confident, Inside and Out: Exploring the Antecedents of Internal and External Self-Confidence in Women Leaders

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Abstract

This study was conducted to examine levels of internal and external self-confidence in women leaders. Specifically, the purpose of this study was to explore the antecedents of self-confidence levels in women leaders, predicting that benevolent sexism would lower self-confidence through stereotype threat. 150 female leaders filled out an online survey. The results did not provide support for six out of the seven proposed hypotheses. The results found that benevolent sexism was negatively related to external self-confidence, but overall did not impact self-confidence. An exploratory analysis was conducted to further examine potential mediators and moderators in the relationship between hostile and benevolent sexism and internal and external self-confidence. Results of the exploratory analysis found stereotype threat and sensitivity to sexism as mediators and moderators in different relationships than hypothesized. Specifically, hostile sexism is related to lower levels of external self-confidence in women leaders. This has major implications for career growth and emotional strain on women leaders. Theoretical implications, practical implications, and limitations are then discussed.
Keywords: self-confidence, internal self-confidence, external self-confidence, benevolent sexism, hostile sexism, stereotype threat, anxiety, sensitivity to sexism, women, leaders
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Introduction

Women throughout history have constantly fought for their rights. While this has been going on for centuries, empowering women is finally picking up momentum. From multiple movements freeing women from the confines of their objectivity, to being on the cusp of electing the first female president, American society is finally placing much needed emphasis on female empowerment. From actresses to politicians to social media influencers, women under the watchful eye of society are paving the way for the everyday woman to feel empowered and confident in the work that they do. Because of so many outlets of self-expression, opportunities to empower oneself are unprecedented. Now more than ever, women are striving to prove themselves against the barriers society has forced on them for so long. Confidence building is being used as a means to empower women.

Evidence suggests that women do not have as much confidence as men. In the *Confidence Code* by Kay and Shipman (2014), the authors discuss that only 50% of women have high levels of self-confidence compared to 70% of men. Kay and Shipman (2014) discuss a confidence gap between men and women. The authors discuss that women do not feel as prepared for promotions or new opportunities in their careers as men do (Kay & Shipman, 2014). This is related to slower career progression than men. In their book, the *Confidence Code*, the authors discuss that men are not afraid to put themselves out there for career development. This may stem back to behaviors we developed as children. The workplace fosters behaviors that were encouraged in boys such as being resilient in
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the face of criticism. Girls, on the other hand, were constantly seeking praise for
everything they did – making good grades, being able to recite facts, the way they
dressed etc. The authors encourage putting girls into competitive sports at a young
age in order to build their resilience. However, that doesn’t help women leaders
who already have lower confidence levels in the workplace. This is why the current
study seeks to examine what drives confidence in women leaders in the workplace.
Once the reasons for lowered self-confidence levels in women leaders are
identified, we can do more to combat them. By assessing internal and external self-
confidence in women leaders, this study hopes to better target the antecedents to
lowered self-confidence levels in women leaders.

Self-confidence needs to be examined because it is related to a number of
positive outcomes such as increased well-being, motivation, performance, ability to
deal with stress, and mental health (Akerlof & Dickens, 1972; Bénabou & Tirole,
2002; Caplin & Leahy, 2001; Compte & Postlewaite, 2004; Hobfoll, 1988; Argyle,
2013). When we think of leaders, we think of confident people. We want our
leaders to be confident in the things they do and the decisions they make,
otherwise, why follow an unconfident leader? Self-confidence is linked to leader
effectiveness along with election, both in politics and in the workplace (Conger &
Kanungo 1994; Shipman & Mumford, 2011). Leaders with high self-confidence are
more likely to persuade their followers to follow their vision while leaders with low
self-confidence are more likely to coerce their followers to follow their vision
(Gamson, 1968; Kipnis & Lane, 1962). While everyone needs to feel confident in
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the workplace, the goal of this paper is to examine women leaders. Women have
worked hard to gain leadership positions in organizations only to be hindered by
the glass ceiling or the glass cliff (Sabharwal, 2013). Women in leadership
positions have consistently shown lower levels of confidence than men in
leadership (Gill & Orgad, 2015; Lenney, 1977). These results suggest that women
frequently feel out of place in higher level positions, but they don’t imply that
women are not effective leaders. In fact, a 2012 study in Harvard Business Review
revealed that women are rated higher in leadership effectiveness than men (Zenger
& Folkman, 2012). This suggests that women’s general lack of self-confidence may
be misplaced. In fact, Flynn, Heath, and Holt (2011) report that about 50% of
women reported feelings of self-doubt about their performance compared to 31% of
men.

Flynn and colleagues (2011) suggest that women should work more on
changing the behaviors they engage in on a daily basis rather than job skills. The
authors convey that the skill is there for women and minor tweaks in their daily
behaviors can go a long way in terms of increasing their self-confidence. Given that
self-confidence is a barrier to a woman’s success in the workplace, the purpose of
this study is to gain a better understanding of self-confidence in the workplace.
Self-confidence as a construct has been examined very little in previous I/O
research. Although the popular press writes about women’s self-confidence as a
barrier to their career progression (Kay & Shipman, 2014), there is very little
empirical research that examines this topic. Furthermore, there is not one agreed
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upon definition and conceptualization of self-confidence as a construct. Some
studies define it as self-esteem (e.g., Goldsmith, 2009), some define it as self-
efficacy (e.g., Flynn et al., 2011), and many do not define it at all (e.g., Ibarra, Ely,
& Kolb, 2013). This study thus explores the antecedents to lowered levels of self-
confidence in women leaders using a conceptualization that defines internal and
external self-confidence developed by Perkins (2018). An antecedent this study
aims to explore is sexism.

Sexism is defined as the intolerance, judgment, or typecasting of the
opposite sex, and more specifically, bias toward women (Dardenne, Dumont &
Bollier, 2007). Gender stereotypes prescribe how men and women are supposed to
behave. Women, according to gender norms, are supposed to engage in communal,
relational behaviors, such as demonstrating affection, sympathy, and helpfulness. In
contrast, men are expected to engage in behaviors which reflect agency, or
individualistic characteristics, such as confidence, aggression, and ambition (e.g.,
Eagly, 1987). Women are expected be to cooperative and peaceful in their
communication style while men are expected to be independent, assertive and
competitive in their communication and decision-making style (Nelson & Brown,
2012).

The research on sexism originally began with measuring sexism in an overt
manner, where an individual holds blatant feelings of superiority towards women.
Covert sexism was then introduced to identify forms of subtle sexism (Swim &
Cohen, 1997). Covert sexism occurs when individuals explicitly state the belief that
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men and women are equal but behave in a manner that contradicts the statement.

Ambivalent sexism was introduced as a modern view of sexism that consists of both overt and covert forms of sexism titled as hostile and benevolent sexism, respectively (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Hostile sexism is the overt belief that women are less superior than men. Benevolent sexism, on the other had is the covert belief that women are less superior but is portrayed through niceties such as women need to be cherished and therefore need help with doing things that men should do. Benevolent and hostile sexism can lead women to feel differently in regards to self-confidence (Dardenne et al., 2007; Glick & Fiske, 1996). Based on social role theory, I suggest that perceptions of ambivalent sexism, specifically those of benevolent sexism, will lead to lower levels of self-confidence in women leaders, caused by stereotype threat.

Stereotype threat occurs when an individual in a certain social group worries that others may define them through negative stereotypes of their social group. An example of a stereotype that is faced by women leaders is that women are not effective leaders because they are ruled by their emotions. Women experiencing sexism are likely to have lower levels of self-confidence, particularly when they believe they are falling into a negative stereotype towards women. That fear of falling within a specific stereotype may instill anxiety within the woman experiencing sexism, ultimately, leading to lower levels of self-confidence. When women leaders are worried about being categorized as inferior or falling into the stereotype that women are inferior – their self-confidence will be more likely to be
SELF-CONFIDENT INSIDE AND OUT: EXPLORING THE ANTECEDENTS affected (Dardenne et al., 2007; Jost & Kay, 2005). This sexist portrayal of the emotional instability of women amplifies the potential of stereotype threat, ultimately reducing their self-confidence in their abilities.

The purpose of this study is to examine self-confidence in women leaders. Specifically, based on social identity theory, I predict that women who experience covert, benevolent sexism in the workplace will have lower levels of self-confidence and that this works through stereotype threat.
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Review of the Literature

Self-Confidence

Self-confidence has always shown up in different forms of rhetoric throughout history (Bénabou & Tirole, 2002). William James inadvertently defined self-confidence in his book, *The Principles of Psychology*, as a person believing in his/her own needs and it is solely by believing in his/her own needs that those needs are satisfied, a person must trust that he/she is able to be successful in their endeavors and he/she must brace himself/herself to reach their goals. (James, 1890). In that same year, Dr. Frederick Needham, unprecedently made a link between self-confidence and mental health when he addressed increasing self-confidence in mental health patients to facilitate their recoveries (Needham, 1980). Throughout history, self-confidence has been used interchangeably between self-efficacy and self-esteem (Perkins, 2018). Abraham Maslow included it in his definition of self-actualization stating that you needed to have your lower needs of survival, safety, love and belonging met before you reached a state of self-actualization (Maslow, 1943).

Self-confidence is defined as an individual’s perception of the competence, skill, and ability they need to successfully maneuver diverse situations (Shrauger & Schohn, 1995). Thus, self-confidence is often referred to as a self-evaluation or self-related attitude. Previous research on self-confidence focuses on defining it as one’s belief in completing a task, self-trust, and belief in performing to a certain standard (Feltz, 1988; Lee & Moray, 1994; Woodman & Hardy, 2003). Self-
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certainty has been operationalized through self-esteem and self-efficacy.
Believing in oneself (self-esteem) and one’s capabilities (self-efficacy) can
motivate an individual to take on more projects or work to further reach their goals,
in other words, demonstrate self-confidence (Bénabou & Tirole, 2002).
One approach to defining self-confidence suggests that it consists of three
components; a behavioral component, an affective component, and a cognitive
component (Shrauger & Schohn, 1995). The behavioral component relates to self-
efficacy or how a person perceives their ability to accomplish a task. The affective
component pertains to feelings associated with self-confidence (i.e., a sense of ease,
eagerness, and an absence of anxiety or uneasiness). The cognitive component of
self-confidence focuses on perceptions and comparisons (i.e., does this person
believe they are performing to the best of their ability, how does this person think
they are performing compared to their peers, etc.). Shrauger and Schohn (1995)
emphasize the cognitive component because when an individual is self-confident,
he or she is more likely to perform well and meet his or her goals in comparison to
others. A study conducted by Canter (2008) examined academic self-confidence
using Shrauger and Schohn’s (1995) definition of self-confidence and found that
while males have lower GPAs, they have higher levels of academic self-confidence
in comparison to women, who have higher GPAs but lower levels of academic self-
confidence.
Self-confidence has clear benefits in the workplace such as promotions or
hiring decisions (Guillén, Mayo, & Karelaia, 2016). Furthermore, individuals that
SELF-CONFIDENT INSIDE AND OUT: EXPLORING THE ANTECEDENTS appear more confident in the workplace are also perceived as being more “trustworthy, reliable, and influential” (Guillén et al., 2016, p.3). Individuals high in self-confidence are viewed as more effective leaders; self-confidence increases a follower’s willingness to work toward the leader’s goals (Shipman & Mumford, 2011). Followers are also more likely to follow leaders who are self-confident. This action in turn is related to higher levels of confidence in leaders (Shipman & Mumford, 2011). Individuals high in self-confidence engage in higher-level learning opportunities and thus develop into more effective leaders (Murphy & Johnson 2016).

