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## Review of Grawitch et al. (2025)

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This manuscript investigates ambiguity in human interactions, building on prior work by Grawitch et al. (2025) to examine how sex composition, context, and individual attitudes shape perceptions of sexism and related decisions.

Overall, I quite appreciate the manuscript's aims to deepen the understanding of barriers to creating a shared reality in human interactions. Of course, this is likely an impossible feat, as the authors suggest in their review of the numerous factors that influence human judgment. The manuscript still tries to advance those aims and identifies several potentially important factors that may shape how people judge ambiguous instances of sexism, including individual and situational elements, ranging from the gender composition of the sender and receiver to observer characteristics and broader contextual cues. Authors find that people assess an ambiguous interaction as more sexist when a comment is made by a man (vs. a woman), observers hold more sexist beliefs, and the context is less stereotypically female.

That being said, the manuscript also contains challenges, particularly in aligning aims, theory, analyses, and the integration of various claims. I will mainly focus on the presentation of ideas and the structure of the study, as these, at times, make it difficult to follow how the different parts fit together or what theoretical logic underpins the predictions. Therefore, my overarching concern is that the manuscript includes numerous moving parts that are not adequately integrated or explained.

1. **As a stated replication and extension, the manuscript relies heavily on the previous study and does not quite stand alone.** The manuscript frequently refers back to the prior study, also published in *JOIBS*. Replications are, of course, welcome, but the manuscript would benefit from standing more on its own. This is evident even in the introduction, which focuses heavily on describing what the previous study did (Grawitch et al.) and then frames the present study as an expansion. It might have been more compelling to begin with the core research question—what you aim to find and what you are focusing on—and integrate the prior study later as support. As it stands, the focus on replication sometimes overshadows the broader questions the manuscript

could be addressing. Moreover, the manuscript assumes that the reader has engaged with the previous study, so it is light on certain explanations and definitions (as noted below).

2. **The theoretical rationale is sometimes unclear or unnecessarily complex.** The manuscript draws on social prediction theory to support the prediction that sex composition should affect judgments. However, the argument does not always come through clearly. In some cases, a more straightforward explanation might suffice, too. For instance, the observed findings could arguably be explained by prototypicality—some individuals, such as men, may be more likely to be perceived as engaging in sexist behavior due to base-rate expectations (e.g., see Goh, Brandt-Law, Cheek, Sinclair, & Kaiser, 2022). In that case, theories such as moral typecasting (e.g., Gray & Wegner, 2009) or research on prototypes of perpetrators and victims may offer a more direct explanation. As it is, the theoretical foundation sometimes feels disjointed from the predictions and results.
3. **The study includes many components, but they are not always well integrated or introduced.** The paper investigates a range of predictors—including sex composition, neosexism, prior beliefs, and context—and includes multiple outcomes (sexism ratings, interaction favorability, and decision choice). This broad scope is valuable, but it sometimes leads to a lack of clarity. There are occasional gaps between research questions, hypotheses, and analyses. Some effects, such as the influence of sex composition on perceived sexism, are treated as open questions even though prior literature would support formal hypotheses.

In addition, the structure of the study is not fully introduced early in the manuscript. The 2x2x2 design described in the methods (but not in analyses) does not come through clearly in the introduction. This makes it difficult to follow how the parts of the study fit together or how they relate to the main aims.

The analytic rationale for the mediation or moderated mediation is similarly not introduced before appearing in the analyses. While the statistical path is clearly described, the conceptual logic behind testing this model is not laid out earlier.

4. **The use of gendered context is a key extension, but it is not fully explained and may be confounded.** One of the stated contributions of the study is the inclusion of male- and female-typed contexts (banking versus childcare). However, the rationale for why this should matter is not clearly explained. Is the idea that congruence between the actor's gender and the setting would reduce attributions of sexism? Or that female-typed environments elicit different baselines of judgment? The discussion is brief and mostly limited to role congruence, without clarifying whether it is the congruence itself or the gendered associations of the setting that are expected to influence outcomes.

There is also a potential confound. In both scenarios, the message sender is described as an assistant manager. This implies a leadership or supervisory role (still occasionally associated with men), which might affect how their behavior is interpreted, regardless

of context. It is possible that the sender's status or authority could interact with perceptions of bias or inappropriateness in ways that are not addressed.

5. **Terminology for key variables is inconsistent, which makes the manuscript harder to follow.** The manuscript refers to the same variable in several different ways across different parts —“sex pairing,” “sex composition,” and labels like “female sender/male receiver.” It is not always clear whether these terms refer to the same construct or different manipulation aspects. This becomes clearer later in the manuscript (and with reference to the previous study), but for a reader unfamiliar with the prior work, it is easy to lose track of what is being manipulated, analyzed, and reported. More consistent terminology—or clearer explanation early on— across all aspects of the manuscript would make the study easier to follow.

**There is also inconsistency in terminology, results, and figures** (in figures, the visual presentation could benefit from more explicit labeling and annotation to support the intended claim).

In summary, the manuscript raises an evergreen question of how people assess ambiguous situations. I recommend better integration of theoretical and methodological elements to help the study's contribution come through more clearly.