Many advances have been made in addressing the most visible barriers to increased participation of women in STEM fields. Nevertheless, many studies describe how subtle biases within the institution can lead to fewer opportunities for leadership positions, preventing women faculty from achieving their full potential. Often referred to as micro-inequities, the accumulation of subtle biases over years can have a profound negative effect on the career trajectory of female STEM faculty.

Gender biases in the workplace are not new. What makes gender biases of today different from those of the pre-civil rights era is the shift from overt sexism to a more subtle form of discrimination. In this project, we focus on subtle gender biases that are often perpetrated unintentionally by well-meaning individuals through verbal or nonverbal, visual, or environmental indignities (e.g., Sue, 2003). While subtle biases are typically thought of as interactions between individuals, they may also be perpetuated by environmental contexts and normative social settings. For example, in a male-dominated work environment, women may be given less meaningful tasks or positions, fewer resources, and receive praise for less meaningful accomplishments (Biernat & Vescio, 2002). Although leaders within these contexts may be giving women praise, resources, and leadership positions, they may be unaware of the downgraded nature of their praise, resources, and assigned roles. Therefore, even when men and women are comparable in skills, they are often evaluated and perceived differently by leadership (Axelson, Solow, Ferguson, & Cohen, 2010). Unlike overt bias and sexism that may lead male leaders to explicitly exclude women from consideration in promotion decisions, subtle gender biases operate at a much more invisible and indirect level. Consequently, exposure to such subtle gender biases leads to micro-inequities that may disadvantage women in the workplace. Because subtle gender biases may be responsible for the lower numbers of women from academic advancement and promotions relative to men (Marchant, Bhattacharya, & Carnes, 2007), it is critical to address these biases in addition to overt sexism.

To date, no measure exists to assess subtle gender biases in the academic setting. This study extends on the fields understanding of subtle gender bias by producing a subtle gender biases index that is relevant to women in academic settings (or in STEM fields if data suggests it is more specific).

**Research Hypotheses:** The primary purpose of the proposed study is to create and validate a measure of subtle gender biases. Following Stereotype Threat Theory (Steele & Aronson, 1995), we hypothesize there to be an indirect effect of subtle gender biases on tenure and promotion rates through psychological well-being and sense of belongingness to one’s workplace. In other words, exposure to subtle gender biases cause women to have reduced wellness and less sense of belonging to their workplace. This, in turn, cases them to have less productivity and ultimately to not get tenure/promotion. Thus, micro-inequities are seen as the products of exposure to subtle gender biases.
We seek to create a Subtle Gender Biases Index (SGBI). The following description explains the two step process that we will take to develop and validate the index.

**Step 1: In-Depth Interviews**

We will conduct twenty 60-minute semi-structured interviews with faculty from UMass Worcester and UMass Lowell. Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Faculty will receive a card for their participation. Two interviewers who are unaffiliated with either UMASS campus and who have extensive experience with conducting in-depth interviews will complete the interviews.

**Step 2: Subtle Gender Biases Index (SGBI) Development**

Faculty for this part of the project will be affiliated with non-UMass academic institutions and both STEM and non-STEM faculty will be invited to complete the measure to allow for greater variability and generalization of the final measure. All eligible and interested faculty will receive an opportunity to enter a raffle for an Ipad or monetary equivalent. This part of the project will generate the initial items for the Subtle Gender Biases Index (SGBI) and work towards validating it for use within the general academic setting. We will work with scholars in the UML Center for Women and Work who are experts in women’s issues in the workplace. Additional validation will be obtained from consultation with the External Advisory Committee.

**References**