Perkins (2018) differentiated self-confidence into two components – internal self-confidence and external self-confidence. Internal self-confidence, how confident individuals feel, is based on the self-trust literature and includes three subcomponents – self-esteem, self-efficacy, and self-compassion. External self-confidence, how confident an individual is perceived, consists of five subcomponents, affectivity, taking action, nonverbal communication, verbal communication, independence, and decisiveness.

Internal self-confidence.

A new theory of self-confidence positions it as a form of self-trust, based on Mayer, Shoorman, and Davis’ (1995) theory of trust. Perkins (2018) described self-confidence to be, at its core, self-trust. Self-trust is the ability to place trust in yourself. The difference between trust and self-trust is that trust typically involves two parties; the trustor and the trustee. In this relationship, the trustor puts
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themselves in a vulnerable position to the behavior of the trustee with the belief
that the trustee will behave in a way that is important to the trustor (Mayer et al.,
1995). In self-trust, the trustor and the trustee are the same person, thus, an
individual is being vulnerable with themselves. Self-trust is consistent with internal
self-confidence because both can be defined as “willingness of an individual to be
vulnerable towards themselves – to take an action that benefits themselves despite
the risk in doing so” (Perkins, 2018, p. 43). Self-trust consists of three beliefs:
belief in one’s capabilities, belief in one’s principles, and a compassionate belief in
oneself. These three beliefs fall in line with the behavioral, affective, and cognitive
components of self-confidence, respectively.

Perkins (2018) established a self-trust feedback loop where self-trust is
influenced by self-efficacy, self-esteem, and self-compassion which influences how
much risk you will endure to get a desired outcome. The result of the outcome will
then feedback to influence self-efficacy, self-esteem, and self-trust as it will
increase or decrease levels of the three based on whether or not the outcome was
satisfactory. The components of internal self-confidence are also influenced by how
much optimism an individual has in obtaining a desired outcome and risk taking,
how much risk and individual perceives in meeting an outcome.

Self-esteem.

Self-Esteem, at its core, is an affect heavy self-evaluation that makes up a
third of internal self-confidence (Orth & Robins, 2014). Self-esteem can be
separated into trait and state self-esteem (MacDonald & Leary, 2012). Trait self-
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Esteem refers to how an individual generally feels about themselves. State self-esteem, on the other hand, refers to momentary feeling of self-worth. Rosenberg (1989) best defined having high self-esteem as “the individual respects himself, considers himself worthy; he does not necessarily consider himself better than others, but he definitely does not consider himself worse; he does not feel that he is the ultimate in perfection but, on the contrary, recognizes his limitations and expects to grow and improve. Low self-esteem, on the other hand, implies self-rejection, self-dissatisfaction, self-contempt. The individual lacks respect for the self he observes” (Rosenberg, 1989, p.31). Self-esteem has indeed been linked to levels of self-confidence; athletes with lower levels of self-esteem have lower levels of self-confidence in the sports they play (Koivula, Hassmén, & Fallby, 2001).

*Self-efficacy.*

Self-Efficacy acts as the behavioral component of self-confidence (Perkins, 2018). Self-efficacy can be defined as a motivation theory that links the belief an individual has in their ability to achieve a desired outcome with persistence toward that outcome (Bandura, 1977). Self-efficacy refers to how an individual thinks, feels, and motivates themselves to act in a particular situation (Bandura, 1994). A stronger sense of accomplishment and well-being are the result of higher levels of self-efficacy. Since self-efficacy is a behavioral component, having high self-efficacy allows an individual to recover from mistakes or setbacks, further strengthening self-confidence. People who believe in their capability to accomplish...
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a task or meet a goal will perceive more difficult tasks or goals as challenges to overcome rather than threats. The individuals will then set goals to meet the new goal or outcome. Self-efficacy thus further aids an individual in quickly overcoming failures or setbacks by allowing an individual to attribute failure to acquirable skills such as insufficient knowledge or effort.

Self-compassion.

Self-Compassion acts as the final third and cognitive component of self-efficacy (Perkins, 2018). Self-compassion is the process of an individual of being affected by and being exposed to their own pain, not sidestepping or disengaging from it, and producing the yearning to improve their own pain by healing themselves with kind-heartedness (Neff, 2003). Neff (2003) asserts that self-compassion consists of three components; self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness. Self-kindness is being kind to oneself instead of harshly judging or criticizing oneself. Common humanity refers to an individual being able to see their own actions as “a part of the human experience” rather than seeing them as unique to the individual (p. 89). Mindfulness consists of an individual having a balanced view on his/her own shortcomings or negative thoughts and experiences to prevent one from internalizing them too harshly. Oftentimes, individuals are depicted as self-interested or selfish but this theory states the contrary. Self-compassion emphasizes that an individual is harsher on themselves and his/her own shortcomings than he/she is on others. The notion of self-compassion reflects a kinder approach to judgements about the self. Self-compassion can thus serve as a
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buffer for failures if an individual practices self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness (Leary, Tate, Adams, Batts, & Hancock, 2007). Previous research conducted by Neff and colleagues indicates that in terms of goal adoption, being high in self-compassion led to stronger feelings of self-confidence (Neff, Hsieh, & Dejitterat, 2005).

**External self-confidence.**

External self-confidence is the perception others have of how confident an individual is (Perkins, 2018). In other words, external self-confidence has to do with the confidence cues displayed by an individual in a public context. These contextual cues include affectivity, taking action, nonverbal communication, verbal communication, independence, and decisiveness. Affectivity is portrayed through how optimistic or comfortable an individual seems in a situation. Taking action is depicted through signs of initiative and how eager an individual is to complete a task (Perkins, 2018). Past research also supports that individuals who take action in various situations report higher levels of self-confidence (Baum, MacDougall, & Smith, 2006). Nonverbal communication is interpreted through body language (i.e. eye contact, gestures, etc.) (Perkins, 2018). Verbal communication is portrayed through speech patterns. Research supports that individuals with weak speaking skills are perceived as less self-confidence than others (Von Tiling, 2011). Independence is depicted through an individual’s ability to do a task or make a decision without worrying about what other people will think (Perkins, 2018). Decisiveness is interpreted through how certain an individual seems in their
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decision. Previous research supports the positive relationship between decisiveness
and self-confidence (Lorber & Savić, 2011).

**Women and Confidence**

Women in the workplace struggle with their confidence far more than men
(O’Neil, Hopkins, & Bilimoria, 2015). There is a need for women in leadership
roles to be well liked in order to be perceived as competent and confident, while
men can be perceived as being competent and confident without being well liked
(Guillén et al., 2016). For a long time, the leadership positions in the workplace
have been more nurturing for men only, leaving women to feel less confident in
terms of thinking about applying for leadership positions and being leaders
themselves (O’Neil et al., 2015). This may be because leadership positions require
agentic qualities that are more stereotyped towards men such as dominance,
confidence, insistence, levelheadedness, individuality, and certainty (Eklund,
Barry, & Grunberg, 2017). Women, holding more communal traits, feel like they
are at a disadvantage. This in turn affects their self-confidence because their
colleagues and subordinates like them but they do not view them as competent
leaders (Catalyst, 2018). Women who hold more agentic traits, however, are seen
as competent leaders but are not well liked by their colleagues and subordinates.
This creates a double-bind for women in the workplace because women will never
be portrayed as competent and likable – it is one or the other.

Flynn and colleagues (2011) recognized four leadership behaviors women
engage in that lower self-confidence. The first is being overly modest – male
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Leaders will publicly take credit for their victories while women hold the belief that their victories should “speak for themselves” (Flynn et al., 2011). Women are naturally to not as open about their accomplishments leading their accomplishments to go unnoticed by their superiors, peers, subordinates, and clients. The second is not asking – women will be passed up for promotions because they do not apply. Women feel this is a risky move and do not ask for various reasons. The third behavior is blending in – Flynn and colleagues discuss that a lot of women do not like attention so they will go out of their way to blend in at board meetings. However, this means that women are missing opportunities to speak out and stand out amongst their peers. The final behavior is remaining silent. Women often do not speak up when they have valuable things to contribute to the conversation. Women must speak up to contribute to the conversation, it is essential for career development.

A study by Babcock, Laschever, Gelfand, and Small (2003) provides further support for why women leaders do not have as much confidence as male leaders. Findings across three separate studies demonstrate that men are more likely to negotiate what they want over women. This may be because from an early age, women are taught to not go after what they want and to put the needs of others over their own needs. After being taught at a young age by parents, teachers, and all of society, this message has long been internalized by women to the point where they do not realize that this is something they do. Males, on the other hand, were taught at a young age to ask for what they want making, them naturally more likely to go
SELF-CONFIDENT INSIDE AND OUT: EXPLORING THE ANTECEDENTS after the things they want. Women must not just assume that they will be recognized for their efforts they must speak out about their efforts and ask for what they want. But sometimes, even if women do ask for what they want – they may still be reprimanded for it. Some companies have company cultures that penalize women for asking for what they want, labeling women who engage in self-promoting behaviors in the workplace and too pushy or rude. This, in turn, may lead to these women to be ostracized from important meetings and information. This behavior happens naturally, without people realizing, because society has deep-seated expectations about women and how they should behave in the workplace. All this results in males naturally taking charge and being praised for it. This even happens in organizations that make an effort to treat all of their employees equally. Managers who aim to treat their employees equally may “give women a smaller piece of the pie” because they give all of their employees what they ask for – in this case, women are not asking for nearly as much as men (Babcock et al., 2003).

**Perceptions of Benevolent and Hostile Sexism**

Sexism is a concept that involves bias against a specific gender (Glick & Fiske, 1996). This form of bias involves perceptions on how the relationship and communication should be between men and women, and predominately indicates that men are more superior than women (Dardenne et al., 2007). Sexism may be present in a variety of situations ranging from home experiences to workplace experiences (Swim, Hyers, Cohen, & Ferguson, 2001). Due to the explicit
SELF-CONFIDENT INSIDE AND OUT: EXPLORING THE ANTECEDENTS conceptions of sexism, it was initially measured as an overt construct. Overt sexism is the blatant bias against another gender (Spence, Helmreich, & Stapp, 1973). In 1972, Spence and Helmreich developed a scale to identify overt sexism towards women.

