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Personal and Organizational Predictors of Workplace Sexual Harassment of Women by Men

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The authors investigated the predictors of workplace sexual harassment in 278 male university faculty and staff (*M* age = 45 years). Workplace variables (perceptions of organizational sanctions against harassment and perceptions of a sexualized workplace) and personal variables (adversarial sexual beliefs, sexual harassment beliefs, perspective taking, and self-esteem) were studied as predictors of sexualized and gender harassment. Social desirability was controlled. Both organizational variables and beliefs about sexual harassment predicted gender harassment and sexualized harassment. Perspective taking, adversarial sexual beliefs, and sexual harassment beliefs moderated the effects of perceived organizational sanctions against harassment on sexualized harassment. Findings are discussed as they relate to organizational efforts to reduce or prevent sexual harassment.

The principal goal of this study was to use men's self-reports to investigate the personal and organizational factors that predict gender and sexual harassment in the workplace. Within the last 10 to 15 years, workplace sexual harassment has become a major issue because of several converging factors. Increased media attention has come about mainly because of several sexual harassment suits involving prominent public figures. Research has shown that sexual harassment victims frequently suffer from the same types of problems associated with other major workplace stressors. These include increased incidence of psychosomatic illness, reduced concentration, and negative mood (Barling et al., 1996). Prolonged chronic exposure to sexual harassment may cause severe emotional strain and the subsequent disabling symptoms associated with this condition (Crull, 1982; Gutek, 1985; Loy & Stewart, 1984; Salisbury, Ginorio, Remick, & Stringer, 1986). Recent decisions handed down by Supreme Courts in the United States (Mishkind, 1992) and in Canada (Aggarwal, 1987) indicate that organizations can be held responsible for the workplace behavior of

employees and for the maintenance of workplace standards and practices that do not encourage or allow harassment (although this has not been the response in all countries that recognize sexual harassment as a workplace problem). As a result, organizations and their leaders in North America are increasing their focus on sexual harassment in the workplace. Other industrialized countries have also responded to workplace harassment as a workplace problem, although the legal response and remedies taken may vary a great deal from country to country. Most of the existing research has focused on the prevalence of harassment, coping strategies of women who are subjected to harassment, and the effects of sexual harassment on the victims. Although invaluable, these reports cannot isolate the antecedents of workplace sexual harassment, which is critical information if we are to move toward prevention. The present study investigates the personal and workplace predictors of sexual harassment using men's self-reports of harassment behavior.

Several explanatory models have been suggested to account for sexual harassment in the workplace. These include the natural/biological model, the organizational model, the sociocultural model (Tangri, Burt, & Johnson, 1982), and the sex-role spillover model proposed by Gutek (1985). Although all offer insight into the problem, no one model of harassment behavior satisfactorily accounts for all types of harassment. The organizational model of sexual harassment proposes that the structural and environmental conditions found in the workplace will provide opportunities for harassment or implicitly encourage harassment on the basis of workplace norms, gender bias, and imbedded power relations

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The complete sexual harassment questionnaire, as well as any others generated for this study, are available from Julian Barling.

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between men and women. Prior research has shown that workplace norms (Gutek, 1985; Gutek & Morasch, 1982), situational factors (Pryor, Lavite, & Stoller, 1993), and workplace climate (Bond, Mulvey, & Mandell, 1993) are all related to victims' reports of harassment in the workplace. The organizational model holds the most direct relevance to workplace harassment behavior and served as the basis for the organizational factors in the current study.

