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Understanding Tokenism: Antecedents and Consequences of a Psychological Climate of Gender Inequity

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Extending tokenism theory, the authors investigate psychological climate of gender inequity as a way to understand how token women experience their work environments. In the first study, responses from a sample of 155 women across varied occupations confirm the expectation that token women tend to perceive their organizational climates to be inequitable for women. The results of a second survey of 196 female managers suggest that the subjective processes of tokenism give rise to inequitable climate perceptions. Finally, the responses of 312 women in the construction industry indicate that the climate of gender inequity is related to job attitudes and behaviors.

Keywords: *gender; tokenism; psychological climate; discrimination*

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Three decades ago, Rosabeth Moss Kanter (1977a, 1977b) examined the experiences of women who were underrepresented in their organizations. The theory of tokenism that emerged from her research suggested that individuals whose social category is underrepresented in particular contexts will face negative experiences such as increased visibility and social isolation. This was a particularly meaningful theoretical contribution because it emphasized the importance of organizational structure and context in explaining the underrepresentation of women in powerful organizational positions. Prior to this, most explanations for gender inequity relied on dispositional and internal rationales (see Yoder, 1994), which implied that there was something inherently different about women that accounted for their inferior career status. In looking beyond the characteristics of women to the structural elements of the contexts in which they were embedded, Kanter's work highlighted critical workplace gender equity issues.

Since Kanter's pioneering observations, social and organizational scholars have conducted thoughtful investigations examining the experiences of tokens. However, much about the experiences of token women is unresolved. For example, some research confirms that some token women do encounter negative experiences (e.g., Goldenhar, Swanson, Hurrell, Ruder, & Deddens, 1998; Kraiger & Ford, 1985), whereas reports of other tokens' experiences lead to different conclusions. That is, token men (e.g., Fairhurst & Snavely, 1983) and some groups of token women (e.g., McDonald, Toussaint, & Schweiger, 2004) who are underrepresented do not always encounter such challenges. This unexpected asymmetry contradicted Kanter's inclusive hypothesis and directed researchers to consider alternative explanations. Accordingly, researchers have begun to look beyond numerical representation in conceptualizing the context that tokens experience. This trend is exemplified by Yoder's (2002) presidential address to the American Psychological Association's Division for the Psychology of Women, in which she emphasized the importance of investigating the contextual elements influencing gender, concluding, "My overarching message is that context matters."

The current research responds to this proposition by empirically examining the psychological climate of gender inequity as a way to understand how token women experience the contexts in which they work. That is, we consider a woman's perceptions of the gendered nature of her organization's policies, procedures, and events (i.e., the psychological climate of gender inequity) as a critical indicator of her interpretation of the work context. Although great progress in gender equity has been achieved in the 30 years since Kanter's initial observations, there is little doubt that gender inequity persists. Women continue to be overrepresented in low-status positions and underrepresented in high-status positions and are less likely than men to have swift rates of job advancement across professions (Valian, 1998). Despite a clear need to better understand gender inequity in the workplace, research has not yet examined the role of psychological climate in contributing to the negative experiences of women who are underrepresented. By examining the psychological climate of gender inequity, we integrate a broad indicator of how individual women perceive the social contexts in which they are embedded (i.e., climate) with a strong theoretical framework (i.e., tokenism theory) to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the experiences of women in the workplace. We argue that the structural representation of women in organizations (i.e., numerical underrepresentation or token status) is linked to the context that they

individually perceive (i.e., psychological climate) and, further, that this perceived context is a critical predictor of their attitudes and behaviors at work.

In the current research, we develop a conceptual understanding of the construct of the climate of gender inequity and test its relationship to token status in a broad sample of women (Study 1). In exploring the gendered nature of climate perceptions, we offer a comprehensive assessment of the relation between token status and psychological context. Building on the results of the first study, we then consider the subjective experiences associated with objective token status that give rise to perceptions of an inequitable climate (Study 2). In this way, we specify that the subjective experience of tokenism links numerically based token status with perceptions of inequity. Finally, to further clarify the importance of the psychological context, we focus on a sample of token women and examine the potential job-related consequences of a psychological climate of gender inequity (Study 3). The specific theoretical associations tested in each of these studies, and the manner in which these studies fit together, are depicted in Figure 1. To begin, we briefly review the theoretical background for this research and then outline each study in detail.

Conceptual Background

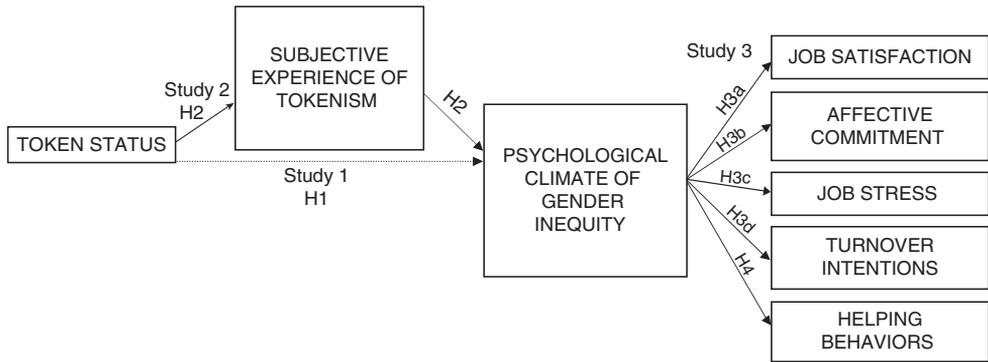
Tokenism Theory

Tokenism theory posits that numerical underrepresentation is a primary cause of negative work experiences for minority group members (Yoder, 1991). In her seminal research, Kanter (1977a) examined the experiences of women in upper management of a *Fortune 500* company. She concluded,

The life of women in the corporation was influenced by the proportions in which they found themselves. Those women who were few in number among their male peers and often had “only woman” status became tokens: symbols of how-women-can-do, stand-ins for all women. . . . Sometimes they faced the loneliness of the outsider, of the stranger who intrudes upon an alien culture and may become self-estranged in the process of assimilation. (Kanter, 1977a: 207)

Specifically, Kanter (1977a) determined that women who composed less than 15% of their work groups experienced three negative processes. First, women in these token positions experienced enhanced visibility or a heightened sense of attention. The scarce presence of tokens created a situation in which tokens (i.e., women) were much more visible than members of the majority group (i.e., men). Although visibility can have positive outcomes in organizational settings (e.g., opportunities for promotion), tokens experienced this enhanced visibility in association with increased performance pressures and stifled emotional expression. Second, the differences between women (i.e., tokens) and men (i.e., dominants) were exaggerated, creating a sense of social isolation among tokens who cannot easily connect with the dominant group nor reach out to scarce in-group members for fear of further ostracism. The salience of gender in such contexts enhanced boundaries and emphasized differences between men and women, which in turn led token women to feel rejected by their male counterparts and disconnected from the few women who were members of their groups or organizations. Third and lastly, tokens felt subject to constrained expectations and social

Figure 1
The Hypothesized (H) Relationships Among Study Variables



roles consistent with gender stereotypes. Token women felt relegated to gendered expectations and thus to the roles of “mother,” “seductress,” or “pet” (Kanter, 1977a); it was easier for tokens to conform to such roles than to challenge the expectations of the majority group. These three processes together typify the experiences of tokens (Young & James, 2001).