A new construct and scale were introduced to explain modern sexism which includes subtle sexism and covert sexism. Subtle sexism is defined as the mistreatment of a specific gender that passes unnoticed because it is mistaken for normal behavior (Swim & Cohen, 1997). An example of subtle sexism would be contemplating whether or not your gender impacts evaluations received on the job (Brake, 2007) For instance, during a performance evaluation would be if a woman was asked the question of “How do you think your gender affects the way people perceive you?” This is considered subtle sexist language because the perpetrator’s use of this question instigates the idea that the female recipient is faced with a special difficulty of being evaluated because of her gender rather than her skill. Covert sexism, on the other hand, is characterized as the mistreatment of a certain gender through a secret manner. An example of covert sexism would be stating that an individual believes in equality of genders but then behaves in a manner that contradicts his purported ideology.

Ambivalent sexism is another approach to modern sexism and includes two constructs; hostile sexism and benevolent sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Hostile sexism and benevolent sexism are forms of gender bias that affect women in the workplace. Hostile sexism is best defined as the more outwardly displayed sexism;
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the blatant antipathy towards the opposite gender (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Hostile sexism is used to substantiate male power, classic gender roles, and exploit women as sexual objects through derogatory labels of women by men (Glick & Fiske, 1997). Previous research suggests that hostile sexism is akin to holding negative stereotypes and judgements about women along with unfair classic gender role norms (Chen, Fiske, & Lee, 2009; Glick & Fiske, 1996; Glick et al., 2000; Masser & Abrams, 2004). Essentially, previous research on hostile sexism has found that hostile sexists think negatively about women and judge them harsher than they would men (Hideg & Ferris, 2016). Hostile sexism is characterized by having a belief in masculine dominance and perceiving women as inferior (Begany & Milburn, 2002). Benevolent sexism, on the other hand, places confidence in nicer and softer excuses for believing in male dominance and classic gender roles. Unlike hostile sexism, benevolent sexism acknowledges a man’s dependence upon a woman and upholds an overly romanticized outlook on a sexual relationship with a woman (Glick & Fiske, 1997). An example of this type of sexism includes the belief that women are soft and it is a man’s duty to protect them. Women in turn have characteristics that men do not such as being mindful of other peoples’ feelings, but they do not have the characteristics to lead or govern. It is because of this that men need to take care of women. Previous research suggests that there is a positive relationship between benevolent sexism and positive stereotypes and judgements towards women (Hideg & Ferris, 2016).
Benevolent sexism seems positive but in reality, it endorses patronizing attitudes about women (Barreto & Ellemer, 2005). Benevolent sexism is very subtle, women may not realize they are experiencing benevolent sexism due to its nonthreatening manner (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Benevolent sexism is made up of three factors: protective paternalism – believing that women need to be protected by men, complementary gender differentiation – believing that women generally have more domestic qualities while men do not, and heterosexual intimacy – believing that a woman is there to fill the romantic needs of a man. Research supports that benevolent sexism is commonly overlooked as a form of bias in today’s society, due to its positive nature, making it more common than hostile sexism (Connelly & Heesacker, 2012; Jones et al., 2014).

Benevolent sexism impacts women in a nontypical manner. Due to the notion that women need to be protected, benevolent sexism prevents women from facing challenges that are crucial to their workplace development. A study by King et al. (2012) found that men and women wanted to experience challenges equally in their developmental work experiences but men reported more challenging experiences and more negative feedback than women. Women, on the other hand, were less likely to be assigned developmental work experiences, and received less feedback, negatively impacting their professional development. This may cause women to feel less confident in the workplace because they do not have enough exposure to challenges, leading them to feel unprepared when facing challenges in their work.
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Women may also be easily manipulated by benevolent sexism due to the indirect nature of benevolent sexism. A study conducted by Becker and Wright (2011) found that women who experienced benevolent sexism were less likely to collectively work with other women to overcome sexist barriers in the workplace. This was not the case with women who experienced hostile sexism, however. Women who experienced hostile sexism were more likely to work collectively with other women in the workplace to overcome the blatant sexist barriers. It was found that women who experienced benevolent sexism in the workplace had increased feeling of gender-specific system justification, meaning that women believed they possessed a certain amount of gender-specific strengths and weaknesses that they could use to progress in an organization. In other words, in situations of benevolent sexism, women are less likely to work together to foster improvements, due in part to the implications associated with benevolent sexism that their feminine characteristics are valued. The problem is that these feminine characteristics are typically associated with communal behaviors and jobs rather than leadership positions.

Previous research states that women who experience benevolent sexism in the workplace have lower levels of cognitive performance (Dardenne et al., 2007). Dardenne and colleagues (2007) conducted four studies to examine the effects of benevolent and hostile sexism on cognitive performance. They found that women who experience benevolent sexism have lower performance than women who experience hostile sexism. Jones and colleagues (2014) conducted a study that
SELF-CONFIDENT INSIDE AND OUT: EXPLORING THE ANTECEDENTS examine the role of self-efficacy on the relationship between benevolent sexism and performance. It was found that self-efficacy mediated the relationship between gender bias and workplace performance. Specifically, this relationship indicated that when a woman experiences benevolent sexism, her self-efficacy decreases, leading to poorer performance (Jones, et al., 2014). This may be because when benevolent sexism is experienced by women in the workplace, it is internalized and is related to mental intrusions, such as distress, allowing women to believe they are not capable of performing competently, ultimately leading to worsened workplace performance.

**Social Role Theory.**

Social role theory is defined as the “social perceivers’ beliefs about social groups in their society derive from their experiences with group members in their typical social roles—that is, in roles in which these group members are overrepresented relative to their numbers in the general population” (Koenig & Eagly, 2014, p. 371-372). This theory can be explained through a model that describes sex differences and similarities through biosocial processes (Eagly & Wood, 2011). The model begins with blatant sex difference between men and women by discussing the origins of male and female sex differences – reproductive differences for women and size and strength for men. Reproductive differences have allowed women to focus on nurturing and caring for children while size and strength have allowed men to become the hunters, providing sustenance for others. This ultimately is related to a division of labor based off of each gender’s
SELF-CONFIDENT INSIDE AND OUT: EXPLORING THE ANTECEDENTS strengths. Based on the type of economy, social structure, and ecology of a group, this division of labor is engrained in social structures (Eagly & Wood, 2011).

Gender roles are then influenced by the division of labor. Women are seen as being homemakers (with communal traits) whereas men are seen as breadwinners (with agentic traits) (2011). It is very important to note that people who believe in these gender roles support them through the physical differences between men and women. The socialization process of children is then enacted which creates a loop between gender roles and division of labor. Young children are nurtured to develop traits that are consistent with their gender role (2011).

Gender role beliefs are further influenced by hormonal regulation, social regulation, and self-regulation. Hormones that are released to a man or a woman’s body support gender roles. Males release higher levels of testosterone, facilitating with agentic behaviors and masculine gender roles. Women release higher levels of oxytocin, facilitating communal behaviors, and feminine gender roles. Self-regulation is impacted by gender roles due to how men or women internalize gender roles. That is, men and women differ in how they implement gender roles. Men and women use gender roles to identify and manage their behavior in situations. Men and women are typically rewarded for conforming to gender roles, yet men and women may deviate from gender roles when the benefits outweigh the costs (2011). For example, women may take on more agentic leadership positions in the workplace that are typically awarded to men if it means further career development. Hormone regulations, self-regulation, and social regulation in turn
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effect gender differences in affect, cognition, and behavior. This final stage in the
model discusses how men and women typically behave in ways that are more
congruent to their gender roles. Behavior variation occurs between men and women
in the same profession. For instance, male vs. female physicians that need to obtain
information from patients – women are known for doing this more communally
than men (2011).

Social role theory posits that benevolent and hostile sexism are both just as
likely to hinder a woman’s progress in an organization through Human Resources
policies and decisions (Stamarski & Son Hing, 2015). Women are perceived as
being better suited for lower-authority roles than higher authority roles by
benevolent sexists. This is reasoned to be because benevolent sexists characterize
women with communal traits while characterizing men with agentic traits, leading
them to promote men to higher-authority positions over women. This is different
from hostile sexism which views women as being less than men, leading to blatant
discrimination and resulting in a lack of promotional opportunities. Furthermore,
benevolent sexism sends women mixed messages in an organization based on
social role theory. Supervisors who are benevolently sexist will give women more
positive feedback in performance appraisals but will ultimately give them lower
scores and fewer opportunities than men. This goes along with the benevolent
sexist view of the need to protect women from negative criticism, leading women
to reach career plateaus. Hostile sexism, on the other hand will cause decision
makers in organizations to be more tolerant of harassment behavior against women.
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Due to the blatant assumption that women are not as good as men, hostile sexists are more likely to tolerate sexist jokes made against women as well as claims of incivility made by women.

Because benevolent sexism is so subtle, the praise it outwardly portrays ignites mixed feelings within women that ultimately lead women to question their abilities, brought upon by social role theory. For example, Tina is a female leader who is passed up for a tough negotiation with a big client. This negotiation is instead given to Tina’s male colleague. While Tina is happy that she does not have to deal with a hard client, she also begins questioning whether or not her leadership skills are where they need to be for someone in her position. When women question their capabilities, they may develop lower levels of self-esteem and higher levels of self-doubt. Once Tina begins questioning her abilities, it heightens feelings of self-doubt. Tina is now questioning every leadership decision she needs to make. Tina then wonders if the decision she makes is the “right” decision to make. These feelings will in turn distract her from her work tasks, thus, leading to lower levels in performance. Therefore, when Tina constantly questions her decisions, she will feel less confident in her decision making, and ultimately her internal self-confidence in general could decline. Others will notice Tina’s lack of ability to trust her decisions based off of the behavioral cues she is portraying. Tina may ask her peers more questions, outwardly hesitate before answering a direct question, or mumble when dealing with important matters which will portray lower levels of external self-confidence.
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Benevolent sexism is predicted to act differently from hostile sexism because of its subtle nature (Dardenne et al., 2007). Those individuals that are more prone to identifying stereotype threat (i.e., more sensitive to sexism) are more likely to label events as sexist – thus, experiencing stereotype threat, which in turn may lower self-confidence. Because benevolent sexism is more subtle and harder to notice given its niceties, women who are more sensitive to sexism will ultimately feel more triggered by it (2007). This trigger will cause them to worry they will fall into a stereotype as opposed to angering them like hostile sexism. This is solely attributed to benevolent sexism over hostile sexism due to the subtle way benevolent sexism suggests incompetence in women whilst providing ambivalent feelings towards women given the praise it is delivered through – rather than angering women (like hostile sexism would), it causes women to doubt themselves (2007). Women in turn will ruminate on experiences of benevolent sexism rather than combating it like they would hostile sexism.