Various researchers have categorized and compiled lists of behaviors reflecting workplace sexual harassment (e.g., Gruber, 1992; Gutek, 1985; Terpstra & Baker, 1991). Gutek (1985) suggested six categories that reflect workplace sexual harassment: comments, looks or gestures, nonsexual touching, sexual touching, expected socializing, and expected sexual activity. Gruber (1992) suggested that there are three general categories: requests, comments, and nonverbal displays that include touching and assault. Based on a factor analysis of the Sexual Experience Questionnaire, Fitzgerald and Hesson-McInnis (1989) showed that three factors accounted for approximately 50% of the variance in workplace sexual harassment, namely gender harassment, unwanted sexual attention, and sexual coercion. Using the same typology of behaviors, Bond et al. (1993) conducted a survey of 2,800 undergraduate students. Two factors accounted for most of the variance in the harassment incidents, namely gender harassment (generalized sexual remarks and derogatory comments and behavior that is gender based but nonspecific) and sexualized harassment (seductive behavior, sexual threats or bribes, and sexual coercion that is part of specific interpersonal events). These researchers found that although sexual coercion might validly be considered a separate construct, in general the incidence of this extreme type of harassment is so low in comparison to other forms that it was necessary to include these with less coercive forms. For the present study we use the more parsimonious two-factor approach to differentiate between conceptually separate categories of behavior and include sexually coercive behavior under sexualized harassment. However, we will refer to these two forms of harassment as "sexualized" and "gender" harassment and use the term "sexual harassment" in its more generic sense.

In addition to the harassment behaviors, we investigate nonsexual interactions between men and women in the workplace. One argument brought to the sexual harassment debate is that ambiguous or noncoercive forms of between-gender behavior that are sometimes viewed as harassment are similar to other nonharassing interpersonal interactions but are misconstrued by the complainant. Thus, nonharassing

behaviors were included in the present study to test whether the predictors of gender and sexualized harassment differ from those of nonharassing interpersonal workplace behaviors (see Barling et al., 1996).

Before identifying specific predictors, two issues bear consideration. First, our choice of predictor variables comes from the literature on workplace sexual harassment (e.g., Gutek, 1985; Tangri et al., 1982) and other coercive behaviors (Rosenbaum & O'Leary, 1981). Second, we are interested in understanding various workplace and personal factors that will either enhance or reduce the likelihood that workplace sexual harassment might occur.

Personal Predictors

Previous research that obtained men's self-reports of unwanted sexual activity demonstrated that perpetrators emphasize the exploitive and adversarial nature of relations between sexes (Muehlenhard & Cook, 1988). For example, the willingness to accept beliefs about rape that deny its impact on the victim and that tend to blame the rape on the victim may be similar to sentiments voiced by those persons who deny the impact, or even the existence, of workplace harassment as a serious social problem. Thus, we predict that inappropriate sexual harassment beliefs (as a specific manifestation) and adversarial sexual beliefs (as a more general manifestation) would predict sexualized and gender harassment. Of these two constructs, sexual harassment beliefs is most directly related to sexual harassment behaviors and so would be expected to have a stronger predictive relationship with the same.

These two variables would be associated with an increase in sexual harassment. It is equally plausible that certain personal variables would result in a decrease in the likelihood of sexual harassment. The ability to adopt or be aware of other people's perspectives is an important feature of successful adult social functioning (Davis, 1980). Pryor (1987) found that perspective taking was negatively correlated with the likelihood to sexually harass. We predict that men who are sensitive to the impact of their actions on others are less likely to engage in behaviors that are offensive.

Another characteristic that is integral to successful adult functioning is self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1965). If sexual harassment stems from the need to exert control and maintain power (Tangri et al., 1982), then individuals high in self-esteem should feel less threatened by others and presumably should feel less need to assert dominance. Some support for this

hypothesis derives from the finding that abusive husbands reported lower self-esteem than nonabusive husbands (Rosenbaum & O'Leary, 1981).

Thus, we expect that adversarial sexual beliefs and inappropriate sexual harassment beliefs will predict the occurrence of workplace sexual harassment (the latter more strongly than the former). In contrast, positive self-esteem and the tendency to take the perspective of others will decrease the likelihood of workplace sexual harassment.

