development and career trajectory of women and minority employees. We illustrate just two examples, but importantly, these are long-term deleterious effects that are not evidenced when considering single acts of subtle discrimination. We will benefit from a more nuanced understanding of subtle discrimination in the workplace, so long as we recognize that its most dangerous characteristic may be a clandestine yet persistent ubiquity.

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Subtle Discrimination in the Service Sector

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A hotel concierge notices that her White female coworker earns higher tips from guests and wonders whether this disparity is attributable to race. A

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financial service specialist working at a bank considers whether his age is the reason why customers in need of consultation approach his younger coworkers more often. As these examples indicate, Jones, Arena, Nittrouer, Alonso, and Lindsey's (2017) multidimensional framework extends to customer service contexts. In the sections that follow, we contextualize and extend many of Jones et al.'s arguments to the customer service industry, providing implications for both research and practice.

Extension to the Customer Service Context

Jones and colleagues describe subtle discrimination as a cyclical, interpersonal process. They note that subtle discrimination can have a contagious effect on people in organizations. Expanding on this metaphor, one can think of the customer service industry as a public space—one in which subtle discrimination may be quickly and widely transmitted. The transmission of subtle discrimination may be infectious within the workplace (as Jones et al. highlighted in their examples) and can transcend organizational boundaries, as it is exchanged between customers (organizational outsiders) and service workers (organizational insiders).

Subtle discrimination in customer exchanges constitutes an important practical and research concern. The service industry is one of the fastest growing industries in the U.S. labor market (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015a). In the next decade, data project 94.6% growth in service occupations—that is 9.3 million new service sector jobs set to emerge. Additionally, minorities are more likely to occupy service jobs compared with nonminorities. In 2015, service jobs employed mostly Blacks (25%) and Hispanics or Latinos (25%), compared with 16% Whites. Of that, women constituted the majority of each grouping (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015b).

As Jones and colleagues argue, the ambiguity of subtle discrimination evokes uncertainty from the target, requiring an additional attributional process, which may be more emotionally and cognitively taxing than overt discrimination. Compounding this issue, customer service workers must mentally reconcile discriminatory experiences within the context of an asymmetric power differential that assumes "the customer is always right." Accordingly, standards for customer service interaction may cultivate acts of subtle discrimination. Skarlicki, van Jaarsveld, and Walker (2008) identify customers "as a source of (un)fairness that is distinct from intra-organizational sources" (p. 1336) based on legitimacy of power, duration of exchange, and employee emotional labor. Given the prevalence and dynamic of service work, exploring subtle discrimination in the service context is a useful area for future research and practical intervention.

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Regarding the Cyclical Nature of Subtle Discrimination

Interpersonal Exchange Process

Customers discriminate against workers in subtle, overt, formal, and informal ways, as we allude to in the examples above. Likewise, workers reciprocate discrimination against customers. Indeed, several studies have found support for the notion that customer service employees respond to customer aggression with reciprocity (e.g., Morganson & Major, 2014; Skarlicki et al., 2008). Walker, van Jaarsveld, and Skarlicki (2014) distinguished customer incivility events (i.e., a single instance of customer incivility) from customer incivility entities (i.e., the accumulation of customer incivility experiences). Their findings support that employees reciprocate customer incivility directly toward the customer that instigated the incivility. Moreover, workers who face customer discrimination may experience ego depletion and may be more likely to transmit workplace aggression to their coworkers, perpetuating the cycle of discrimination (Deng, Walter, Lam, & Zhao, 2016). These results provide support for Jones et al.'s description of subtle discrimination as an exchange process that occurs over time, but the results extend it to a customer service context.

Jones et al. explain that subtle discrimination "does not occur within a vacuum of a single dyadic interaction" (p. 60) and instead highlight the role of bystanders, team-level processes, and culture in the discrimination cycle. Likewise, we purport that the cycle of subtle aggression between service workers and customers operates not only at the dyadic level of analysis but becomes shared and can operate at the group or organizational levels of analysis. As a recent media example of subtle discrimination at the organizational level of analysis, some restaurants closed their doors for the Essence Music Festival this year in New Orleans and faced skepticism about closing during the potentially very lucrative African American-focused music festival (Ferrand, 2016). Although there is a lack of research examining discrimination in customer service at this level, Schneider and colleagues' research on customer service orientation (e.g., Schneider, Gunnarson, & Niles-Jolly, 1994) provides some initial evidence of how employees can form shared perceptions that impact how they treat customers. In turn, these perceptions impact customer perceptions of the organization (Schneider, White, & Paul, 1998).