In sum, benevolent sexism, which ignites the incongruence between gender roles brought upon by social role theory, may subtly instigate feelings of inferiority in women leaders because they feel like they do not belong in stereotypical male roles. This, in turn, will impact how confident women leaders feel in their own abilities and what confidence cues they portray on the job. Thus, I predict that benevolent sexism will lead to lower levels of internal self-confidence and lower levels of external self-confidence. Specifically:
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H1: Benevolent sexism will be negatively-related to lower levels of internal self-confidence

H2: Benevolent sexism will be negatively-related to lower levels of external self-confidence

On the other hand, women who experience hostile sexism will be motivated to combat it due to its blatant nature, leading them to pursue challenges that may promote higher levels of self-confidence. Due to its overt nature, hostile sexism will not invade the thought process, but rather it could lead to more combative behavior. For example, if Tina is told that she is passed up for a promotion at work because she is a woman. Tina is more likely to want to prove that women are just as capable for promotions as men are. Tina will allow the sexist comment to boost her self-perception and cause her to truly believe that she is capable of proving her sexist co-worker wrong. This will build Tina’s internal self-confidence. Tina’s efforts will then be noticed by others due to the behavioral cues that she may portray such as speaking clearly and effectively, appearing more comfortable in situations, or taking on more responsibility which will depict higher levels of self-confidence.

Hostile sexism is predicting differently from benevolent sexism because it triggers reactance theory (Dardenne et al., 2007). Reactance theory posits that when an individual deems something as unfair, an unpleasant feeling of reactance is elicited within that individual (Brehm, 1966). Reactance acts as a motivational state that allows a person to feel that they have to do something to get around the
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tion he/she deemed unfair. Reactance is triggered by anger thus, acting as a
fuel for individuals experiencing hostile sexism. In terms of hostile sexism, the
hostile sexist event would be identified as unfair causing hostile sexism to be the
qualification for triggering reactance theory ultimately eliciting anger that
motivates an individual to react.

Due to its blatant nature, when women experience hostile sexism, it ignites
a fire within women that is related to working harder. This, in turn, relates to an
increase in how confident women are in their abilities and their portrayal of that
confidence on the job. Thus, I predict that hostile sexism will lead to higher levels
of internal self-confidence and higher levels of external self-confidence.
Specifically:

H3: Hostile sexism will be positively-related to higher levels of internal
self-confidence.

H4: Hostile sexism will be positively-related to higher levels of external
self-confidence

Stereotype Threat

Stereotype threat is a phenomenon that occurs when individuals of a certain
social group are worried that people outside of their social group will categorize
them with the common negative stereotype held by their social group (Hoyt &
Murphy, 2016; Steele, 1997; von Hippel, Sekaquaptewa, & McFarlene, 2015b).
Stereotype threat theory suggests individuals worry they will confirm a negative
 stereotype and this anxiety will impact task performance (Hoyt & Murphy, 2016).
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A common stereotype that women fall into is that women are bad at math. Just by being told that a woman is bad at math makes her more likely to fall into that stereotype (Reyna, 2000), yet it is clear women in general are no worse at math than men (Bridgeman & Wendler, 1991). Still, women who are told that women are bad at math consistently drop out of math classes (Shih, Pittinsky, & Ambady, 1999). Kalokerinos and colleagues (2014) proposed that stereotype threat is enabled when an individual is concerned with being stereotyped against. Stereotype threat comes in two forms; acute and chronic (Kalokerinos, von Hippel, and Zacher, 2014). Acute stereotype threat is associated with facing stereotype threat directly after being reminded of a stereotype. Shih and colleagues (1999) found that women perform worse on math exams after being reminded that women are bad at math, supporting acute stereotype threat. Chronic stereotype threat is dealing with stereotype threat on an everyday basis. Von Hippel and colleagues found that older employees in the workplace face chronic stereotype threat as they face the fact that they are not presented with the same opportunities young employees are. This is related to older employees questioning their own competence at work (von Hippel, Kalokerinos, & Henry, 2013).

Previous research suggests that fear that individuals will fall into a stereotype can lead to a self-fulfilling prophesy (von Hippel, et al., 2015b). This is due to the internalization of the stereotype on one’s identity and subsequently enacting it (Davies, Spencer, & Steele, 2005). Stereotype threat can be broken down into prescriptive and descriptive stereotypes. Prescriptive stereotypes are
stereotypes that specify how men and women should behave, whereas, descriptive stereotypes are the way that men and women actually behave (Rudman & Glick, 2001). Stereotype threat essentially occurs when there is an incongruence between the two. Men and women may be punished when there is an incongruence between how they behave and how they, “ought to,” behave. Stereotype threat is known to lead to a myriad of consequences such as stress, decreased performance, disengagement, and change in goals (Shapiro & Neuberg, 2007). Specifically, consequences associated with acute stereotypes are geared towards performance deficiencies, while, consequences associated with chronic stereotypes are geared towards performance disengagement (Kalokerinos et al., 2014).

A common stereotype faced by women in the workplace is that they are not able to perform as well as men in leadership positions (Flanagan, 2015). Women are commonly at a disadvantage in male-dominated fields and are often perceived as less capable compared to men (Davies, et al., 2005). When stereotypical perceptions of women are combined with the male stereotyping of leadership positions, they increase perceptions of lack of fit for women in these leadership positions (Bergeron, Block, & Echtenkamp, 2006). This bias arises when perceivers expect individuals of a certain gender to behave in a way that goes along with their respective gender. Thus, when individuals being stereotyped against do not act in a way that is stereotypical of their gender, bias ensues. This can cause the individuals who are being stereotyped against to feel lowered self-esteem and self-confidence (Kidder, 2001). Due to being perceived as less competent, these women
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are less likely to ask for feedback in the workplace because they believe it will confirm the less competent stereotype (Kalokerinos et al., 2014).

Leadership positions exemplify agentic traits such as urgency, confidence, and resilience, these traits are most commonly associated with men (Hoyt & Murphy, 2016). A common prescriptive stereotype for women in leadership positions is that they should have communal traits (Rudman & Glick, 2001). Communal traits are traits such as kindness, being thoughtful, being sensitive to the feelings of others. Communal traits are those that are associated with caring for others (Kidder, 2001). A descriptive stereotype for women leaders would be women that are more aligned to portray agentic traits. Agentic traits are thus, better associated with leaders (Kidder, 2001). This creates a double-bind for women as women that are highly communal are liked by their subordinates but are not respected, while highly agentic women are respected by their subordinates but are not necessarily liked (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Rudman & Glick, 2001). Professional identities may be created to better deal with the perceived threat (Kalokerinos et al., 2014). Women may put on a persona at work that will satisfy their professional needs but this persona may not be who they are outside of work. While this sounds like a healthy way of dealing with stereotype threat, it is full of consequences such as negative job attitudes, depression, and lowered life satisfaction. Dardenne and colleagues (2007) found that benevolent sexism works similar to stereotype threat as it induces the same consequences for performance in women leaders. A series of studies conducted by Logel and colleagues (2009) found that female engineering
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students who experience sexist behavior from their male classmates perform worse on engineering exams because they fear they are falling into a negative stereotype (Logel et al., 2009).

As it relates to the Tina example: experiencing benevolent sexism will trigger Tina’s fear of falling into a negative stereotype. Tina will ruminate more because her male colleague was picked over her to negotiate with a big client. Because of her fear of falling into a negative stereotype, Tina will act in accordance with self-fulfilling prophecy where she will engage in behaviors that she believes negatively portray women. This will relate to Tina feeling less confident in her abilities such as feeling like she cannot achieve her goals. Tina will also portray characteristics that go along with lower levels of self-confidence such as needing constant approval from others.

In sum, experiencing a benevolently sexist event will trigger the fear of falling into a negative stereotype, will lead women to portray behaviors that will lower how confident they feel and the confidence cues they portray on the job. Thus, stereotype threat will explain the negative relationship between benevolent sexism and internal and external self-confidence. Specifically:

H5: Stereotype threat mediates the negatively-related relationship between benevolent sexism and internal self-confidence such that the relationship will be stronger for those perceiving stereotype threat in the workplace.
H6: Stereotype threat mediates the negatively-related relationship between benevolent sexism and external self-confidence such that the relationship will be stronger for those perceiving stereotype threat in the workplace.

**Sensitivity to Sexism**

Sensitivity to sexism is defined as the degree to which women notice or identify that the events or situations that occur to themselves and others are due to sexism (Stangor, Sechrist, & Swim, 1999). Consequently, women with higher levels of sensitivity to sexism are more likely to label events as sexist or perceive stereotype threat. Three factors influence sensitivity to sexism; “the extent to which the event fits a prototypical image or schema of a discriminatory event, the immediate costs and benefits of labeling an event as discriminatory, such as protecting one’s self-esteem or losing a sense of control, and the target of the discrimination” (Stangor et al., 1999, p. 251). Women have a lower likelihood of not reporting sexism when they believe it is being inflicted on themselves compared to when they see it being inflicted on others. Furthermore, some women who are more stigma conscious are more prone to perceiving an event as sexist or discriminatory.

This study examines sensitivity to sexism as a moderator between the relationship between perceived gender bias and stereotype threat. Sensitivity to sexism is predicted to further strengthen the relationship between benevolent sexism and stereotype threat. Specifically:
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H7: Sensitivity to sexism will moderate the mediated relationship between benevolent sexism and stereotype threat such that the relationship will be stronger for those who are more sensitive to sexism.

Furthermore, this study will conduct an exploratory analysis to examine sensitivity to sexism as a moderator in the relationship between hostile sexism and internal and external self-confidence. Sensitivity to sexism is predicted to increase internal and external self-confidence in women leaders. Given the overt nature of hostile sexism, women more likely to perceive sexist events will be further enraged and motivated to work harder on the job to ensure no one perceives them as incompetent. This is not the case with benevolent sexism because the subtle nature of benevolent sexism is predicted to cause more rumination because many times the perceiver does not realize they are experiencing a sexism until after the fact. This will be examined in an exploratory analysis.

Based in social role theory, the purpose of this study is to examine the extent to which benevolent sexism is related to lower self-confidence in women leaders and one mechanism through which this might occur, stereotype threat. This study contributes to the literature by explicating the nuanced impacts of hostile and benevolent sexism on self-confidence. Self-confidence has been noted in the academic literature and popular press as a reason for women’s slower career progression, as opposed to men.