Organizational Predictors

The organizational model of sexual harassment (Tangri et al., 1982) focuses our attention on the immediate worksite, the broader culture of the organization, and the ways that organizational norms may implicitly encourage or explicitly discourage workplace sexual harassment. One aspect of this contextual focus is the organization's sexual harassment policy and grievance procedures. The lack of a sexual harassment policy may suggest an indifference or reluctance to deal with sexual harassment as a serious issue. A formal policy that looks good on paper but is ineffectively enforced, or a grievance procedure that is damaging to the complainant, may implicitly discourage legitimate complaints and do little to curb inappropriate behavior. Accordingly, we expect that the perception of the organization's sexual harassment policy (i.e., the way in which it is implemented) would predict gender and sexualized harassment. That is, those respondents who perceive their workplace sexual harassment policy as weakly enforced or without prohibitive sanctions will be more likely to commit sexual harassment behaviors.

A related workplace factor is the extent to which the workplace is perceived as sexualized (i.e., sexual jokes and innuendo, sexual teasing, and sexual discussions are common), which will signal to employees that sexualized behavior between employees is acceptable. As such, we predict that the perception of a more sexualized workplace will be associated with a greater likelihood to sexually harass.

Person \times Situation Interactions

Previous writers have suggested that neither contextual factors nor personal attitudes alone are sufficient to fully understand the phenomenon of workplace sexual harassment and have called for a focus on Person \times Situation Interactions (Gutek, 1985; Pryor et al., 1993). Support for a Person \times

Situation interaction was found in the work of Pryor et al. (1993), which showed that men high in the likelihood to sexually harass were more likely to behave in a sexually harassing way toward a woman if they perceived that sexual harassment could occur with no negative consequences. Men who were low on the likelihood to sexually harass were not affected by a model's behavior (Pryor et al., 1993).

In the present study, we predict that three personal variables (perspective taking, adversarial sexual beliefs, and sexual harassment beliefs) will moderate the effects of two perceived workplace variables (company sanctions against sexual harassment and workplace sexuality) on gender and sexual harassment. Perspective taking and adversarial sexual beliefs were chosen because they have been found to be related to the likelihood to sexually harass (Pryor, 1987), which in turn interacts with situational variables in the prediction of harassing behavior (Pryor et al., 1993). Sexual harassment beliefs are tested for interactions with workplace variables because of their (presumably) more proximal relevance to sexually harassing behavior. Specifically, under conditions of high adversarial sexual beliefs or inappropriate (high) sexual harassment beliefs, or low perspective taking, the perception of company's sanctions as ineffective, or the perception of high workplace sexuality, will be associated with a greater likelihood of harassment behavior.

Last, two methodological issues are raised. First, we will be using men's self-reports of their own behaviors in this study. An understanding of the antecedents of men's sexually harassing behaviors requires this approach. Because of the emotional and controversial nature of workplace sexual harassment, this may increase the likelihood that social desirability is a factor in responding. Paulhus (1984) proposed and tested a model of socially desirable responding consisting of two components, self-deception and impression management. Impression management reflects a tendency toward deliberate and conscious manipulation of responses to present a more socially favorable view and is analogous to various "lie scales" found imbedded in many social desirability inventories. Self-deception is less susceptible to purposeful manipulation than impression management (Paulhus, 1989). Dutton and Hemphill (1992) found that men's self-reports of physical abuse of their wives was related primarily to impression management and that self-reports of psychological abuse were related to both impression management and self-deception. Thus, both impression manage-

ment and self-deception will be controlled statistically in the present study.

Second, because all the data are obtained from self-reports, monomethod bias is a potential threat to the interpretability of any findings. To address this, we follow Podsakoff and Organ's (1986) suggestion and will compute an exploratory factor analysis on all the self-report variables to assess whether there is a substantial amount of common method variance present.

Method

Participants and Procedure

We distributed 1,679 questionnaires to the male faculty and staff of a Canadian university through the internal mail system. A second "reminder" mailing went out 2 weeks later. Fifty-four questionnaires were returned as undeliverable or otherwise unusable. Two hundred seventy-eight usable questionnaires were returned (response rate = 18%). In the letter accompanying the questionnaire packet, respondents were assured of confidentiality and were not required to give their names at any point on the response sheet.