Research examining the experiences of underrepresented individuals has revealed mixed support for tokenism theory. On the one hand, researchers have found that many women and ethnic minorities who are numerically underrepresented do experience the negative processes predicted by tokenism theory. For example, female military cadets reported feeling identifiable, socially isolated, and limited to feminine roles that conflicted with the expectations of good cadets (Yoder, 1983). Similarly, tokens have reported feeling entrapped in their roles (Spangler, Gordon, & Pipkin, 1978) and socially alienated (Wolman & Frank, 1975), and they perform worse as their representation decreases (Kraiger & Ford, 1985; Mellor, 1996). Empirical evidence also demonstrates that women and ethnic minorities are more likely to experience discrimination in contexts where they are underrepresented than in contexts that are more balanced (e.g., Goldenhar et al., 1998). For example, in a sample of workers from a national insurance company, Schaffer and Riordan (2004) found that numerical representation was negatively correlated with discrimination.

On the other hand, additional research demonstrates that some tokens do not face such difficulties. For example, Fairhurst and Snavely (1983) conducted a social network analysis of male nurses and found that they were not more socially isolated than the women who dominated their occupation. In another study, gender proportion negatively influenced token women’s task performance, but not token men’s (Sackett, DuBois, & Noe, 1991). Although these studies focus on male tokens, there is also evidence that some female tokens do not suffer from negative experiences. For example, female coal miners who maintained a deferential role reported strong feelings of solidarity with their male colleagues (Hammond & Mahoney, 1983). As another example, the results of a laboratory study indicate that the contributions of token women to a group decision-making task were accurately and favorably

evaluated (Fuegen & Biernat, 2002). Taken together, these findings suggest that not all tokens have negative experiences.

Researchers have attempted to account for these asymmetrical findings. For example, Blalock (1967) suggested that numerical underrepresentation might affect some tokens differently as a function of social subordination and dominance. Building on Blalock, McDonald et al. (2004) demonstrated that social status was a better predictor of tokenism dynamics than was gender alone. As another example, Yoder and Schleicher (1996) determined that the traditionality of the occupation (i.e., men and women in either engineering or nursing) influenced the social isolation of tokens in an experimental setting. Similarly, a vignette experiment suggested that sole reliance on numerical representation did not adequately account for token processes without accounting for occupational gender typing (Yoder, 1994).

These studies suggest that contextual elements such as status, occupational deviance, and job prestige can affect the experiences of tokens. However, although each of these studies provides insight into factors influencing tokenism dynamics, they do not fully address the informal norms and expectations that are perceived by tokens in organizational contexts. Thus, a comprehensive framework of the gendered nature of the context in which tokens work is needed. In this study, we propose that the perceptions of gendered contexts that are likely to be associated with token status can be conceptualized in terms of the psychological climate of inequity.

Psychological Climate of Gender Inequity

The increasing representation of individuals with diverse characteristics in the American workforce, and the persistent occurrence of gender and racial discrimination, has drawn the attention of organizational scholars to the study of diversity in organizations. In particular, researchers have called for an emphasis on studying and establishing positive organizational climates for diversity (e.g., Brief & Barsky, 2000; Cox, 1993), recognizing that "a complete examination of diversity needs to address individuals in the context of this social environment" (Riordan & Shore, 1997: 342). Nonetheless, limited empirical research has focused on the role of the climate of diversity in organizations (cf. Avery, McKay, Wilson, & Tonidandel, 2007; Barak, Cherin, & Berkman, 1998; Kossek, Markel, & McHugh, 2003; McKay, Avery, Tonidandel, Morris, Hernandez, & Hebl, 2007).

Because work is central to people's economic and psychological well-being, influencing lifestyle, prestige, and social standing (Lips, 2001), discrimination and concomitant gender inequities in the workplace are pressing concerns for organizational scholars (see also Goldman, Gutek, Stein, & Lewis, 2006). Although approximately one half of managerial and professional positions in the United States are occupied by women, less than 15% of the corporate officers in *Fortune 500* companies, and less than 5% of the top earners, are women (Catalyst, 2001). Pointing to the importance of examining contextual factors that contribute to such disparities, the majority of executive women who participated in a national survey reported that negative gender stereotypes and exclusion from informal social networks were major factors prohibiting them from advancement (Ragins, Townsend, & Mattis, 1998). Given these and other statistics suggestive of the prevalence of inequitable contexts, understanding

the context in which women work should be fertile ground for applied psychological research. However, although such research is evident in the literature, it is surprisingly narrow in focus. In fact, Bond and colleagues state that “most past studies have examined the effects of interpersonal discrimination or harassment without considering them in the context of institutional manifestations of differences in the gendered conditions of work” (Bond, Punnett, Pyle, Cazeca, & Cooperman, 2004: 29). Although a few studies have begun to investigate the climate of diversity (e.g., Cox, 1993; Hicks-Clarke & Iles, 2000), and a few consider sexism at the level of the organization (e.g., Appold, Siengthai, & Kasarda, 1998; Bond et al., 2004), we are not aware of any previous research that focuses on the psychological climate of gender inequity.

In general, the term *psychological climate* is used to represent the meaning and significance of work contexts for individual employees (James & Jones, 1974). That is, psychological climate represents “individuals’ perceptions of their work environment” including “structures, processes and events” (Parker et al., 2003: 390). James and his colleagues (James, Gent, Hater, & Coray, 1979; James, Hartman, Stebbins, & Jones, 1977; James, Hater, Gent, & Bruni, 1978) summarized the generally accepted conceptualization of psychological climate by specifying that it is a descriptive, multidimensional construct that involves an individual’s perception of the work situation he or she encounters. Some contemporary research focuses on shared or collective perceptions of work environments (i.e., organizational climate; e.g., Schneider, Bowen, Ehrhart, & Holcombe, 2000). The present research approaches the issue of gender equity from the perspective of psychological climate, which represents individual (rather than collective) perceptions (see McKay et al., 2007). That is, this study is concerned with the extent to which individual women perceive that the policies, procedures, and events in their organizations unfairly favor men: a psychological climate of gender inequity. By focusing on individual perceptions (i.e., psychological climate), rather than on an aggregate measure (i.e., organizational climate), we can better understand the uniquely individual manner in which practices and policies are interpreted, as well as the consequences for individuals who hold such interpretations.

The perspective of psychological climate offers a useful framework through which to understand psychologically meaningful interpretations associated with the experience of token status (Jones & James, 1979). In focusing on individual women’s perceptions of the contexts in which they work, we are able to examine the meaning that token women attribute to daily events. Of theoretical and practical interest from a psychological climate perspective are the determinants and consequences of each individual woman’s appraisal of her workplace. Existing evidence suggests that psychological climate acts as a mediator between psychologically meaningful characteristics of organizations and job-related outcomes (James et al., 1977). For example, a recent meta-analytic study confirmed the importance of individual-level perceptions of environment (i.e., psychological climate) in predicting numerous job-related outcomes across 121 studies (Parker et al., 2003). Perceptions of jobs, roles, leaders, work groups, and the organization as a whole (i.e., psychological climate dimensions; Jones & James, 1979) have been linked with job involvement (Brown & Leigh, 1996), contextual performance (Moorman, 1991), and financial performance (Schneider, White, & Paul, 1998). Of direct relevance to the current study, McKay and colleagues (2007) determined that perceptions of diversity climate were associated with organizational turnover among ethnic

minorities. Extending this theory and research, we expect that a meaningful characteristic of the work context (i.e., token status) will influence the psychological climate (i.e., the extent to which women perceive a climate to be inequitable). We further expect that the psychological climate of gender inequity will be meaningfully associated with attitudinal (e.g., satisfaction) and behavioral (e.g., extrarole performance) outcomes.

