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Creating gender-inclusive research cultures: the role of micromessages



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INTRODUCTION

- ❖ Social interaction can either create a **positive, collegial atmosphere** or create situations in which **some people feel marginalised or excluded**, collectively referred to as **micromessages**.
- ❖ On the negative side, **microexclusions** are typically **subtle, ambiguous** and often **unintentional**, e.g., a passing comment, an assumption about someone's role, or a failure to credit a contribution.
- ❖ We focused on microexclusions **specifically related to gender**, given that women cite interpersonal relationships at work as reasons for leaving, or considering leaving, academia.¹
- ❖ Whether someone **recognises** an event as a microexclusion may depend on their **personal attitudes**; people with more egalitarian views may notice gendered signals in everyday interactions.
- ❖ **Research questions:**
 - **RQ1:** On average, do women appraise these scenarios more negatively than men do?
 - **RQ2:** Do women and men differ in gender-related attitudes, awareness of gender-based stigma and strength of identity with their own gender?
 - **RQ3:** Do these variables correlate with how participants appraise the fictional scenarios?

RESULTS

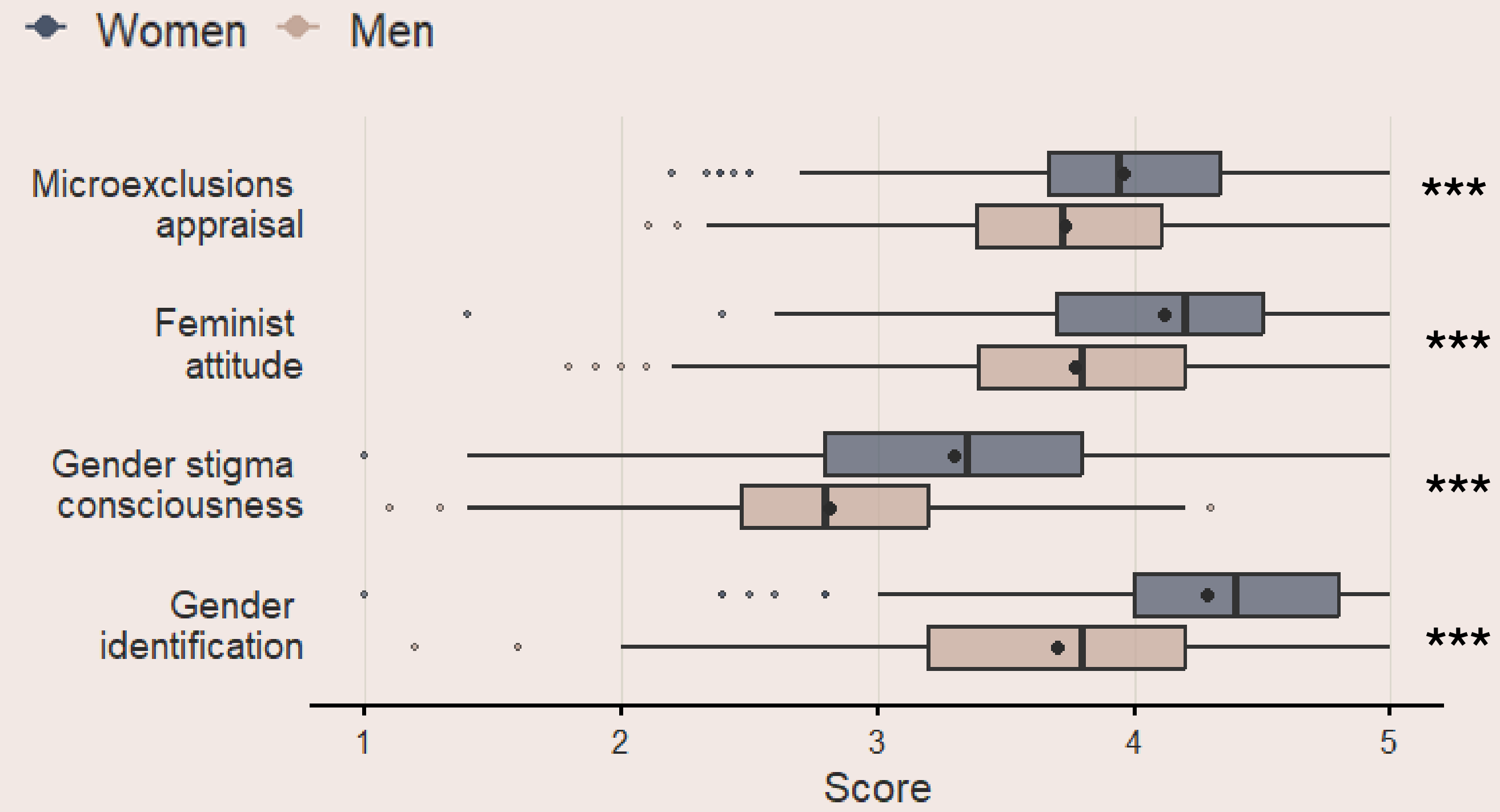


Figure 1. Distribution of scores for each variable. Boxes: interquartile range (IQR). Vertical line inside each box: the median. Point inside each box: the mean. Microexclusions appraisal reflects the mean of 6 appraisal questions across 3 vignettes. *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