The age range of respondents was 24 to 73 years ($M = 45$ years, $SD = 11$ years); most (73%) had attained a graduate-level degree, 21% an undergraduate degree, and 5% had completed high school only. Of the respondents, 67% identified themselves as professors, teachers, physicians, or researchers. The remainder were administrators (16%), technicians (9%), clerks (3%), custodians (3%), consultants (1%), and graduate students (1%). The mean length of tenure was 12 years. Three of the respondents indicated that they had had a sexual harassment complaint filed against them in the past year.

The sexual harassment policy in place in the university is comprehensive and supportive of both complainants' rights and the rights of the accused. Complaints about sexual harassment on campus are handled through a special division of the human rights office by specially trained advisors. The university has publicized its stand against sexual harassment by means of a poster campaign, university publications, and distribution of pamphlets providing information about what sexual harassment is, both in general terms and in more specific behavioral terms, as well as the procedures to be followed if one is or believes one is a victim of sexual harassment. This pamphlet also includes information on how to avoid behavior that might be intended well but may be interpreted as harassment.

Measures

Means, standard deviations, internal consistency coefficients, and intercorrelations of the study variables appear in Table 1.

Person variables. Adversarial Sexual Beliefs (Burt, 1980) is a 10-item scale that measures the general tendency to believe that men and women are natural adversaries and that cross-sex relationships are characterized by deceit, trickery, and attempts to dominate (e.g., "Men are out for

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics and Intercorrelations of Study Variables ($N = 278$)

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Impression management	3.21	0.62	.83										
2. Self-deception	3.21	0.40	.34**	.71									
3. Company sanctions	4.16	0.62	.17*	.11	.80								
4. Workplace sexuality	1.66	0.42	-.24**	-.08	-.19**	.67							
5. Perspective taking	3.64	0.50	.33**	.07	.13*	-.04	.76						
6. Self-esteem	3.53	0.40	.20**	.50**	.20**	-.04	.02	.80					
7. Adversarial sexual beliefs	1.90	0.73	-.10	-.07	-.27**	.22*	-.27**	-.10	.83				
8. Sexual harassment beliefs	1.80	0.76	.03	.07	-.16*	.16**	-.17**	.03	.62**	.87			
9. Gender harassment	0.80	1.77	-.21**	.01	-.22**	.27**	-.12	.05	.24**	.22**	—		
10. Sexualized harassment	1.17	3.02	-.28**	-.01	-.24**	.31**	-.12	-.07	.23**	.21**	.64**	—	
11. Nonharassing behavior	11.25	5.80	-.15*	-.01	-.07	.21**	.07	.04	-.01	-.05	.19**	.19**	—

Note. Alpha coefficients in bold on the diagonal.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

only one thing" and "Most women are sly and manipulating when they are out to attract a man"). One item ("A lot of women seem to get pleasure in putting men down") was deleted to improve reliability.

To assess more specific attitudes about sexual harassment, we generated the 11-item Sexual Harassment Beliefs Acceptance scale for the present study based on the Rape Myth Acceptance scale (Burt, 1980). It assesses attitudes about women in the workplace and common beliefs regarding sexual harassment that tend to blame the victim (e.g., "Many women falsely report sexual harassment because they have a need to call attention to themselves" and "In the majority of harassment cases the victim brings it on herself with her own actions"). Respondents indicated the extent of agreement or disagreement with the items on this scale and the Adversarial Sexual Beliefs scale on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree."

Rosenberg's (1965) 10-item Self-Esteem scale assesses feelings of self-worth (e.g., "I feel that I have a number of good qualities"; "All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure"—reverse coded). Respondents indicated their agreement or disagreement with the items on a 4-point scale from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree."