In developing an understanding of the context that token women encounter, we first assess the relationship between token status and the psychological climate of gender inequity. We then examine processes that give rise to inequitable climate perceptions and the consequences of such perceptions. Taken together, the findings of this set of studies will clarify the subjective experiences associated with token status and the relation between the psychological climate of gender inequity and attitudinal and behavioral outcomes (see Figure 1).

Study 1

In Study 1, we focus on the relation between token status and the psychological climate of gender inequity in a sample of women across industries and occupations. This represents a first step toward understanding how representation is linked with perceptions of inequity for women who work in a wide range of contexts. Drawing from tokenism theory, we propose that tokens may perceive that organizational policies and procedures are inequitable.

According to tokenism theory, a woman is a token when women comprise less than 15% of a given context (Kanter, 1977a). Moreover, tokenism research specifies that tokens notice and are affected by their experience of such skewed representation (Kanter, 1977b). In particular, careful attention is paid to the conditions that are relevant to the token characteristic. In the case of token women, gender is the characteristic on which their token status relies. Thus, token women will be mindful of the gendered nature of their environments. This rationale is consistent with social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), which suggests that individuals associate with others who are similar to them along meaningful dimensions, including gender. Such social groups fulfill a fundamental human need for social connectedness (see Baumeister & Leary, 1995) and serve as a primary source of individuals' self-perceptions (Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 2002). As such, members of social identity groups attend to their identities and relevant experiences, particularly in contexts in which their identities are salient (Cota & Dion, 1986). Thus, a woman whose gender identity is salient may be particularly attuned to dynamics she encounters that do not reflect positively on women; to the extent that women are tokens, gender-related issues will become salient and the organization will be perceived through a gender-focused schema. In other words, if the salience of a woman's gender is amplified, she may perceive her work context from this perspective. This rationale is also consistent with distinctiveness theory and research, which proposes and finds that gender is a salient characteristic for women when they are underrepresented (Cota & Dion, 1986). Drawing from these ideas, a study of ethnic minority tokens in academic positions demonstrated that when tokens feel distinctive from their coworkers, they evaluate their contexts more negatively (Niemann & Dovidio, 1998).

Because women are likely to consider and be affected by both their proximal and distal contexts (Ely, 1995; Martins, Milliken, Wiesenfeld, & Salgado, 2003; Riordan, 1997; Schaffer

& Riordan, 2004), this study considers the climate perceptions of women who may be tokens at the level of the work group and at the level of the organization. Representation at both levels is likely to affect women; in the case of group representation, women likely experience the effect of token status in interpersonal and group interactions, whereas in the case of organizational representation, women may experience more diffuse effects such as a lack of organizational support and mentorship. We examine the relative importance of group and organizational representation in predicting these perceptions in an exploratory fashion; it may be that the immediate work group context (or alternatively, the organization as a whole) is of central importance in determining how women view their organizations. Consistent with tokenism and social identity theories, we expect that token status (within one's group and one's organization) will be positively related to perceptions of a climate of gender inequity:

Hypothesis 1: Token status is positively related to a psychological climate of gender inequity.

Study 1: Method

Participants

Undergraduate research assistants approached 180 women in public locations such as airports and coffee shops. Women who agreed to participate in a brief, anonymous survey were screened for work status and then received a one-page questionnaire, clipboard, and pen. The researcher waited nearby until the participant indicated she had completed the questionnaire and inserted it in an envelope provided to ensure confidentiality. Approximately 25 women declined to participate, resulting in a sample size of 155 and a response rate of 86%. Seventy-two percent of participants were Caucasian, 5% African American, 5% Asian American, and 11% Hispanic. The participants' ages ranged from 22 to 67, with a mean of 36.14 ($SD = 10.54$). Most of the participants were well educated, with 65% having earned an undergraduate degree and 10% having earned a master's degree or beyond. Participants reported working in a wide range of occupations, including "registered nurse," "elementary school teacher," and "human resources director." Given the nature of the sampling strategy, it is important to consider its representativeness. All job titles were categorized according to the major occupational groups recognized by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2007) and compared to the percentage of women working in each group nationwide (see Table 1). Although the current sample is generally comparable overall, it is somewhat overrepresentative of women in service jobs and underrepresentative of those working in management, sales, and production.

Measures

The questionnaire included measures of token status, climate of gender inequity, and demographic characteristics. Measures were separated by filler items (e.g., self-esteem) to procedurally address concerns regarding common method variance (see Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003).

Table 1
Percentage of Working Women Across Occupational Groups

	% Women in U.S. Workforce	% Women in Study 1	% Women in Study 2
Management, professional, and related occupations	38.1	30.0	80.4
Service occupations	20.4	44.0	9.6
Sales and office occupations	34.2	24.7	9.1
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	1.1	0.7	1.0
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	6.2	0.7	0

Token status in organization and work group. Participants reported the approximate number of men and women in their organizations and in their immediate work groups. In each case, the number of women was divided by the total number of individuals to indicate the numerical proportion of women represented at each level. Consistent with tokenism theory, this proportion was dichotomized for the primary analyses such that participants for whom less than 15% of their work groups or organizations were composed of women were considered tokens, and all others were considered nontokens (coded as 1 and 0, respectively).

Psychological climate of gender inequity. Each participant's psychological climate of gender inequity in her current organization was measured with a four-item 7-point scale anchored with 1 (*strongly disagree*) and 7 (*strongly agree*; adapted from Kobrynowicz and Branscombe, 1997; Reid, 1987). These items were designed to address systematic gender differences in the policies and procedures of the organization and included, "Men in my company are promoted at a better rate than women," "Women in my company have been prevented from attaining their full potential because of their gender," "There are frequent occurrences of gender discrimination against women in my company," and "Men are often given opportunities instead of women because of their gender in my company." Measuring the psychological climate of gender inequity in this manner is consistent with the premise in the more general psychological climate literature that psychological climate pertains to an individual's perceptions of his or her organization (e.g., James & Jones, 1974; James et al., 1977, 1978, 1979; Parker, 2003). In this sample, the internal consistency reliability of the measure of psychological climate of gender inequity was .77. An exploratory factor analysis with promax rotation suggested that a single factor (all loadings greater than .80) captured 63.8% of the variance (eigenvalue = 2.55).

Study 1: Results and Discussion

As indicated in Table 2 and supporting Hypothesis 1, the participants' token status in their groups and organizations was significantly and positively correlated with the psychological climate of gender inequity ($r_s = .23, p < .01$, and $r_s = .20, p < .05$, respectively). The mean of the psychological climate of gender inequity was higher for organizational tokens ($M = 4.50, SD = 1.15$) than for nonorganizational tokens ($M = 3.15, SD = 1.52$), $t = -2.54, p < .05$. Similarly, group tokens perceived more inequitable climates ($M = 4.38, SD = 1.61$) than did

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics and Zero-Order Correlations
Between Study 1 Variables ($N = 155$)

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Token Status in Group	Token Status in Organization	Climate of Gender Inequity
1. Token status in group	0.09	0.29	—		
2. Token status in organization	0.05	0.22	.49**	—	
3. Climate of gender inequity	3.22	1.54	.23**	.20*	(.77)

Note: Internal consistency reliabilities are in parentheses on the diagonal. Correlations with token status are nonparametric (Spearman-Brown).

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

nongroup tokens ($M = 3.07$, $SD = 1.48$), $t = -3.03$, $p < .05$. The difference between perceptions of group tokens and organizational tokens was not significant.¹

To examine the appropriateness of Kanter's categories of tokenism and the current measurement strategy, we considered the ratio of women to men (rather than the dichotomized variable reported in the previous analyses) in an organization in linear and logarithmic regression models predicting the psychological climate for inequity. The relationship between representation and perceptions of inequity exponentially decreased such that the relationship was strongest only at the lowest levels of representation. Moreover, the logarithmic and linear models accounted for a similar portion of variance, $R^2 = .13$, $F(1, 135) = 20.21$, $p < .01$, and $R^2 = .15$, $F(1, 135) = 24.03$, $p < .01$, suggesting that the dichotomization of representation and linear measurement strategies account for comparable variability.