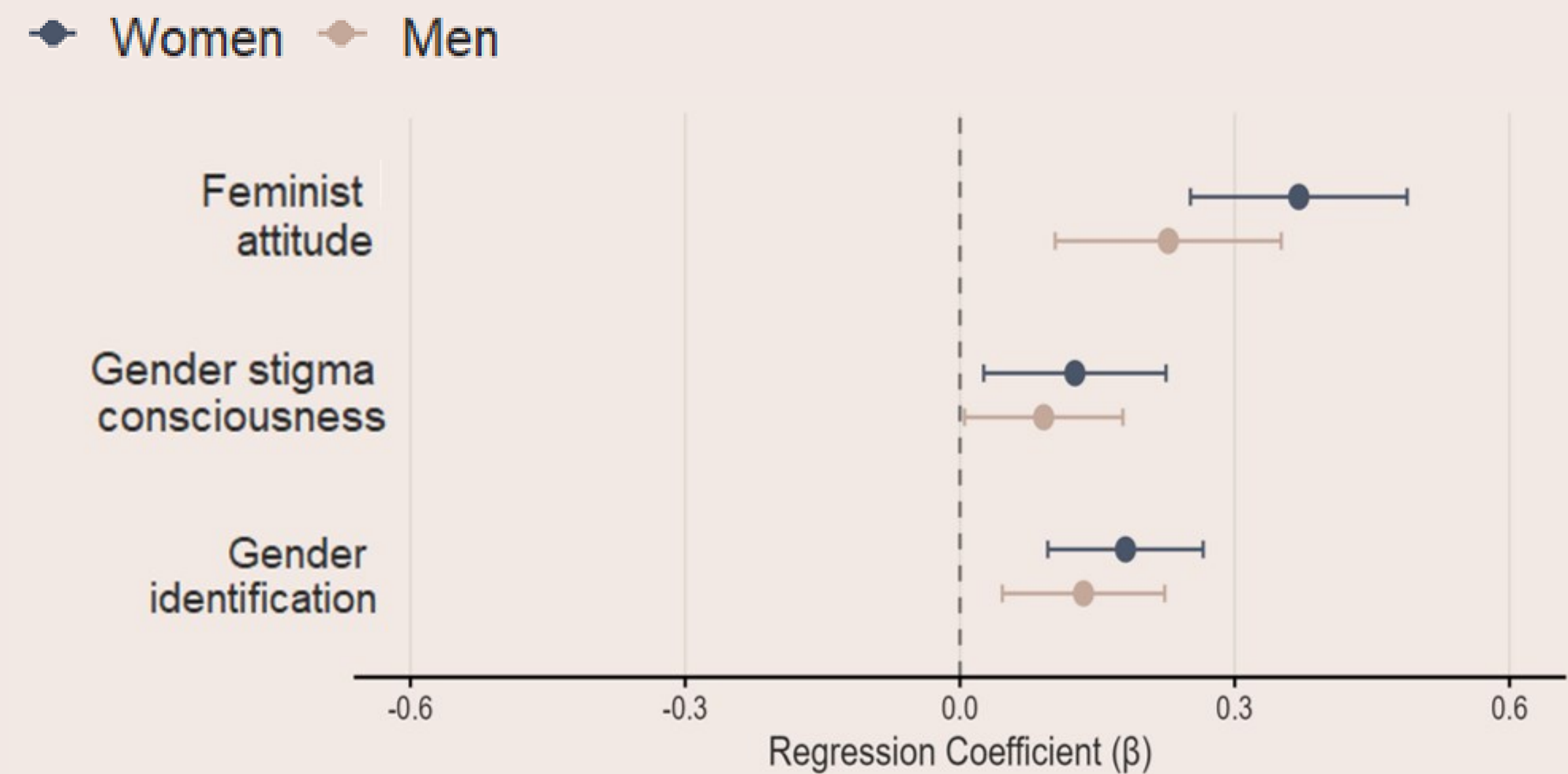


Figure 2. Forest plot showing standardised regression coefficient and 95% confidence interval predicting microexclusion appraisal.