Workers may form shared stereotypes and give differential service to customers. For example, a waitress may casually comment to another waitress-in-training that customers of a particular identity group do not tip well. This stereotype is part of the new employee's socialization and may lead the trainee to engage in subtle discrimination toward that identity group. Likewise, norms of subtle customer discrimination may become initiated and shared as employees socially cope by "venting" their experiences with

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coworkers (Morganson, 2011). Discussing the incident creates allies who have vicariously experienced discrimination.

The Dynamic Nature of Service Interaction

Jones et al. highlight the effects of repeated exposure (i.e., relationships) on the target individual. However, interactions with customers vary in both duration and nature. Service *encounters* are brief individual exchanges, whereas service *relationships* develop with time and repeated contact (Gutek, 1995). Encounters may be more susceptible to customer discrimination and mistreatment. Encounters are fleeting—there is little reason for one to remain cordial when future contact is unanticipated. Thus, service encounters may be more likely than relationships to involve overt discrimination. One can easily conjure images of an overtly irate customer at a service window, for example.

Furthermore, encounters permit customers to assign stereotypes to service employees based on perceptions of outgroup characteristics (Gutek, 1995). Jones et al. discuss the positive outcomes of increased socialization with outgroup members. Namely, repeated contact with outgroup members (as in customer–employee relationships) may invalidate preconceived notions based on one's social category. This learning process is notably absent from service encounters.

Effects of Prolonged Exposure

Jones et al. describe how workers may habituate or become desensitized to subtle discrimination over time. However, customer incivility research seems to indicate the opposite. Customer incivility predicts emotional exhaustion (Kern & Grandey, 2009; Sliter & Jones, 2016), an aspect of employee burnout. Emotional exhaustion is a state of feeling worn down or having one's psychological resources depleted (Maslach, Schaufei, & Leiter, 2001). Perhaps some employees do find ways to cope and adapt. However, these coping strategies can sometimes involve perpetuating the cycle of aggression (e.g., retaliation; Krischer, Penney, & Hunter, 2010; Morganson & Major, 2014) and need more careful study.

Perhaps instead of the "skin thickening" effect that Jones et al. describe, resilience to subtle discrimination occurs over time at the organizational level of analysis. Morganson (2008) used Schneider's (1987) attraction-selection-attrition model to explain how enduring sexualized aggression from customers may be built into service workers' psychological contract. The processes of attraction, selection, and attrition may describe how customer service employees who are retained may outwardly appear to have a "thicker skin."

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Spillover

As observed by Jones et al., bystanders who fail to challenge subtle discrimination may unintentionally structure a workplace culture accepting of these acts. This norm then influences an employee's well-being on the job, the effects of which cascade into their personal lives. Negative spillover may occur when the deleterious effects of customer discrimination follow an employee home. Similarly, adaptation in response to mistreatment in one's personal life may transfer to the work environment. As emphasized by this view, customer service relationships potentially pose wide-ranging issues for targets of subtle discrimination.

Several studies have investigated spillover as it applies to the nursing occupation (e.g., Jackson, Hutchinson, Luck, & Wilkes, 2013; Oliveira & Flava, 2008). Jackson et al. (2013) explored the overt discrimination and harassment that nurses endure by way of patients and their personal contacts. The authors operated under the assumption that nurses, like other service workers, accept discrimination as part of the job due to the repetitive nature of these acts. This leads to an apathetic workforce—individuals who may become tolerant of subtle acts of incivility at home. Furthermore, the prevalence of intimate partner violence reported among nurses may relate to attitudes of submission and silence reinforced by the work culture (Oliveira & Flava, 2008). Results from a related study support a strong relationship between workplace silencing behaviors and home silencing behaviors among nurses (DeMarco, 2002). This continuous reinforcement of inaction from work to home, and vice versa, may inadvertently promote the cyclical nature of subtle discrimination among targets who experience it.