Figure 1 displays the thesis model.
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Figure 1. Thesis Model
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Methods

Participants

The final sample was comprised of 150 female participants. 95% of these women were supervisors and 5% of these women were leaders. 48% of the participants were Caucasian, 31% of the participants were Asian, 14% of the participants were African American, 5% of the participants were Latina, and 2% of the participants were Native American. 30% of the participants have been with their organizations for 3-5 years, 27% of the participants have been with their organizations for 5-10 years, 23% of the participants have been with their organizations for 1-3 years, 19% of the participants have been with their organizations for more than 10 years, and 1% of the participants have been with their organizations for less than one year. 39% of participants have led or supervised their teams for 1-3 years, 30% of participants have led or supervised their teams for 3-5 years, 15% of participants have led or supervised their teams for 5-10 years, 11% of the participants have led or supervised their team for more than 10 years, and 5% of the participants have led or supervised their teams for less than one year. Finally, 15% of the participants worked in the computer industry, 15% of the participants worked in the education industry, 11% of the participants worked in the healthcare industry, 10% of the participants worked in the finance industry, 9% of the participants worked in the information industry, 7% of the participants worked in the service industry, the rest of the participants worked in various industries such as manufacturing, food, telecommunications, construction,
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entertainment, hospitality, agriculture, chemical, defense, energy, mass media, and
transport.

Procedure

A survey was administered via Mturk. The survey used validated measures of
ambivalent sexism, stereotype threat, sensitivity to sexism and internal and
external self-confidence (the measures can all be found in the appendix). Screening
questions were included to determine whether or not a respondent could participate
in this study. The screening questions asked the respondents if they were a woman
in a leadership position. The screening questions included the following: “Are you
a woman? Do you supervise other people? Do you lead a team? How many people
do you supervise or lead?” If the respondents answered no to the first question, they
were told that they were not eligible to participate in the survey. If the respondent
indicated they were a woman and supervisor/leader, they were asked the number of
people they lead and then moved to the survey.

Measures

Ambivalent sexism.

Ambivalent sexism was measured using the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory
(ASI) developed by Glick and Fiske (1996). This scale was originally developed to
measure whether or not someone is an ambivalent sexist. Given that the purpose of
the current study is to measure perceptions of ambivalent sexism in the workplace,
this scale will be modified into a self-report measure. For instance, an original item
measuring benevolent sexism is “no matter how accomplished he is, a man is not
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truly complete as a person unless he has the love of a woman.” An original item measuring hostile sexism is “many women are actually seeking special favors, such as hiring policies that favor them over men, under the guise of asking for ‘equality.’” The scale evaluates the 2 dimensions of ambivalent sexism; hostile and benevolent sexism. This scale consists of 22 items - 11 measuring hostile sexism and 11 measuring benevolent sexism. Benevolent sexism questions assess how much women are subtly objectified through the need to rescue them, not being complete without a woman, cherishing women, etc. A sample item of benevolent sexism is “At work I encounter people who believe that no matter how accomplished they are, men are not truly complete as people unless they have the love of a woman.” Hostile sexism questions assess the belief that men and women are equals, how women interpret sexism, women’s attitudes toward men, etc. A sample item of hostile sexism is “At work I encounter people who believe that many women are actually seeking special favors, such as hiring policies that favor them over men, under the guise of asking for ‘equality.’” This scale is measured using a six-point Likert-type scale ranging from zero (strongly disagree) to five (strongly agree). Using 6 representative samples, this scale’s reliability coefficients ranged between .92 and .83 (Glick & Fiske, 1996).

Kilianski and Rudman’s (1998) profile approach to assessing ambivalent sexism was also used. The three profiles provide two descriptions for ambivalent sexists one description for hostile sexists and one description for benevolent sexists. The last profile is a neutral non-sexist profile that will be used as a control.
After reading the profiles, the participants were asked to state the degree to which they encounter men like the ones in the profiles in their workplace on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from one (never) to five (always) (Kilianski & Rudman, 1998). While, reliabilities were not calculated for these profiles, the profiles themselves were significantly correlated at a .001 level with the hostile and benevolent sections of the ASI. The correlations were .63 and .51, respectively. Kilianski and Rudman (1998) suggest that the highly significant correlations validate the profiles.

**Self-confidence.**

Self-Confidence was measured using the Self-Confidence scale developed by Perkins (2018). This scale measures self-confidence through 2 dimensions - internal and external self-confidence. Internal self-confidence is measured through how confident an individual believes themselves to be and external self-confidence is measured though confidence cues people portray. Participants will be asked to respond to 12 items that assess internal self-confidence through their levels of self-efficacy, self-esteem, and self-compassion. A sample item of internal self-confidence is “I am a person of value and worth.” The external self-confidence scale measures affectivity, taking action, nonverbal communication, verbal communication, independence, and decisiveness. This scale was developed to examine self-confidence levels through the perceptions of others and consists of 12 items. Given the self-report nature of this study, the questions for this scale will be modified to examine a self-report of external self-confidence cues that individuals portray. A sample item of external self-confidence is “I often appear nervous or
SELF-CONFIDENT INSIDE AND OUT: EXPLORING THE ANTECEDENTS anxious in the workplace.” This scale is measured on a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from one (strongly disagree) to seven (strongly agree). The reliability coefficients for internal and external self-confidence were .94 and .91, respectively (Perkins, 2018).

**Sensitivity to sexism.**

Sensitivity to Sexism was measured using the Sensitivity to Sexism Scale developed by Stangor et al. (1999). This scale consists of three questions that measure how often an individual has been discriminated against and how bothered a person is by sexism (alpha = .69) (Stangor et al., 1999). It is measured on a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from one (not at all) to seven (very much). A sample item for the sensitivity to sexism scale is “How often do you think about being a victim of gender-based discrimination?”

**Stereotype threat.**

Stereotype threat was measured using a 10-item scale adapted from von Hippel, Issa, Ma, and Stokes’s (2015a) measure of stereotype threat among working women, which itself was adapted from Steele and Aronson (1995). Von Hippel et al.’s (2011) measure was expanded to include items assessing whether women differentiate between stereotyping targeted at themselves as a group member versus at their group as an extension of themselves (alpha = .90) (Von Hippel et al., 2015a). Sample item from this scale are “Some of my male colleagues believe I have less ability because I’m a woman” and “Sometimes I worry that my behavior at work will cause my male colleagues to think that stereotypes about women apply
SELF-CONFIDENT INSIDE AND OUT: EXPLORING THE ANTECEDENTS to me.” Participants will respond using a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), with higher numbers corresponding to increased feelings of stereotype threat.

**Analysis**

Hypotheses 1-4 were examined using correlations. Hypotheses 5 and 6 were examined using mediated regression analysis. Hypothesis 7 were examined using a moderated regression analysis. All of these analyses were conducted using SPSS. The mediation and moderation hypotheses were conducted using the PROCESS macro for SPSS.
Hostile and benevolent sexism were measured in two ways; a modified version of the ambivalent sexism inventory and the ambivalent sexism profiles. 11 items in the ambivalent sexism inventory (ASI) were used to measure perceptions of benevolent sexism and 11 items were used to measure perceptions of hostile sexism. The ambivalent sexism profiles (ASP) consisted of a profile depicting an ambivalent sexist and a profile depicting a hostile sexist and the respondent indicated how common each profile is in their workplace. Results will be reported separately for both the benevolent sexism inventory and the benevolent sexism profile, as well as the hostile sexism inventory and the hostile sexism profile.

739 participants were obtained from Mturk. A total of 277 participants qualified as women, supervisors or leaders, and completed the entire survey. After eliminating the participants who responded incorrectly to the quantitative attention check questions, a total of 160 participants remained. 151 participants remained after removing the participants who did not correctly answer the qualitative check item. This question was “Define and leader in your own words.” Responses to this question that showed clear signs of English as a second language were removed. After reverse scoring the negatively worded items, composites of the scales were then created and z scores of the composites were created. After eliminating outliers, the final sample was comprised of 150 participants.

Scale descriptive statistics can be found in Table 1. Bivariate correlations were conducted using all the variables (See Table 2.). The benevolent sexism
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profile was significantly correlated with the benevolent sexism inventory \( (r = .23, p < .01) \). The hostile sexism profile was significantly correlated with the hostile sexism inventory \( (r = .21, p < .01) \). However, these correlations were lower than those reported in the Kilianski and Rudman (1998) study that created the profiles. The reported correlation coefficients were .51 and .63 for benevolent and hostile sexism, respectively. Stereotype threat was significantly correlated with internal self-confidence \( (r = -.18, p < .05) \), external self-confidence, \( (r = -.58, p < .01) \), the benevolent sexism inventory \( (r = .17, p < .05) \), the hostile sexism inventory \( (r = -.52, p < .01) \), sensitivity to sexism \( (r = .70, p < .01) \) and the hostile sexism profile \( (r = .32, p < .01) \). Sensitivity to sexism was significantly correlated with external self-confidence \( (r = -.54, p < .01) \), the hostile sexism inventory \( (r = -.43, p < .01) \), and the hostile sexism profile \( (r = .28, p < .01) \). It is interesting to note that the hostile and benevolent sexism inventories were not related to internal self-confidence but the hostile sexism inventory was negatively related to external self-confidence, suggesting that hostile sexism in the workplace is related to the display of fewer self-confidence cues.

Hypothesis one predicted that benevolent sexism would be negatively correlated with internal self-confidence. The benevolent sexism inventory was not significantly correlated with internal self-confidence but the benevolent sexism profile was significantly positively correlated with internal self-confidence \( (r = .18, p < .05) \). Therefore, hypothesis 1 was not supported. Hypothesis two predicted that benevolent sexism would be negatively correlated with external self-confidence.
The benevolent sexism inventory was not significantly correlated with external self-confidence and the benevolent sexism profile was significantly negatively correlated with external self-confidence, \((r = -.18, p < .05)\), providing mixed support for hypothesis 2. Thus, there is some evidence that benevolent sexism is related to higher internal self-confidence but lower external self-confidence.

Hypothesis three predicted that hostile sexism would be positively correlated with internal self-confidence. The hostile sexism inventory and the hostile sexism profile were not significantly correlated with internal self-confidence. Therefore, hypothesis three was not supported. Hypothesis four predicted that hostile sexism would be positively correlated with external self-confidence. The hostile sexism inventory was significantly negatively correlated with external self-confidence, \((r = -.42, p < .01)\) and the hostile sexism profile was not related to external self-confidence. Therefore, hypothesis four was not supported.