To explore the relative importance of token status in the group and the organization, we entered both predictors simultaneously in a regression model. The results suggested that being a token in one's group was somewhat more strongly related to perceptions of inequity ($\beta = .22$, $p < .05$) than token status in the organization as a whole ($\beta = .10$, $p > .05$, $R^2 = .08$). However, the overlapping nature of the confidence intervals (CI) around these coefficients (95% CI = -0.12 to 1.96 and CI = -0.74 to 2.02 for group and organization tokens, respectively) suggests this difference should be interpreted with caution.

These results support Hypothesis 1 and suggest that women's token status in their organizations and work groups is linked to the psychological climate of inequity. That is, token women perceived a more inequitable climate than did nontoken women. These findings suggest that women who are underrepresented in organizational contexts may perceive the norms, policies, and procedures of their organizations to be inequitable. In addition, exploratory analyses in which group and organizational representation were considered as simultaneous predictors of inequitable climate perceptions suggest that the representation of women in the work group may be a more central predictor than the representation of women in the organization as a whole.

However, the subjective experiences that give rise to such climate perceptions still remain unclear. It is important to consider intervening mechanisms explaining how and why token

status might lead to perceptions of an inequitable climate. The purpose of Study 2 is to examine subjective experiences associated with the structural component of organizations (i.e., numerical representation) that might influence the perceptions of the context (i.e., inequitable climate). In addition, whereas Study 1 was inclusive of working women in any type of position, we are also interested in exploring whether women who hold some power in organizations would also be subject to similar effects of token status. Thus, Study 2 focuses on the perceptions and experiences of women who are in managerial roles in their organizations. Drawing from tokenism theory, we explore whether the subjective experience of tokenism mediates the relation between token status and an inequitable psychological climate.

Study 2

As previously described, token status can be conceptualized as a function of the numerical representation of women in one's work group and organization. According to Kanter's (1977a) original theory, objective or numerically based token status leads to negative tokenism dynamics, including social isolation, enhanced visibility, and gender role expectations. Thus, the experience of being a token involves more than numerical imbalance; it also encompasses experiences that are unique to individuals whose identity groups are underrepresented. In the current study, we consider these potentially negative tokenism dynamics to be elements of the subjective experience of tokenism.

These subjective experiences may contribute to a perception that the organizational climate is not supportive of women. That is, the dynamics resulting from token status may lead women to perceive their work contexts more negatively in relevant or pertinent domains such as gender equity (Schaffer & Riordan, 2004). As described previously, social identity theory suggests that women may be particularly attuned to gender-related dynamics when they encounter token contexts (Cota & Dion, 1986; Tajfel & Turner, 1986); the salience of an identity increases as representation decreases (Taylor, 1981). We argue that there are meaningful intervening processes that account for the effects of token representation and perception of an inequitable context. Social identity theory, and its evolution in social and self-categorization theories (for a review, see Hogg & Terry, 2000), suggests that individuals' motives of self-enhancement and uncertainty reduction can be addressed through relations between one's in-group and out-group. That is, individuals are motivated to reduce uncertainty and enhance their sense of self. One way to fulfill such motives is to engage in processes of comparison between the experiences and outcomes of one's in-group and one's out-group. In token contexts, then, the salience both of gender identity and of intergroup comparisons is enhanced. Thus, women who feel socially isolated from their coworkers because of their gender may come to attribute their disadvantaged status to procedures and policies that are inequitable. Similarly, token women may feel scrutinized as a function of the increased visibility that their gender provokes and then might evaluate the organization's gender norms as unfair. The effects of numerical underrepresentation on perceptions of climate, then, are expected to be explained by the subjective experiences that accompany token status.

In other words, the experience of social isolation, role exaggeration, and heightened visibility associated with token status may give rise to perceptions of an inequitable climate.

We hypothesize that it is the subjective experience that accompanies objective representation that leads tokens to perceive their environments to be inequitable. Consequently, we hypothesize that the subjective experience of tokenism will fully account for the relationship between numerical, objective token status (within the group and the organization) and perceived climate of gender inequity (see Figure 1).

Hypothesis 2: The subjective experience of tokenism fully mediates the relationship between token status and psychological climate of gender inequity.

We will also explore the relative importance of group and organizational representation for women who hold managerial positions. Although the results of Study 1 suggest that token status in one's work group is central to women working in a range of occupations, it may be that women in management are particularly concerned with the bigger picture and the opportunities that exist for women as a whole (see Ragins & Sundstrom, 1989). It may also be that managers are more concerned than other employees with the organizational climate because it is a more direct comparison cohort. It follows that organizational representation may be more predictive than group representation for women in managerial roles.

Study 2: Method

Participants and Procedures

Undergraduate students enrolled in a large introductory organizational psychology course were given class credit in exchange for their nominations of female managers who were responsible for at least one subordinate. Students identified 196 female contacts (e.g., friends and family) who consented to participate in an anonymous written survey about the experiences of women at work. Students returned to the researchers the responses in sealed envelopes provided to the participants to ensure confidentiality. The majority of female managers (73%) identified themselves as Caucasian, with an additional 9% African American, 12% Asian American, and 5% Hispanic. These women's self-reported job titles varied widely and included "department chair," "lawyer," "lab supervisor," and "co-owner." The participants' median annual salary was \$72,000 and age was 47. Consistent with the sampling approach, more than 80% of the sample reported working in a managerial role, resulting in an overrepresentation of managers compared to the overall population of working women in the United States (see Table 1).

Measures

Participants completed measures of the climate of gender inequity and token status that were identical to those measures used in Study 1. In addition, they completed a measure of the subjective experience of tokenism (adapted from Yoder, 1994). (Note that all items were separated by fillers—e.g., personality, self-esteem—to reduce concerns regarding common method variance.) The participants' experience of increased visibility, social isolation, and gender role

expectations associated with tokenism was measured with a seven-item scale with a 7-point response format anchored by 1 (*strongly disagree*) and 7 (*strongly agree*). These items were, "People in my company look at me as a representative of all people of my gender," "I feel that I am a 'token' representative of my gender in my current position," "I feel I have to represent the perspective of my gender in my company," "I have to explain the perspective of my gender to others in my company," "I often feel accepted as a person by my male colleagues" (reverse coded), "I often spend social and leisure time together with my male colleagues" (reverse coded), and "I often discuss general topics such as politics with my male colleagues" (reverse coded). The internal consistency reliability for this scale was .70.

All items intended to capture climate for gender inequity and token experiences were entered in exploratory factor analysis with a promax rotation. The results supported a two-factor solution: The first factor included the four perceived inequity items (all loadings > .80) and accounted for 58% of the variance (eigenvalue = 4.71), and the second factor included the seven tokenism items (all loadings > .80) and accounted for an additional 14.6% of the variance (eigenvalue = 1.17). For completeness, these items were also entered in a confirmatory factor analysis that suggested that the two-factor solution was a relatively good fit to the data, $\chi^2(43) = 184.69$, $p < .01$; CFI = .95, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .10. Items loaded significantly on their respective factors (all $t_s < .01$) and with a magnitude of .3 or greater. Note that a one-factor solution (i.e., a Harman test; Podsakoff et al., 2003) was a poorer fit to the data, $\chi^2(54) = 291.69$, $p < .01$; CFI = .76, RMSEA = .17; $\chi^2(7) = 107$, $p < .01$, reducing concerns regarding the contamination of findings as a function of common method variance.