To assess perspective taking, we used Davis's (1980) 7-item subscale (e.g., "Before criticizing somebody I try to imagine how I would feel if I were in their place"; or "If I am sure I'm right about something, I don't waste much time listening to other people's arguments"—reverse coded) that assesses the "tendency to spontaneously adopt the psychological point of view of others" (Davis, 1980, p. 113). Respondents indicated their agreement on a 5-point scale from "does not describe me well" to "describes me very well."

Workplace variables. Perception of Organizational Sanctions Against Sexual Harassment is a 6-item scale we developed to assess the perceived seriousness of the organization's response to sexual harassment and sexualized harassment grievance policy (e.g., "The organization that I work for takes sexual harassment complaints very seriously"; "The company that I work for has to have a sexual harassment grievance policy to make the lawyers happy, but it is pretty much a joke among the employees"—reverse coded). Responses are on a 5-point scale from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree."

The 7-item Workplace Sexuality scale was developed for this study to assess perceptions of the extent to which the climate of their workplace is sexualized (e.g., "Sexual teasing and horseplay is acceptable behavior where I work"; "There is a lot of sexual activity going on between my coworkers"). Respondents indicated the frequency of the activity on a 5-point scale from "always" to "never."

Social desirability bias. We used Paulhus's (1984, 1989) 40-item Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding, which consists of two 20-item subscales to assess self-deception and impression management. Examples of impression management items include "I never cover up my mistakes" and "I have never dropped litter on the street." Examples of self-deception items include "My first impressions of people usually turn out to be right" and "I am fully in control of my own fate."

Outcome measures. Respondents were presented with a list of 26 behaviors and asked to indicate if they had engaged in the activity with a member of the opposite sex at work within the last 3 months. The list of 26 items in the questionnaire was based on the list of harassing behaviors

used by Barling et al. (1996). However, 5 were subsequently excluded as it was found (in a separate study) that less than 50% of a group of females experienced the behavior as sexually harassing (Barling et al., 1996). The remaining 21 items were rated in terms of frequency (0 = "did not occur" to 4 = "always"). This format is analogous to a "life-events" scale in that the occurrence of one behavior is not necessarily correlated with the occurrence of another; hence, measures of internal consistency would not be appropriate.

From these 21 items, gender harassment was assessed with 5 items that refer to actions that are generalized (sometimes called environmental) harassment and appear to be nontarget specific (e.g., "displayed or handed out sexually explicit material" and "authored sexual graffiti").

Sexualized harassment was assessed with 12 items assessing specific interactions between two people. Many of these items reflect distorted or inappropriate versions of "normal" social-sexual interactions and include unwanted or inappropriate attention, physical or otherwise, and pressure for social contact outside of work (e.g., "repeatedly asked for a date" and "touched unnecessarily"). Other sexually harassing behaviors are more physical or clearly threatening to the victim's physical well-being or job status, such as "cornered a member of the opposite sex" or "suggested that a sexual relationship with you might help their career."

Four items measured nonsexual interpersonal interactions between men and women in the workplace. These include both personal interactions ("given emotional support for personal problems") and work-oriented interactions ("given work-related feedback to others").

Each of the outcome measures was generated by summing the frequency of the respective items.

Results

To assess whether monomethod bias was present, we computed an exploratory factor analysis of all the study variables: If common method variance were present, then the first factor should account for a substantial amount of the variance, more than 50% according to Podsakoff and Organ (1986). As can be seen from Table 2, the first factor accounted for 25% of the variance, the first three factors together accounted for 54%, and the factors that did emerge are largely interpretable.

Using hierarchical multiple regression, the three outcome variables (gender harassment, sexualized harassment, and nonharassing behavior) were regressed separately on the predictor variables using the same procedures for each. Four variables were entered as covariates in the regression equation. Age and education were entered together in a block to control for variance that is due to these demographic factors. In the second step, self-deception and impression management were entered to control for respondents' tendency to bias their responses toward more socially acceptable alternatives. The remaining personal and workplace variables were entered simultaneously.