Table 1

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<th>Descriptive statistics for all variables</th>
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<td>5.70</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>-.701</td>
<td>.885</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESC</td>
<td>4.61</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>.079</td>
<td>-1.273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSI</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>.97</td>
<td>-.850</td>
<td>.652</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIS</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>.95</td>
<td>-.591</td>
<td>-.680</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STT</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>-.045</td>
<td>-1.271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SS</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>-.345</td>
<td>-1.108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSP</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td>.027</td>
<td>.177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSP</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>-.087</td>
<td>-.540</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. M and SD are used to represent mean and standard deviation, respectively. ISC = Internal Self-Confidence. ESC = External Self-Confidence. BSI = Benevolent Sexism Inventory. HIS = Hostile Sexism Inventory. STT = Stereotype Theat. SS = Sensitive to Sexism. BSP = Benevolent Sexism Profile. HSP = Hostile Sextist Profile.
Hypothesis five predicted that stereotype threat would mediate the negative effect of benevolent sexism on internal self-confidence. To test Hypothesis five, the study used the PROCESS macro in SPSS. Two mediation analyses were conducted to assess hypothesis five, one for the benevolent sexism inventory and one for the benevolent sexism profile. Using the benevolent sexism inventory, found that benevolent sexism positively predicted stereotype threat ($b = .17, p < .05$). Stereotype threat negatively predicted internal self-confidence ($b = -.19, p < .05$). The bootstrapped, bias corrected 95% confidence interval for the indirect effect, was not significant because the 95% CI [-.07, .00] included zero, the indirect effect was not significant. Using the benevolent sexism profile found that benevolent sexism did not significantly predict stereotype threat ($p = .79$). Stereotype threat negatively predicted internal self-confidence ($b = -.18, p < .05$). The bootstrapped, bias corrected 95% confidence interval for the indirect effect was not significant 95% CI [-.04, .03]. Thus, perceptions of stereotype threat did not significantly
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meditate the relationship between benevolent sexism measured through both of the
measures of benevolent sexism and internal self-confidence, not supporting
Hypothesis 5. To further examine this hypothesis, a bivariate correlation was
conducted to examine the correlations between the demographic items and internal
and external self-confidence. Age was highly correlated with internal self-
confidence \((r = .31, p < .01)\), and external self-confidence \((r = .46, p < .01)\). Team
tenure was also highly correlated with internal self-confidence \((r = .22, p < .01)\) and
external self-confidence \((r = .37, p < .01)\). These variables were then controlled for
and the analysis was re-conducted for further examination. The hypothesis was still
not supported even when controlling for age and team tenure.

Hypothesis six predicted that stereotype threat mediates the negative
relationship between benevolent sexism and external self-confidence. To test
Hypothesis 6, the study used the PROCESS macro in SPSS. Two mediation
analyses were conducted to measure hypothesis six, one for the benevolent sexism
inventory and one for the benevolent sexism profile. The benevolent sexism
inventory found that benevolent sexism positively predicted stereotype threat \((b = .17, p < .05)\). Stereotype threat negatively predicted external self-confidence \((b = -.57, p < .001)\). The bias corrected 95% confidence interval for the indirect effect
was not significant \([- .27, .01]\). The second analysis used the benevolent sexism
profile. The benevolent sexism profile found that benevolent sexism did not
significantly predict stereotype threat \((p = .79)\). Stereotype threat negatively
predicted external self-confidence \((b = -.59, p < .001)\). The bias corrected 95%
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confidence interval for the indirect effect was not significant [-.12, .09]. Thus,
perceptions of stereotype threat did not mediate the relationship between
benevolent sexism and external self-confidence. Hypothesis six was not supported.
Age and team tenure were controlled for and the analysis was reconducted for
further examination. Hypothesis six was still not supported.

Hypothesis seven predicted sensitivity to sexism moderates the relationship
between benevolent sexism and stereotype threat such that the relationship will be
stronger for those who are more sensitive to sexism. To test Hypothesis seven, a
moderation analysis was conducted using the PROCESS macro in SPSS. Baron and
Kenny (1986) described steps for moderation. In the first step, the main effect of
the independent variable on the dependent variable is established (Baron & Kenny,
1986). There was a main effect between the benevolent sexism inventory and
stereotype threat (p < .05). The second step, examines the main effect of the
moderator on the dependent variable. There was a main effect of the sensitivity to
sexism on stereotype threat. In the third and final step examines the interaction
between the independent variable and the moderator on the dependent variable
(1986). There was no main effect of the interaction between the benevolent sexism
inventory and sensitivity to sexism on stereotype threat, thus not supporting
Hypothesis seven (see Table 3). Hypothesis seven was then examined using the
benevolent sexism profile. There was no main effect between the benevolent
sexism profile and stereotype threat (step 1). There was a significant main effect of
sensitivity to sexism on stereotype threat (p < .05) (step 2). There was no
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significant interaction between the benevolent sexism profile and sensitivity to
sexism on stereotype threat (step 3) (see Table 4). The analyses were reconducted
by controlling for age and team tenure by inserting them into the covariates box in
PROCESS. Hypothesis 7 was still not supported. A summary of the results of the
hypothesis testing can be found in Table 5.

Table 3

Hierarchical Regression Results to Predict Stereotype threat

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BSI</td>
<td>.31 (.15)*</td>
<td>.22 (.11)*</td>
<td>.20 (.74)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SS</td>
<td>.69 (.06)***</td>
<td>.67 (.18)***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSI X SS</td>
<td>.01 (.06)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>.03*</td>
<td>.51**, ΔR² = .48***</td>
<td>.51, ΔR² = .00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Unstandardized coefficients and standard errors are reported. BSI = Benevolent Sexism Inventory. SS = Sensitivity to Sexism. * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

Table 4

Hierarchical Regression Results to Predict Stereotype threat

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BSP</td>
<td>.04 (.16)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SS</td>
<td>.71 (.06)***</td>
<td>.92 (.18)***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSP X SS</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.07 (.06)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.50**, ΔR² = .50***</td>
<td>.51, ΔR² = .01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Unstandardized coefficients and standard errors are reported. BSP = Benevolent Sexism Profile. SS = Sensitivity to Sexism. ** p < .01, *** p < .001

Table 5

Findings Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>H1</th>
<th>H2</th>
<th>H3</th>
<th>H4</th>
<th>H5</th>
<th>H6</th>
<th>H7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BSI</td>
<td>n.s</td>
<td>n.s</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>n.s</td>
<td>n.s</td>
<td>n.s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSP</td>
<td>n.s</td>
<td>Supported</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>n.s</td>
<td>n.s</td>
<td>n.s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSI</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>n.s</td>
<td>n.s</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSP</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>n.s</td>
<td>n.s</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: n.s = not supported. BSI = Benevolent Sexism Inventory. HSI = Hostile Sexism Inventory. BSP = Benevolent Sexism Profile. HSP = Hostile Sexist Profile. H = Hypothesis.
An exploratory analysis was conducted to further examine stereotype threat and its effects on internal self-confidence. In this exploratory analysis stereotype threat was examined as a moderator in the relationship between benevolent sexism and internal self-confidence. This analysis was first conducted using the benevolent sexism inventory and then conducted using the benevolent sexism profile. Using the benevolent sexism inventory, it was found that stereotype threat was not a significant moderator in the relationship between benevolent sexism and internal self-confidence. Using the benevolent sexism profile, did not support stereotype threat as a moderator in the relationship between benevolent sexism and internal self-confidence.

The exploratory analysis then explored the relationship between benevolent sexism and internal and external self-confidence, moderated by sensitivity to sexism for both the benevolent sexism inventory and the benevolent sexism profile. Using the benevolent sexism inventory, no evidence for sensitivity to sexism as a moderator between benevolent sexism and internal or external self-confidence was found. Using the benevolent sexism profile, there was also no evidence for a moderated relationship between benevolent sexism and internal or external self-confidence.

Furthermore, the exploratory analysis explored sensitivity to sexism and its effects on internal and external self-confidence. In this exploratory analysis sensitivity to sexism was examined as a moderator in the relationship between
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hostile sexism and internal self-confidence. This analysis was first conducted using
the hostile sexism inventory and then conducted using the hostile sexism profile.
The findings of the exploratory analysis did not support sensitivity to sexism as a
moderator in the relationship between hostile sexism and internal self-confidence.

Sensitivity to sexism was examined as a moderator of the relationship
between hostile sexism and external self-confidence. The hostile sexism profile and
sensitivity to sexism found a significant main effect in the first step of the
regression analysis ($p < .001$). There was also a main effect in the second step of
the regression between sensitivity to sexism and external self-confidence ($p <
.001$). In the third step of the regression analysis, the interaction term between
sensitivity to sexism and hostile sexism was entered, and it explained a significant
increase in variance in external self-confidence ($\Delta R^2 = .05, F(1, 146) = 11.41, p <$
.001$). Thus, sensitivity to sexism was a significant moderator of the relationship
between hostile sexism and external self-confidence (see Table 5). The
unstandardized simple slope for employees 1 SD below the mean of sensitivity to
sexism was .03, the unstandardized simple slope for employees with a mean level
of sensitivity to sexism was -.20, and the unstandardized simple slope for
employees 1 SD above the mean sensitivity to sexism was -.44 (see Figure 2). This
suggests that the relationship between hostile sexism and external self-confidence
is stronger for those who are sensitive to sexism. This however was not found using
hostile sexism measured through the ambivalent sexism profiles.
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Table 6

Hierarchical Regression Results to Predict External Self-Confidence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HSI</td>
<td>-.53 (.10)**</td>
<td>-.30 (.10)**</td>
<td>-.26 (.09)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SS</td>
<td>-.30 (.05)**</td>
<td>-.32 (.05)**</td>
<td>-.28 (.08)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSI X SS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$R^2 = .18$</td>
<td>$R^2 = .58$, $\Delta R^2 = .33$***</td>
<td>$R^2 = .62$, $\Delta R^2 = .38$***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Unstandardized coefficients and standard errors are reported. HSI = Hostile Sexism Inventory. SS = Sensitivity to Sexism. **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$

Figure 2. Moderation for sensitivity to sexism on the relationship between hostile sexism and external self-confidence