Study 2: Results

The means, standard deviations, internal consistency reliabilities, and intercorrelations among the study variables are provided in Table 3. As expected, token status in participants' groups and organizations was positively correlated with the subjective experience of tokenism ($r_{sb} = .16$, $p < .05$, and $r_{sb} = .21$, $p < .01$, respectively) and with psychological climate of inequity ($r_{sb} = .14$, $p < .05$, and $r_{sb} = .21$, $p < .01$, respectively). Furthermore, the subjective experience of tokenism was positively correlated with climate of gender inequity ($r = .59$, $p < .01$).

Organizational tokens perceived greater levels of psychological climate of gender inequity ($M = 4.67$, $SD = 2.05$) than did nonorganizational tokens ($M = 2.58$, $SD = 1.52$), $t = -3.24$, $p < .05$. For tokens within groups, the average perception of inequity was 4.00 ($SD = 2.23$) and for nongroup tokens was 2.68 ($SD = 1.60$), $t = -2.23$, $p < .05$. For the women in this sample, organizational tokens reported higher levels of inequitable climate perceptions than did group tokens, $t = 3.70$, $p < .05$. With regard to the subjective experience of tokenism, individuals who were tokens in their organizations reported greater levels of tokenism experiences ($M = 4.38$, $SD = 1.34$) than did nonorganizational tokens ($M = 2.95$, $SD = .93$), $t = -3.52$, $p < .05$. Similarly, group-level tokens reported higher levels of tokenism experiences ($M = 3.75$, $SD = .89$) than did nongroup tokens ($M = 2.98$, $SD = 1.00$), $t = 2.12$, $p < .05$.

As in Study 1, we considered linear and logarithmic models to clarify the appropriateness of Kanter's conceptualization for relating representation to perceptions of inequity. The data

Table 3
Descriptive Statistics and Zero-Order Correlations
Between Study 2 Variables ($N = 196$)

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Token Status in Group	Token Status in Organization	Subjective Tokenism	Climate of Inequity
1. Token status in group	0.05	0.21	—	—		
2. Token status in organization	0.04	0.19	.48**	—		
3. Subjective tokenism	3.00	0.99	.16*	.21**	(.70)	
4. Climate of inequity	2.78	1.62	.14*	.21**	.59**	(.93)

Note: Internal consistency reliabilities are in parentheses on the diagonal. Correlations with token status are non-parametric (Spearman-Brown).

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

suggest that the logarithmic model accounted for more variance, $R^2 = .07$, $F(1, 144) = 10.73$, $p < .01$, than did the linear model, $R^2 = .03$, $F(1, 144) = 5.02$, $p < .05$, supporting the nontoken–token dichotomy.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that the subjective experience of tokenism would mediate the relationship between token status and psychological climate of gender inequity. This hypothesis was tested using a process outlined by Baron and Kenny (1986). Mediation exists when the significant effect of an independent variable (IV) on a dependent variable (DV) is no longer significant when a mediating variable (MV) is included in the regression model. More specifically, in order for a mediation model to have support, three relationships must be tested (Baron & Kenny, 1986). First, the MV must be regressed onto the IV, and the resulting regression coefficient must be statistically significant. With regard to Hypothesis 2, this is confirmed by a significant relationship between the subjective experience of tokenism and token status in participants' groups and organizations ($\beta = .16$, $p < .01$, and $\beta = .29$, $p < .01$). Next, in a separate regression equation, the DV must be regressed on the IV, and this regression coefficient must be statistically significant. This is supported by significant relationships between the psychological climate of gender inequity and token status in participants' groups ($\beta = .17$, $p < .05$; see Table 4) and organizations ($\beta = .26$, $p < .01$). Lastly, when both the IV and the MV are entered in a separate regression model, the effect of the IV on the DV must decrease in magnitude and significance level from the first model. Supporting Hypothesis 2, the effect of token status on perceived climate of gender inequity was fully mediated by the subjective experience of tokenism. In addition, a Sobel test yielded significant comparisons between the models, reflecting representation in the group (Sobel value = 2.11, $p < .05$) and the organization (Sobel value = 3.18, $p < .01$). In other words, the relationship between token status and climate of gender inequity was no longer significant after controlling for the subjective experiences of tokenism.²

To explore the relative importance of token status in women's groups and organizations, we entered both variables simultaneously in a regression equation predicting inequitable climate perceptions. The results suggest that, contrary to the results of Study 1, there was a

Table 4
Regression Analyses Testing the Subjective Experience of Tokenism as a Mediator
of the Token Status Climate of Gender Inequity Relationship

Variables Entered	Climate of Gender Inequity	
	β	R^2
Model 1: Token status in group	.17*	.03*
Model 2: Token status in group	.08	.34**
Subjective experience of tokenism	.57**	
Model 1: Token status in organization	.26**	.07**
Model 2: Token status in organization	.12	.29**
Subjective experience of tokenism	.49**	

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

somewhat stronger relationship between organizational representation and climate perceptions ($\beta = .24$, $p < .05$; 95% CI = 3.39 to .41) than group representation and climate perceptions ($\beta = .05$, $p > .05$; 95% CI = 1.89 to -1.09), $R^2 = .07$, although the confidence intervals around these coefficients are overlapping.

Study 2: Discussion

The results of the second study confirm our expectations and demonstrate that the relationship between token status and psychological climate of gender inequity was mediated by the subjective experience of tokenism. Thus, the results of Study 2 suggest that perceptions of inequitable climates in organizations are influenced by the subjective experience of tokenism. This association is consistent with the premises of distinctiveness theory and increased gender salience (e.g., Cota & Dion, 1986) and by the social isolation and gender role expectations associated with tokenism (Kanter, 1977a). In addition, the results suggest that for women in managerial positions, the representation of women in their work groups is somewhat less predictive of climate perceptions than the representation of women in the organization as a whole. Taken with the results of Study 1, it can be inferred that perceptions of inequity may be more closely linked to organization-level representation for women in management than for other female workers. Understanding the experiences that give rise to inequitable climate perceptions may enable researchers and practitioners to target and remove contributing factors, thereby enhancing climate perceptions. For example, instituting mentoring programs to enrich the social networks of women (and decrease their experience of social isolation) might also improve women's perceptions of the gender climate.

Although the results of the first two studies indicate that objective token status and the associated subjective experiences give rise to perceptions of an inequitable psychological climate, the consequences of these perceptions remain unclear. That is, the potential outcomes associated with perceiving that an organization's norms, policies, and procedures are

inequitable for women have not been identified. Thus, the purpose of the third study is to consider the consequences of a perceived climate of gender inequity in a sample of token women.

Study 3

Most women work in female-dominated occupations. In fact, 70% of women are employed as secretaries, bookkeepers, registered nurses, cashiers, elementary school teachers, or waitresses (Thornborrow & Sheldon, 1995). However, these occupations, as a whole, are associated with lower power, pay, and prestige than those dominated by men (Lips, 2001; Valian, 1998). It is unclear why women continue to cluster in these relatively disadvantaged occupations. Examining the experiences of women in nontraditional occupations may provide some answers and, importantly, reveal the difficulties that exist and the barriers that need to be removed for workplace equity to emerge (Ragins & Sundstrom, 1989). Understanding the consequences of a climate of inequity in organizational contexts dominated by men is critical because it is precisely these kinds of contexts that contribute to the statistics cited earlier attesting to the prevalence of gender discrimination. Accordingly, in Study 3 we purposefully focus on a male-dominated occupation in which women are uniformly tokens and in which inequitable treatment is likely to take place in the present and the future (Goldenhar et al., 1998; Mansfield, Koch, Henderson, Vicary, Cohn, & Young, 1991).