METHOD

- ❖ **986 participants (49.8% women)**, who were fluent in English and UK-based, were recruited via Prolific (<https://www.prolific.com/>).
- ❖ Participants were asked to read **3 out of 6 microexclusion vignettes²** and answer **6 questions** for each one; for example:
Jessica, an associate within the finance department, is discussing her performance appraisal ratings with her boss, John. During the meeting, Jessica was reporting back on her accomplishments for the quarter. They discuss a formal presentation that Jessica had single-handedly developed and delivered to a group of key potential clients. After Jessica briefs John on the outcome of this presentation, John asks, "So, who helped you with your presentation?"

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly agree
○	○	○	○	○

 - Question about **unfairness**: e.g., "John's actions were **fair**."
 - Question about **prejudice**: e.g., "The response of John was based on his **prejudice**."
 - Question about **emotions**: e.g., "Jessica would **feel upset** with John's behaviour."
- ❖ Participants then completed the following measures:
 - **Feminist attitudes scale** (10 items; e.g., 'A woman should have the same job opportunities as a man.')
 - **Gender stigma consciousness scale** (10 items; e.g., 'Me being [female]/[male] does not influence how [men]/[women] act with me.')
 - **Gender identification scale** (5 items; e.g., 'I have a lot in common with other [women]/[men].')
- ❖ **Analyses**
 - We used a **MANOVA** to compare gender differences on all variables (**Fig. 1**).
 - We used **multiple regression** to examine psychological predictors of responses to the vignettes (**Fig. 2**).
 - We used a **moderated mediation** to examine whether gender differences in microexclusion appraisal are explained by differences in feminist attitudes and gender stigma consciousness (**Fig. 3**).

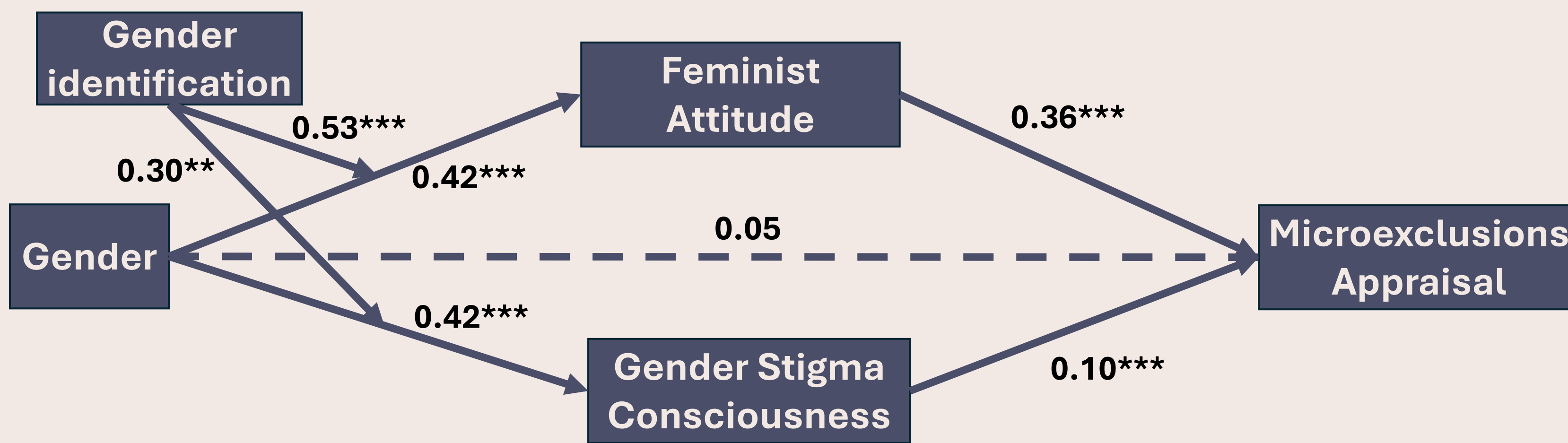


Figure 3. Moderated mediation model for the relationship between gender and microexclusion appraisal.

DISCUSSION

- ❖ On average, women rated the scenarios more negatively than men did (**Fig. 1**).
- ❖ Women also scored higher than men on feminist attitudes, gender stigma consciousness and identification with their own gender (**Fig. 1**).
- ❖ In both genders, individuals who scored higher on each of these three predictors rated the scenarios more negatively (**Fig. 2**).
- ❖ Feminist attitudes and gender stigma consciousness mediate gender differences in scenario ratings, moderated by gender identification, and the magnitude of gender differences depends on gender identification (**Fig. 3**).
- ❖ These results suggest that personal attitudes and identities shape how people interpret subtle, exclusionary social interactions.
- ❖ Understanding who recognises these acts as exclusionary, and why, is critical for designing effective interventions for workplace settings.

REFERENCES ¹ Spoon, K., et al. (2023). *Science Advances*. 9, eadi2205; ² Basford, T. E., et al. (2014). *Psychology of Women Quarterly*. 38, 340–349.

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