Conversely, spillover of subtle discrimination from work to home may have a positive effect on customer–employee relations. Individuals working in the service industry often find themselves in the role of customer. It is possible that repeated exposure to subtle discrimination has a positive spillover effect when a service employee switches roles from employee to customer. Accordingly, targets of subtle discrimination within the provider context may function as allies when engaged in the customer role.

Strategies for Remediation

Individual Strategies

Jones et al. discuss how targets, perpetrators, bystanders, and allies contribute to and have a role in remediating subtle discrimination. As the authors note, targets may employ numerous coping strategies to address subtle discrimination. Morganson and Major (2014) found support for a five-factor model of how workers cope with sexual harassment from customers. Of these coping strategies, social coping was the most frequently employed, which emphasizes the importance of allies. McCance, Nye, Wang, Jones, and

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Chiu (2013) found that workers who experienced more negative customer interactions engaged in more social sharing and reported it to be beneficial. The authors argued that sharing alleviated the burden of emotional labor.

In focus group discussion on how workers respond to sexualized customer aggression (Morganson, 2010), a service worker provided a creative example of what Jones et al. refer to as consensual allyship. As an employee at a large retail store, she was required to wear a headset to communicate and collaborate with team members in other areas of the store. Occasionally, workers would turn their microphones on to invite their team members to hear a particularly irate customer. Coworkers would provide supportive commentary and jokes to lighten the interaction.

Jones et al.'s discussion of target remediation strategies briefly notes the effectiveness of individuation. Likewise, we recommend the use of impression management tactics in customer service interactions. Service employees may shape customer perceptions by providing them with humanizing information. Practical means of doing so include placing family photos within customers' view, wearing a nametag, or making small talk about things that the service worker or customer may have in common (e.g., a cashier may comment "My son loves this product too.").

Organizational-Level Strategies

An organization-wide needs analysis, along with multilevel data, may identify instances of subtle discrimination otherwise obscured by the rapid exchange of services. Training initiatives aimed at both employees and supervisors may encourage acknowledgment and correction of discriminatory acts. Because subtle discrimination is difficult to identify, role-play exercises might improve employees' ability to recognize when it happens. Training programs may also help workers identify when they are experiencing negative feelings about a particular group or individual by increasing awareness of personal biases. As a result, the employee can learn ways to redirect his/her thoughts and practice approaching the customer in a neutral manner.

Management should work to address issues and complaints by taking action, thereby setting the example for other employees within the organization to follow. In the focus groups referenced above (Morganson, 2010), a focus group contributor noted that his company tracked negative interactions with customers through rewards cards. If a customer engaged in a certain number of aggressive acts, they could be turned away from future business. Perhaps a tracking technique could be used to identify accumulated patterns of discrimination in perpetrators. Additionally, displaying corporate diversity policies can serve as a reminder to abide by organizational standards of behavior. Efforts to eliminate discrimination must be reflected by behavior at the organizational level. By studying individual and aggregate

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practices, organizations can better detect and, therefore, address instances of discrimination.

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Wait! What About Customer-Based Subtle Discrimination?

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In the focal article, Jones, Arena, Nittrouer, Alonso, and Lindsey (2017) provide a review and a conceptual framework for examining subtle discrimination in the workplace. The focal article, however, mainly focuses on subtle discrimination that occurs among coworkers and only mentions customers once. The current commentary delves deeper into this notion and extends their framework by focusing on customer-based subtle discrimination. We mainly focus on research from the service industry, in part because the service industry is the largest industry in the United States, employing more than half of all employees in the United States (Lopez, 2010), and because the service industry involves frequent customer interactions. Whether it is a server in a restaurant, a front-desk clerk at a hotel, a flight attendant on a plane, or an attendant in a retail store, stigmatized service employees often face subtle discrimination. Consistent with the focal article, we argue that the subtle discrimination faced by service employees can be both interpersonal (e.g., rudeness directed toward a stigmatized service employee) and formal

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