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2007) defines a nontraditional occupation as one in which less than 25% of the workforce is composed of women. By these standards, the representation of women in the construction industry classifies it as a nontraditional environment. For example, of more than 1.8 million carpenters, only 1.9% are women. Similarly, only 4.2% of 117,000 construction helpers are women. Even architecture is a male-dominated occupation within the construction industry, as only 24.7% of 240,000 architects are women (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2007). Importantly, nontraditional fields such as the construction industry tend to offer higher starting wages than do many female-dominated jobs (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2007). This nontraditional context provides an opportunity to examine the psychological climate of gender inequity and its potential consequences in a context in which gender is salient; it may be in such contexts that perceptions of equity are particularly meaningful.

Attitudes, stress, and turnover intentions. Prior theorizing and research suggest that a psychological climate of inequity will adversely affect work attitudes and job-related distress. At a general level, social exchange theory and research suggests that when employees perceive that their organization or its agents have put forth effort or support on their behalf, they are likely to feel obligated to reciprocate with positive attitudes and behaviors (Blau, 1964; Gouldner, 1960; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Analogously, when individuals perceive that there has been a lack of effort or support, they may reciprocate with less positive attitudes and behaviors (e.g., Turnley, Bolino, Lester, & Bloodgood, 2003). As such, when a woman believes that women in her organization are not fairly treated, she may believe that the organization and its agents are not putting forth sufficient effort and support on her behalf. This is likely to negatively affect the nature of the exchange relationship within

the organization, leading to lower levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment (see also Branscombe & Ellemers, 1998; Ensher, Grant-Vallone, & Donaldson, 2001). Similarly, justice theory and research suggests that employees who perceive injustice in their organizations will be less satisfied with their jobs and less attached (i.e., affectively committed; Meyer, Allen, & Smith, 1993) to their organizations than those who do not perceive injustice (Brief, 1998; Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001). Consistent with this reasoning, research has found that perceived discrimination has a negative impact on Hispanic employees' job satisfaction (Sanchez & Brock, 1996). Moreover, McKay and colleagues (2007) argued and found that ethnic minorities' perceptions of organizational climate for diversity were related to their beliefs that the organizations' actions served their best interests and, ultimately, to their attitudes toward those organizations. Following this rationale, it is likely that women who believe that their organizations do not treat women fairly will be dissatisfied with their jobs and less affectively committed to their organizations.

Similarly, job-related distress is likely to be affected by a climate of gender inequity (Tepper, 2001). Several studies have looked at discrimination as a stressor that affects outcomes beyond traditional work stressors (e.g., Goldenhar et al., 1998; Sanchez & Brock, 1996). There is a fundamental need in human beings to believe in a just world (see Lerner & Miller, 1978), and when women perceive that gender discrimination takes place in their organizations, their beliefs in a just world may be threatened (Branscombe & Ellemers, 1998; Hafer, 2000). A climate of inequity may result in cognitive dissonance between their beliefs about how things should be in their work groups and organizations and what they perceive to be taking place in the workplace, resulting in job-related distress.

Perceived climate of gender inequity is also likely to be positively associated with women's turnover intentions. The attraction-selection-attrition (ASA) model (Schneider, Goldstein, & Smith, 1995) suggests that an organization is defined by the characteristics of the people in it and that attrition will occur when individuals do not "fit" the modal type in their organization. According to demography theories, women in male-dominated contexts have a demographic disadvantage with regard to their fit in the organization. In addition, a psychological climate of gender inequity might deny women the opportunity, or decrease their motivation, to fit in the organization (Katz, 1987). Indeed, extant empirical data suggest that perceptions of climate for diversity predicts the commitment and turnover intentions of ethnic minorities (McKay et al., 2007). Following the ASA model, women who perceive a climate of inequity may be more likely to want to leave that organization. It follows:

Hypothesis 3: Perceived climate of gender inequity will be negatively related to job satisfaction (Hypothesis 3a) and affective commitment (Hypothesis 3b), and positively related to job stress (Hypothesis 3c) and turnover intentions (Hypothesis 3d).

Behaviors. In considering the behavioral consequences of the perceived climate of gender inequity, we do not expect that actual job performance will be affected, given the likely presence of countervailing pressures. Given the widespread potential ramifications of employment discrimination for well-being and economic security, women may actually overcompensate for discrimination by performing at high levels (e.g., Gutek, Cohen, & Tsui, 1996; Tsui, Porter, & Egan, 2002; Valian, 1998). Job performance is not discretionary in that it is required for maintaining organizational membership and the outcomes that accompany it; job performance

typically takes the form of an evaluation of role-required behaviors (Katz, 1964). Most workers are dependent on their jobs for multiple reasons, not the least of which is economic security. Although a climate of inequity may serve as a threat, by performing at a high level women can ensure that their organizational standing is not adversely affected. Thus, although a climate of inequity might have negative performance implications for women (e.g., to the extent that it serves as a distraction and source of stress and to the extent that male coworkers are uncooperative), these may be offset by the positive effects that occur when women feel a need to perform at high levels so that their contributions to an organization are without question.

Although women in male-dominated organizations, such as those in the construction industry, may maintain acceptable levels of job performance, we do expect that behaviors that are not required of workers in order to maintain their job status might be negatively affected by perceived discrimination. In particular, women who experience a psychological climate of gender inequity may not enact discretionary behaviors that might be negatively received by members of a majority. One form of discretionary behavior addressed in the organizational citizenship behavior literature, helping coworkers (Organ, 1988; Podsakoff, Ahearne, & MacKenzie, 1997), might be especially likely to suffer when women experience an inequitable climate. Given their minority status, women in the construction industry would likely be helping their male counterparts who might resent, rebuff, or belittle their offers of assistance. In line with this reasoning, a number of demography studies have shown that men have negative reactions to the presence of female coworkers and believe that their presence can devalue the importance of the work (e.g., O'Farrell & Harlan, 1982; Ragins & Sundstrom, 1989). Consequently, we expect the following:

Hypothesis 4: The psychological climate of gender inequity will be negatively related to helping behaviors.

Study 3: Method

Procedure

Participants in this research were selected randomly from the 5,000 members of the National Association of Women in Construction (NAWIC), an organization devoted to the education of employers and community members at large about women in construction. These women work as tradeswomen, construction company owners, engineers, architects, and secretaries. Participants each received a large envelope that contained a cover letter addressed to them, a survey for them to complete, a second cover letter addressed to their supervisors, a two-page rating form to be completed by their supervisors, and two postage-paid return envelopes addressed to the researchers (one for the respondents and one for the supervisors).

Participants

Employees. Due to time and cost constraints, we randomly selected 3,000 NAWIC members (approximately 60%) as part of a larger study. We received back a total of 657 employee surveys, for a 21.9% response rate. Twenty-four of the surveys were not included

in the analyses because they were incomplete (e.g., retirement). An additional 8 surveys were removed from analyses because they were completed incorrectly. Survey participants received one of two forms (randomly assigned) of the survey that reflected different constructs and measurement strategies. Thus, only half of the sample received the questionnaire that reflected the constructs of interest in this study. Of the 625 interpretable responses, 312 were from the randomly assigned half of the original sample that received the version of the survey that is reported in this article.