The exploratory analysis also examined stereotype threat as a mediator in the effect of hostile sexism on external self-confidence. To assess this mediation, the study used the PROCESS macro in SPSS for both the hostile sexism inventory and the hostile sexism profile. The hostile sexism inventory significantly predicted stereotype threat ($b = .52$, $p < .001$). Stereotype threat then negatively predicted external self-confidence ($b = -.42$, $p < .001$). The bias corrected 95% confidence
interval for the indirect effect was -.22 with a 95% CI [-.35, -.09]. Thus, perceptions of stereotype threat significantly mediated the relationship between hostile sexism and external self-confidence using the hostile sexism inventory. There were similar results using the hostile sexism profile. The hostile sexism profile significantly predicted stereotype threat ($b = .44, p < .001$). Stereotype threat then positively predicted external self-confidence. The bias corrected 95% confidence interval for the indirect effect was -.15 with a 95% CI [-.27, -.05]. Therefore, there is evidence for an indirect effect of hostile sexism on external self-confidence through stereotype threat. The findings for stereotype threat as a mediator in the relationship between hostile sexism and internal self-confidence were not significant for the hostile sexism inventory 95% CI [-.08, .05] or the hostile sexism profile 95% CI [-.06, .02]
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Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore potential antecedents for internal and external self-confidence using social role theory. I predicted that benevolent sexism would lower levels of internal and external self-confidence based on the incongruence women feel when they take on a stereotypically male leadership role. When women leaders experienced benevolent sexism on the job, it would inflate their feelings of gender role incongruence as social role theory suggests. This relationship would ultimately lead to lower levels of self-confidence. To examine this, the study used a sample of 150 women leaders or supervisors obtained from Mturk. Hostile and benevolent sexism and stereotype threat were examined as potential antecedents because research supports varying levels of self-confidence in women leaders when faced with these challenges in the workplace (Dardenne et al., 2007; Kalokerinos et al., 2014; Kidder, 2001; King et al., 2012; Stamarski & Son Hing, 2015). Sensitivity to sexism was explored because research suggests that it impacts stereotype threat (Stangor et al., 1999). Overall, it was found that benevolent sexism did not impact confidence, however this study found significant results for hostile sexism and external self-confidence. This finding implies that hostile sexism effects the way you behave in the workplace rather than what you think of yourself. Hypotheses one, two, five, six, and seven discuss benevolent sexism and confidence. While only the benevolent sexism profile was significantly correlated with internal self-confidence, the findings ultimately depict that benevolent sexism does not significantly impact confidence.
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Hypothesis one predicted that benevolent sexism would be negatively correlated with internal self-confidence. It was found that the benevolent sexism profile was positively correlated with internal self-confidence, thus not providing support for hypothesis one. However, this finding suggests the opposite of what research suggest, that is, the more benevolent sexism that is perceived on the job may lead to more internal self-confidence (Dardenne et al., 2007). I suspect that when women experience benevolent sexism in the workplace, the event may enrage them and motivate them to work harder, acting in accordance with reactance theory. Reactance theory is an unpleasant feeling that is elicited within an individual if they deem a situation as unfair (Brehm, 1966). Reaction theory states that perceiving a situation as unfair will anger and motivate individuals to overcome the unfair situation. The implications of experiencing benevolent sexism in her workplace, in turn, may cause her to feel that her worth or ability in her position is being challenged. In this case she may react to the subtle threat with a surge of internal vigor and determination, increasing her levels of internal self-confidence. These results also speak to attribution theory. Attribution theory posits how individuals ascribe their successes and failures (Kelley & Michela, 1980). Attributions theory suggests that individuals ascribe their failures to external factors (1980). This helps explain this result as some women who experience benevolent sexism may show higher levels of self-confidence because they attribute the sexist comment as a fault of the individual that said it rather than a fault in themselves. This logic keeps a woman’s self-confidence intact as she places blame
SELF-CONFIDENT INSIDE AND OUT: EXPLORING THE ANTECEDENTS on her sexist colleague as opposed to herself. Another explanation may be because of the positive nature of benevolent sexism, some women may internalize the comment positively. The positive internalization may result in higher levels of self-confidence. Attribution theory supports this type of internalization as it suggests that individuals internalize their successes (Kelley & Michela, 1980). The positive nature of benevolent sexism may allow some women to internalize the incident as more positive than negative because it allows them to feel good.

Hypothesis two, on the other hand, suggests the opposite. Hypothesis two predicted that benevolent sexism would be negatively correlated with external self-confidence. Support for Hypothesis two was found with the benevolent sexism profile, only, and suggests that the more benevolent sexism a women leader experiences the less likely she is to also portray confidence cues in the workplace. Taken together, these two findings, while suggesting the opposite of each other ultimately mean that when a woman experiences benevolent sexism, she may feel more confident in her abilities but her confidence may not display externally. This is supported by previous research as it suggests how deadly the subtleties of benevolent sexism are to career growth (Dardenne et al., 2007). Women leaders must display confidence on the job, even in the face of sexism, if not then they may be overlooked for promotional opportunities or other opportunities for career growth.

Hypothesis five predicted stereotype threat would mediate the relationship between benevolent sexism and internal self-confidence. This hypothesis was not
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supported. Given that hypothesis one found that there is a positive relationship between benevolent sexism and internal self-confidence, the results from hypothesis five may further suggest that benevolent sexism may trigger reactance theory within women. Furthermore, benevolent sexism was related to stereotype threat. This finding indicates that the more benevolent sexism a woman experiences, the more likely she is to perceive stereotype threat in a situation (Jost & Kay, 2005). However, since stereotype threat was not a mediator, benevolent sexism may impact internal self-confidence through a different mechanism, such as anger as suggested by reactance theory.

Hypothesis six predicted that stereotype threat would mediate the relationship between benevolent sexism and external self-confidence. This hypothesis was not supported. This finding indicates that benevolent sexism did not impact the confidence cues women display on the job.

Hypothesis seven predicted that sensitivity to sexism moderates the relationship between benevolent sexism and stereotype threat. This hypothesis was not supported indicating that women who are sensitive to sexism are not more likely to label instances where they experience benevolent sexism as being due to stereotype threat. This finding suggests that women are just as likely to perceive stereotype threat after a benevolent sexist experience.

Hypotheses three, four, and further exploratory analyses discuss the implication for hostile sexism and confidence. While hypotheses three and four were not supported, the relationship can be better explained when examining
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mediators and moderators – specifically stereotype threat as a mediator and
sensitivity to sexism as a moderator in the relationship between hostile sexism and
self-confidence. Hypothesis three predicted that hostile sexism would be positively
correlated with internal self-confidence. This finding was not supported for either
of the scales measuring hostile sexism. This finding suggests that there may not be
a relationship between hostile sexism and internal self-confidence.

Hypothesis four predicts that hostile sexism is positively correlated with
external self-confidence. This hypothesis was not supported as this study found that
hostile sexism is negatively correlated with external self-confidence. This finding
suggests that the more hostile sexism a woman experiences in the workplace, the
less confidence cues she portrays on the job. This finding could be explained by
reactance theory, in that hostile sexism is obvious sexism that may trigger anger or
other reactions which may lead to lower external self-confidence. Alternatively,
perhaps hostile sexism is related to a self-fulfilling prophesy in which a woman
leader who receives hostile sexist comments from her coworkers will begin to react
and perceive herself in ways that would support the claims of the hostile sexist
comments. This in turn may impact her perceptions of the confidence cues she
displays. This finding again may impact a woman leader’s career growth on the
job. If women are facing overt sexism on the job, their feelings on a gender role
incongruence may be higher, leading to a display of fewer confidence cues on the
job. These lack of confidence cues displayed on the job will allow women leaders
to be passed up for career growth opportunities.

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The exploratory analysis further found sensitivity to sexism had mixed findings as a moderator in the relationship between hostile sexism and external self-confidence. Using the hostile sexism inventory, sensitivity to sexism strengthens the negative relationship between hostile sexism and external self-confidence such that women who are sensitive to sexism will portray a lower level of confidence cues when they experience average to high levels of hostile sexism. However, this interaction was not present using the hostile sexism profile. This finding has implications for women that are sensitive to sexism.

When examining the stereotype threat as a mediator for the effect of hostile sexism on external self-confidence, it was found that stereotype threat explains the effect of hostile sexism on external self-confidence using both the hostile sexism inventory and the hostile sexism profile. This finding suggests that stereotype threat may explain why women portray fewer confidence cues in the workplace after experiencing hostile sexism. Women who experience hostile sexism in the workplace display fewer confidence cues on the job because they worry that their colleagues truly believe that they are not competent enough to be a leader because of their gender. By not displaying confidence cues, women are getting passed up for career growth opportunities.

**Theoretical Implications**

This study contributes to the current literature on social role theory. According to social role theory, the incongruity felt by women in leadership positions provides detrimental results for career progression in women leaders.
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Future research could examine social role theory outside of leadership positions. In particular, how does hostile sexism affect career progression for women in entry level positions. Does social role theory still make women feel an incongruence in organizations even in entry level positions? Furthermore, theoretical implications speak to the relationship between hostile sexism and reactance theory. Given that hostile sexism was found to lead to lower levels of self-confidence, reactance theory may not impact hostile sexism as previous literature supports.

**Practical Implications**

The implications for this study have great practical value. The findings depicted instances that directly effect a woman leader’s self-confidence in the workplace. For instance, it was found that more experiences of benevolent sexism may lead to higher levels of internal self-confidence but lower levels of external self-confidence. This finding poses benevolent sexism as both a potential benefit and a potential threat. An explanation for these findings suggest that while women recognize benevolent sexism and are likely affected and possibly motivated by it, they do not feel comfortable engaging in or displaying confidence cues. This disparity between how women leaders internalize benevolent sexism and how it affects their overt behavior, possibly suggests that women refrain from displaying such cues because they fear being scrutinized for portraying more agentic traits. One recommendation is to train women leaders to display more confidence cues. Women have consistently looked for external validation throughout their whole lives and they may not know the types of confidence cues to display because no
one has mentioned it (Kay & Shipman, 2014). Whereas boys are told from a young age that they need to be resilient in the face of hardship, women may learn immensely from leadership trainings geared towards developing women leaders. Interventions may also be placed in organizations to ensure the content of the trainings are being maintained. Quarterly seminars to ensure that the content is being administered consistently along with meeting with the leaders in the organizations to ensure that they have a zero tolerance policy for sexism.

Another finding was that more instances of hostile sexism lead to lower levels of external self-confidence. This finding suggests that hostile sexism may again trigger a fear of displaying confidence in the workplace. I suspect this blame can be placed on the aggressive nature of hostile sexism. Taken together, these finding suggest that organizations may be more tolerant of hostile and benevolent sexism even in today’s society. If hostile sexism is impacting the types of confidence cues that women portray in the workplace, then that speaks to the types of organizational cultures that women must work in. Recommendations to combat this would be to change organizational cultures that are more tolerant of sexism in the workplace. Organizational culture change may look like creating more instances where sexists are penalized. For example, if a sexist comment is reported, it may lead to a slap on the wrist, if three separate sexist incidents are reported, this may lead to a write up. Three write ups would thus lead to a termination of employment. Women should be encouraged to report sexist incidents without a fear of retaliation. This is further strengthened when organizations have a no retaliation
SELF-CONFIDENT INSIDE AND OUT: EXPLORING THE ANTECEDENTS policy that is highly enforced. No retaliation policies allow for employees who are being discriminated against in any way to disclose the details of the event to HR in order to find a solution. If retaliation is made towards the individual that is reporting the incident by the abuser then the abuser is terminated from the organization.

The findings of this study also have implications for stereotype threat in the workplace. Higher perceptions of stereotype threat were related to lower levels of internal self-confidence and external self-confidence. This suggests that experiences of stereotype threat may be detrimental for women in the workplace. Implications for this would be emotional strain on women. If women are constantly working to combat stereotype threat, that would mean fewer resources for women to do their jobs, possibly resulting in burnout or lower well-being.