Of the respondents included in the analyses, participants reported job titles such as “lighting technician,” “welding assistant,” and “project manager.” The majority of respondents (74.3%) reported working as full-time employees with supervisors, but 18.6% reported that they owned their own company, 2.1% reported that they were self-employed contractors, 1.1% reported being subcontractors, and 3.9% reported working in a part-time role. In addition, approximately 6% of the respondents reported being in a secretarial, administrative assistant, or receptionist position. The majority of participants were Caucasian (91.9%), with relatively equal amounts of individuals from African American, Hispanic, Asian, and Native American descent. Most of the women (57.7%) were married, 22.8% divorced, and 15.3% single. The mean age of the participants was 45.44 years ($SD = 10.60$), whereas the average length of time working in the industry was 16.06 years ($SD = 10.24$). About 14% of the respondents had undertaken some amount of graduate school, in addition to 76% who received some undergraduate education. The average annual pay for the participants was about \$48,700. As expected, the organizations in which the participants worked were male dominated. More than 92% of the participants indicated that there were more men than women employed by their organizations. Furthermore, the average ratio of women to men was less than 1 to 4, consistent with the U.S. Department of Labor’s definition of “nontraditional” work environments (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2007).

Supervisors. We received 465 supervisor rating forms back for a 73.4% response rate among supervisors who received the rating form (i.e., their subordinates returned a completed questionnaire). Of the supervisor surveys, 91 were returned incomplete, primarily due to the fact that the employees were owners without supervisors. Overall, there were 374 interpretable supervisor rating forms (59.1% among those who received the form). Of these, 172 responses were from supervisors of employees who received the version of the questionnaire used for this study (55.1% response rate). Analyses that are based solely on the employees’ questionnaires are based on a sample size of 312, whereas analyses that utilize both the employee surveys and the supervisor rating forms are based on a sample size of 172.

Using binary logistic regression, we tested for nonresponse bias between those participants whose supervisors returned a survey and those whose did not. The ethnicity ($\beta = -.43$, *ns*), marital status ($\beta = .06$, *ns*), and age ($\beta = .01$, *ns*) of the participants were not significant predictors of supervisor completion of the survey. The gender of the supervisor ($\beta = -.48$, *ns*) and organizational composition ($\beta = .28$, *ns*) were also not related to supervisor responses.

Measures

Psychological climate of gender inequity. As in Studies 1 and 2, the extent to which participants believed that their current organizations maintained a climate of gender inequity was measured with a four-item 7-point scale (internal consistency reliability = .91).

Job satisfaction. The participants' satisfaction with their current jobs was measured with a three-item scale (adapted from Seashore, Lawler, Mirvis, & Cammann, 1982) with a 7-point response format anchored by 1 (*strongly disagree*) and 7 (*strongly agree*). A sample item is, "All in all, I am satisfied with my job." In the current study, the internal consistency reliability of the measure of job satisfaction was .67.

Affective commitment. Affective commitment was measured with a six-item scale (from Meyer et al., 1993) with a 7-point response format anchored with 1 (*strongly disagree*) and 7 (*strongly agree*). A sample item is, "This organization has a great deal of personal meaning to me." In the current study, the internal consistency reliability of this measure was .86.

Job-related distress. Job-related distress was measured by a four-item scale (Motowidlo, Packard, & Manning, 1986) with a 7-point response format anchored with 1 (*strongly disagree*) and 7 (*strongly agree*). A sample item is, "My job is extremely stressful." In the current study, the internal consistency reliability of the measure of job distress was .82.

Turnover intentions. The participants' intentions to leave their organizations were measured with a three-item scale (Cammann, Fishman, Jenkins, & Klesh, 1979) with a 7-point response format anchored with 1 (*strongly disagree*) and 7 (*strongly agree*). A sample item is, "I will probably look for a new job in the next year." In the current study, the internal consistency reliability of the measure of turnover intentions was .84.

Job performance. Supervisors' evaluations of overall job performance were measured with a seven-item scale with a 7-point response format (Wayne & Ferris, 1990) anchored with 1 (*strongly disagree*) and 7 (*strongly agree*). A sample item is, "Is a dependable worker." In the current study, the internal consistency reliability of the measure of job performance was .80.

Helping behavior. Helping behavior was measured by supervisors' responses to a seven-item scale (Podsakoff et al., 1997) with a 7-point response format anchored with 1 (*strongly disagree*) and 7 (*strongly agree*). A sample item is, "Helps coworkers if they fall behind in their work." In the current study, the internal consistency reliability of the measure of helping behavior was .87.

Study 3: Results

Table 5 provides the means, standard deviations, internal consistency reliabilities, and intercorrelations among the study variables. A confirmatory factor analysis with all items supported the anticipated structure of seven latent variables, $\chi^2(474) = 696.85, p < .05$, CFI = .95, RMSEA = .05, more so than a single factor, $\chi^2(528) = 2,876.58, p < .01$, CFI = .83, RMSEA = .13, $\chi^2(54) = 2,179.73, p < .01$. In addition, all items loaded (.3 or greater) on the expected factors significantly (all $t_s < .01$).

Table 5
Descriptive Statistics and Zero-Order Correlations Between Study 3 Variables (N = 312)

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Climate of Gender Inequity	Job Satisfaction	Affective Commitment	Job Stress	Turnover Intentions	Job Performance	Helping Behavior
1. Climate of gender inequity	3.31	1.90	(.91)						
2. Job satisfaction	6.39	0.90	-.30**	(.67)					
3. Affective commitment	5.61	1.39	-.42**	.52**	(.86)				
4. Job stress	4.70	1.57	.17**	-.12*	-.08	(.82)			
5. Turnover intentions	2.28	1.62	.39**	-.52**	-.62**	.24**	(.84)		
6. Job performance	6.38	0.74	-.06	.03	.03	-.05	-.08	(.80)	
7. Helping behavior	5.95	0.93	-.18*	.14	.22**	-.18*	-.22**	.60**	(.87)

Note: Internal consistency reliabilities are in parentheses on the diagonal.

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

Table 6
Regression Analyses for Testing Study 3 Hypotheses

	Job Satisfaction	Affective Commitment	Job Stress	Turnover Intentions	Helping Behaviors	Performance
Step 1						
Age	-.05	-.00	-.24**	-.07	-.01	-.10
Education	-.13*	-.10	.16*	.06	-.10	-.17*
Tenure in level	.02	.17*	-.05	-.10	.13	.09
Tenure in organization	-.03	.11*	.20*	-.12	-.03	.02
Tenure in industry	.10	.00	.01	.09	.12	.04
Organization size	.01	.03	-.11*	-.04	-.00	-.00
Step 2						
Climate for gender inequity	-.31**	-.41**	.17**	.40**	-.18*	-.04
Total R^2	.12**	.23**	.12**	.20**	.09*	.04
ΔR^2 from Step 1 to Step 2	.09**	.16**	.03**	.15**	.03*	.00

Note: Values represent standardized coefficients.

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

Hierarchical regression analyses, controlling first for potential confounds (i.e., age, education, tenure) and then examining the relationship between perceptions of an inequitable climate and job attitudes and behaviors, supported Hypotheses 3 and 4 (see Table 6). Specifically, climate of gender inequity was positively related to job stress ($\beta = .17, p < .01$) and turnover intentions ($\beta = .40, p < .01$), and negatively related to job satisfaction ($\beta = -.31, p < .01$), affective commitment ($\beta = -.41, p < .01$), and helping behaviors ($\beta = -.18, p < .05$). As expected, climate of gender inequity was not significantly associated with job performance ($\beta = -.04, ns$).³

Study 3: Discussion

The results of Study 3 indicate that psychological climate of gender inequity is negatively related to women's job satisfaction, affective commitment, and helping behaviors, and positively related to their turnover intentions and stress. These findings confirm and extend previous research linking discrimination with negative work outcomes (e.g., Sanchez & Brock, 1996). That is, a psychological climate of gender inequity appears to contribute to a more negative work experience for women, heightened intentions to leave their current organizations, and lower levels of helping. The results suggest that when women perceive that their organizations condone or tolerate negative treatment based on gender, it has the potential to impair their psychological well-being as well as their interpersonal behaviors. A limitation of this study is that we did not directly assess token status among women in this sample. However, data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2007) suggest that women are uniformly underrepresented in this industry, supporting the notion that many, if not all, of the women in this study likely worked in token environments.

General Discussion

Taken together, the results of these three studies support the integration of the construct of psychological climate of gender inequity within the framework of tokenism theory. In particular, the results of Study 1 suggest that women's token status (particularly in the immediate work group) is associated with their perceptions of an inequitable gender climate in their organizations. Study 2 suggests that women in management may be particularly attuned to the representation of women in the organization as a whole and that the subjective experience of tokenism (i.e., enhanced salience, visibility, and social isolation) gives rise to perceptions of an inequitable gender climate. The results of Study 3 suggest that a psychological climate of gender inequity is negatively related to job satisfaction, affective commitment, and helping behaviors, and positively associated with turnover intentions and job stress. Thus, this article informs tokenism theory and organizational practice in several ways.

The introduction of the construct of psychological climate of gender inequity from the perspective of tokenism theory contributes to a theoretical understanding of the contextual factors involved in tokenism. Although previous studies have called for increased attention to contextual factors related to gender (e.g., Yoder, 2002), this research is among the first empirical studies to consider social contexts from the perspective of psychological climate. Instead, previous researchers have focused on narrower indicators of gendered context such as the traditionality of occupations (Yoder & Schleicher, 1996) and the status of women in particular situations (McDonald et al., 2004). The current research expands these previous conceptualizations of gendered contexts and offers a broader assessment of perceptions of gender equity. By providing a theoretical rationale and empirical evidence that suggest that the subjective experience of tokenism accounts for the effects of objective token status (within the work group and the organization) on the perceived climate of gender inequity, we also contribute to an understanding of the processes underlying psychological climate in organizations. These results also underscore a need to simultaneously integrate objective (i.e., numerical) and subjective components of tokenism in future research.

Although researchers have begun to consider dimensions of organizational climate that are related to diversity (i.e., diversity climate, Barak et al., 1998; organizational tolerance for sexual harassment, Fitzgerald, Drasgow, Hulin, Gelfand, & Magley, 1997), this is one of the first empirical studies to examine individual perceptions of the extent to which the policies, procedures, and norms of organizations are equitable for men and women (cf. Avery, McKay, & Wilson, 2008; Ragins et al., 1998). The increasing diversity of the American workforce, and in particular the pernicious nature of gender discrimination (for a review, see Dipboye & Colella, 2005), makes it critical to consider contextual factors that contribute to the experiences of women and minorities in organizations. Preliminary evidence (e.g., Goldenhar et al., 1998; Sanchez & Brock, 1996) suggests that the experience of discrimination negatively influences job attitudes and behaviors. Extending these findings, the results of Study 3 confirm that a psychological climate of gender inequity is associated with attitudinal and behavioral outcomes in hypothesized ways. Consistent with our theoretical rationale and the foundational theoretical work on psychological climate (e.g., James et al., 1977; Jones & James, 1979), perceptions of inequitable gender climates have very real psychological and behavioral consequences for women in organizations.

Recently, critics (e.g., Yoder, 1991, 1994) have questioned Kanter's (1977a) original postulation that a central solution for improving the status of women in organizations is increasing their proportional representation, but these critics have generally failed to identify favorable alternative remedies. The results of this study help to illuminate that the nature of the problem of tokenism, and the nature of its solution, might lie in the context it produces. That is, in addition to increasing the representation of women and minorities in organizations, practitioners might also work toward developing and communicating equitable organizational norms, policies, and procedures. Recent analyses of survey and archival data from 700 organizations over a 30-year period suggest that women (and ethnic minorities) may be most successful in organizations with formal structures designed to support them (e.g., affirmative action programs, diversity committees, organizational positions devoted to ensuring equal opportunity; Kalev, Dobbin, & Kelly, 2006). Future research should draw from the literature on organizational culture change (e.g., Ashkanasy, Wilderom, & Peterson, 2000; Wilkins & Dyer, 1988) to integrate such formal structures and assess the efficacy of various organizational strategies to create an equitable climate. Previous research has also highlighted the central role of supervisors in creating positive exchange relationships (e.g., Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002), suggesting that the negative consequences of tokenism may be avoided through supportive efforts made by women's supervisors. Indeed, the current results suggest that the effect of token status is accounted for by subjective perceptions, implying that negative outcomes of tokenism may be avoided by ensuring that women do not experience social isolation and enhanced visibility and/or by working to create an equitable gender climate.

As with most research, our study is not without limitations. For example, our data are cross-sectional, and thus, the direction of causality cannot be unambiguously ascertained. Although, based on prior theorizing and research, we hypothesized and found certain patterns of relations, we cannot rule out the possibility of alternative relations among our variables. Future longitudinal research should clarify, integrate, and extend our work on the antecedents and consequences of a climate of gender inequity by tracking the effects of token status and inequitable climate over time. Such research might also compare the experiences of token men and women; we focused here on the experiences of women because of their disadvantaged status (which is likely to influence their interpretation of token status; see Stryker, 1980) and propensity to experience inequity and its consequences, but examination of the perceptions and experiences of men who are underrepresented in their organizations is an important next step. It would also be helpful to test the linkages among all of the relevant variables in a single sample. The three studies provided here are informative in conjunction, and the consistency in the pattern of findings across three samples might be indicative of generalizability. However, it would be useful for future research to integrate these patterns in a single study. In addition, although our three studies were purposefully focused on the individual level of analysis, we would encourage future researchers to consider multilevel implications. For example, it would be helpful to examine the organization-level factors that give rise to tokenism and inequitable climates and to assess perceptions of work group inequity in comparison to perceptions of the organization as a whole.

Conclusion

The increasing diversity of the American workforce has created a critical need for a broader understanding of the processes and outcomes associated with demographic representation. The current research clarifies tokenism theory by integrating the construct of psychological climate of gender inequity in relation to token status, the subjective experience of tokenism, and work outcomes. Thus, this study highlights the need for researchers to examine perceptions of an inequitable climate as a proximal process by which tokenism may affect work outcomes. Despite genuine and considerable progress in the status of women in organizations, the persistence of workplace inequities (e.g., Catalyst, 2001; Dipboye & Colella, 2005; Powell, Butterfield, & Parent, 2002) makes this and future studies crucial for the field of organizational behavior.

Notes

1. We conducted two additional sensitivity analyses to test the robustness of our findings for Study 1: (a) excluding from the sample any participants who indicated that their job title was "owner," "co-owner," "president," or "CEO" and (b) including control variables for age, tenure, and education level. These models yielded the same pattern of findings as those reported in the text.

2. We conducted two additional sensitivity analyses to test the robustness of our findings for Study 2: (a) excluding from the sample any participants who indicated that their job title was "owner," "co-owner," "president," or "CEO" and (b) including control variables for age, tenure, and education level. These models yielded the same pattern of findings as those reported in the text.

3. We conducted two additional sensitivity analyses to test the robustness of our findings for Study 3: (a) excluding from the sample any participants who indicated that their job title was "owner," "co-owner," "president," or "CEO" and (b) excluding participants who indicated that their job title was "secretary" or "receptionist" from the sample. These models yielded the same pattern of findings as those reported in the text.

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