Women who are more sensitive to sexism also portray fewer confidence cues in the workplace. Women who are more sensitive to sexism, like women who worry that they’re falling into a negative stereotype will have higher levels of emotional strain. This emotional strain may lead to negative workplace consequences such a disengagement or burnout.

Limitations

This study has a number of limitations. The first limitation is the self-report nature of the data. Self-report data can be influenced by a number of biases such as common method bias. Common method bias is a bias that is a result of an instrument of measurement itself rather than the individuals responding to the bias
SELF-CONFIDENT INSIDE AND OUT: EXPLORING THE ANTECEDENTS (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, Podsakoff, 2003). When the same method, in the case of this study, self-report survey, is used to measure different variables, this may lead to a false method-specific variance that may bias perceived relationships between measured variables. Because this study uses a self-report survey to collect data, the results obtained may be inflated or deflated because of common method bias. Common method bias also affects to the cross-sectional nature of this study. Because the data is collected at one time point, the results obtained from the data may only speak to that point in time. Given the cross-sectional nature of this study means that it is difficult to make causal inferences based off of the results.

The second limitation is the lack of a validated scale to measure perceptions of ambivalent sexism. Instead, a modified version of the ambivalent sexism inventory was utilized along with a second measure of sexism, the hostile and benevolent sexism profiles. Using these two different measures of ambivalent sexism led to an array of contradictory findings.

The third limitation is the participant pool. Participants were recruited from Amazon’s Mechanical Turk (Mturk). While this is a quick way of obtaining participants, fakers may fill out the survey and lie about qualifications for the study. While quantitative and qualitative check questions were used to combat this, a few may slip through the gaps. The fourth limitation is again, related to the participant pool. This study was taken by Mturk users all over the world and may not truly be indicative of American society.
Conclusion

This study examined antecedents to internal and external self-confidence in women leaders using a sample of 150 women leaders or supervisor. It was found that benevolent sexism may not have a relationship with self-confidence, but hostile sexism does. Specifically, hostile sexism has a relationship with external self-confidence. This relationship can be further explained by stereotype threat and further strengthened by sensitivity to sexism. This finding provides a potential explanation as to why women leaders have lower confidence levels in the workplace which lead to detrimental effects such as emotional strain and slow career growth. Future research can be conducted to explore possible antecedents to internal self-confidence in women leaders. Future research may also be conducted to further examine the consequences of the emotional strain women experience when dealing with hostile sexism in the workplace.
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Internal Self-Confidence Scale (Perkins, 2018)

Below are questions in regards to your perceptions about yourself as a leader.

*Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements in a 7-point agreement scale; 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Somewhat disagree; 4 = Neither agree nor disagree; 5 = somewhat agree; 6 = Agree; 7 = Strongly agree.*

Self-efficacy:

1. I am capable of achieving my goals.
2. I believe in my ability to succeed.
3. I have what it takes to get things done.
4. I often have doubts in my ability to meet my goals. (R)

Self-esteem

5. I am a person of value and worth.
6. I am happy with who I am as a person.
7. I am sure of myself and my beliefs.
8. I feel good about myself and who I am.

Self-compassion

9. When I make a mistake, I can easily forgive myself.
10. While I may not be perfect, I am good enough.
11. I can learn from failures and try again.
12. I have the ability to cope with feelings of self-doubt.
External Self-Confidence Scale (Perkins, 2018)

Below are cues that you may portray as a leader in the workplace. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements on a 7-point agreement scale; 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Somewhat disagree; 4 = Neither agree nor disagree; 5 = somewhat agree; 6 = Agree; 7 = Strongly agree.

Affectivity

1. I think others perceive me as nervous or anxious. (R)

2. I think others perceive me as comfortable in most situations.

Taking Action

3. I think other perceive me as eager to take on more responsibility.

4. I think others perceive me as afraid to try new things. (R)

Nonverbal Communication

5. I have difficulty making lasting eye contact with people. (R)

6. I often make nervous gestures or have fidgety body language. (R)

Verbal Communication

7. I often mumble when I speak to others. (R)

8. I often speak up to voice my views or opinions.

Independence

9. I need approval from others. (R)

10. I often look for reassurance or confirmation from other people. (R)

Decisiveness
11. I think that others think that I often appear worried about making the wrong decision. (R)

12. I think that others think that I often have a hard time making up my mind. (R)
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Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (Glick & Fiske, 1996) – Modified Glick & Fiske
scale

Below is a series of statements concerning men and women and their relationships
in at work. Please indicate the frequency to which you have encountered people
who believe the following statements: 0 = strongly disagree; 1 = disagree
somewhat; 2 = disagree slightly; 3 = agree slightly; 4 agree somewhat; 5 = agree
strongly.

At work I encounter people who believe that:

1. no matter how accomplished they are, men are not truly complete as people
   unless they have the love of a woman. (B)
2. many women are actually seeking special favors, such as hiring policies that
   favor them over men, under the guise of asking for “equality.” (H)
3. in a disaster, women ought not necessarily to be rescued before men. (R)
   (B)
4. most women interpret innocent remarks or acts as being sexist. (H)
5. women are too easily offended. (H)
6. people can be happy in life without being romantically involved with a
   member of the other sex. (R) (B)
7. feminists want women to have more power than men. (R) (H)
8. many women have a quality of purity that few men possess. (B)
9. women should be cherished and protected by men. (B)
10. most women fail to appreciate fully all that men do for them. (H)
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11. women seek to gain power by getting control over men. (H)

12. every man ought to have a woman whom he adores. (B)

13. men are complete without women. (R) (B)

14. women exaggerate problems they have at work. (H)

15. once a woman gets a man to commit to her, she usually tries to put him on a tight leash. (H)

16. when women lose to men in a fair competition, they typically complain about being discriminated against. (H)

17. a good woman should be set on a pedestal by her man. (B)

18. women get a kick out of teasing men by seeming sexually available and then refusing male advances. (H)

19. women, compared to men, tend to have a superior moral sensibility. (B)

20. men should be willing to sacrifice their own well-being in order to provide financially for the women in their lives. (B)

21. feminists are making entirely reasonable demands of men. (R) (H)

22. women, as compared to men, tend to have a more refined sense of culture and good taste. (B)
Below are three types of descriptions of males. Please indicate the degree to which you have encountered these types of men in the workplace using the following scale: 1 = Never; 2 = Rarely; 3 = Sometimes; 4 = Often; 5 = Always.

J is an adult male who firmly believes that, despite any achievements, a man’s life remains incomplete without the love of a woman. He feels that such a relationship should be one in which the man upholds the woman as an object of adoration. He is convinced that women have a more highly developed and keenly felt moral sense than do men and that they are disposed to act in a more ethical fashion. He believes that women possess a naturally superior aesthetic sensibility which makes them better judges in matters of culture and taste. He sees women as being in need of male protection and as entitled to special treatment (such as being rescued or treated for injuries first) in a disaster or emergency. He holds the view that it is a man’s obligation to provide financial support and economic security for a woman.

Do you encounter this type of male in the workplace?

H is an adult male who believes that many women exploit the movement toward equality to gain unfair advantage over men. He is convinced that women are often overly sensitive and misconstrue humorous, casual remarks as put-downs or sexual harassment. He feels that many women make unreasonable, conflicting demands of men, placing them in a “damned if you do, damned if you don’t” dilemma. It is his opinion that many women enjoy provoking men by arousing them sexually and
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then refusing them or being offended by their advances. He believes that women
undervalue men and fail to appreciate everything that men do for them. He feels
that most women use men for their own ends and, when in a relationship, attempt to
restrain a man’s independence and exert undue control over his behavior

Do you encounter this type of male in the workplace?

K is an adult male who believes that women are seeking only equality and freedom
from discrimination, not special treatment or unfair advantage over men. In cases of
extreme danger or hardship, he feels that a person’s sex should not be a factor in
determining who is helped first. He is convinced that neither sex is superior with
respect to moral sensibility or ethical behavior. He also holds that neither sex
possesses more refined taste or esthetic judgement than the other. He feels that
intimacy with women is important to men, but not indispensable for a worthwhile
life. He does not believe that most women attempt to control or restrain men with
whom they share a relationship. It is his opinion that it is rare for women to
willingly tempt men sexually with the intent of rejecting and frustrating them for
enjoyment.

Do you encounter this type of male in the workplace?
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Measure of Stereotype Threat (von Hippel et al., 2015a)

Below is a series of statements concerning the attitudes of males on women’s behavior in the workplace. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement using the following scale: 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = disagree somewhat; 4 = neither agree nor disagree; 5 = slightly agree; 6 = agree somewhat; 7 = strongly agree.

Some of my male colleagues believe

1. I have less ability because I’m a woman
2. I’m not as committed to my career because I’m a woman
3. I’m limited in my career because I’m a woman
4. women are not as committed to their careers as men
5. women have less ability than men
6. women are limited in their careers

Sometimes I worry that

7. my behavior at work will cause my male colleagues to think that stereotypes about women apply to me
8. if I make a mistake at work, my male colleagues will think that I’m not cut out for this type of job because I’m a woman
9. my behavior at work will cause my male colleagues to think that stereotypes about women are true
10. if I make a mistake at work my male colleagues will think that women are not cut out for this type of job
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Sensitivity to Sexism Scales (Stangor et al., 1999)

Below are questions in regards to how often you experience discrimination based off of your gender. Please how often you experience gender discrimination in workplace situations: 1 = not at all; 2 = rarely; 3 = occasionally; 4 = neutral; 5 = sometimes; 6 = usually; 7 = very much

Individual-Based Sexism

1. How often do people discriminate against you on the basis of your gender?
2. How much does the gender discrimination you experience bother you?
3. How often do you think about being the victim of gender-based discrimination?
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Screening questions

Below are questions that indicate whether or not you qualify to participate in this survey. Please answer honestly.

1. Are you a woman?
2. Do you supervise other people?
3. Do you lead a team?
4. How many people do you supervise or lead?
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Demographic questions

Below are a series of questions about you. Please answer to the best of your ability.

1. Please indicate your gender
   a. Male
   b. Female

2. Please indicate your age ______

3. Please indicate your ethnicity
   a. American Indian or Native Alaskan
   b. Asian
   c. Black or African American
   d. Hispanic or Latino
   e. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
   f. White or Caucasian

4. Please indicate the industry in which you work
   a. Aerospace
   b. Agriculture
   c. Chemical
   d. Computer
   e. Construction
   f. Defense
   g. Education
   h. Energy
5. Please indicate your organizational tenure in years
   a. Less than one year
   b. 1-3 years
   c. 3-5 years
   d. 5-10 years
   e. 10+ years

6. Please indicate the amount of time you have spent as a supervisor or leader
   a. Less than one year
   b. 1-3 years
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c. 3-5 years

d. 5-10 years

e. 10+ years