Table 2
Results of Exploratory Factor Analysis

Variable	Factor			
	1	2	3	4
Sexualized harassment	.77	.20	.04	-.22
Gender harassment	.74	.20	.09	-.22
Nonharassing behavior	.61	-.22	-.01	.20
Workplace sexuality	.58	.18	-.17	.03
Sexual harassment beliefs	.07	.86	.10	-.03
Adversarial sexual beliefs	.13	.83	-.08	-.15
Company sanctions	-.32	-.38	.31	.01
Self-deception	.00	.07	.84	.13
Self-esteem	-.01	-.10	.83	-.01
Perspective taking	.05	-.23	-.02	.86
Impression management	-.36	.16	.38	.64
Eigenvalue	2.79	1.69	1.43	1.02
% variance	25.4	15.3	13.0	9.3

Prediction of Gender Harassment

The results of the regression of gender harassment on the predictor variables appear in Table 3. Education was significantly and negatively correlated with gender harassment, $\beta = -.18, p < .05$. After controlling for age, education, self-deception, and impression management, only inappropriate sexual harassment beliefs among the personal predictors was positively related to gender harassment, $\beta = .19, p < .01$. Both of the organizational predictors significantly predicted gender harassment. The perception of company sanctions was negatively related to gender harassment, $\beta = -.13, p < .05$, and workplace sexuality was a positive predictor of gender harassment, $\beta = .18, p < .01$.

Prediction of Sexual Harassment

The results of the regression of sexualized harassment on the predictor variables can be found in

Table 3
Predicting Gender Harassment

Variable	Order of entry	β	R^2		F change
			R^2	change	
Education	1	-.18			
Age	1	-.11	.09	.09	9.82**
Self-deceptions	2	-.01			
Impression management	2	-.09	.11	.02	2.03
Sexual harassment beliefs	3	.19	.17	.06	12.86**
Workplace sexuality	4	.18	.20	.03	8.33**
Company sanctions	5	-.13	.22	.02	4.07*

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 4. Education and impression management were negatively associated with sexualized harassment (education, $\beta = -.17, p < .05$; impression management, $\beta = -.20, p < .01$). Of the personal variables, only sexual harassment beliefs predicted sexualized harassment, $\beta = .16, p < .01$, after controlling for age, education, self-deception, and impression management. As was the case in the prediction of gender harassment, both organizational variables predicted sexualized harassment. The frequency of self-reported sexualized harassment behaviors was negatively related to perception of company sanctions, $\beta = -.15, p < .05$, and was positively related to workplace sexuality, $\beta = .24, p < .01$.

Prediction of Nonharassing Behaviors

The results of the regression of nonharassing behaviors on the predictor variables can be found in Table 5. The findings differ from the other outcome variables. After controlling for age, education, self-deception, and impression management, nonharassing behaviors were only predicted by perspective taking, $\beta = .16, p < .05$.

Interactions Between Personal and Workplace Variables

Of the 12 interactions tested, three were significant. Each of the three "person" variables (perspective taking, adversarial sexual beliefs, and inappropriate sexual harassment beliefs) interacted with the employees' perception of company sanctions in predicting sexualized harassment. The meaning of these three interactions is presented in Figures 1, 2, and 3, respectively.

The interaction between perspective taking and perception of company sanctions contributed signifi-

Table 4
Predicting Sexualized Harassment

Variable	Order of entry	β	R^2		F change
			R^2	change	
Age	1	-.01			
Education	1	-.17	.07	.07	7.34**
Self-deception	2	.03			
Impression management	2	-.20	.13	.06	6.37**
Workplace sexuality	3	.24	.20	.08	18.21**
Sexual harassment beliefs	4	.16	.23	.03	7.47*
Company sanctions	5	-.15	.26	.02	5.73*

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 5
Predicting Nonharassment Behaviors

Variable	Order of entry	β	R^2	R^2 change	F change
Age	1	.05			
Education	1	-.05	.00	.00	0.36
Self-deception	2	.08			
Impression management	2	-.22	.03	.03	2.39
Perspective taking	3	.16	.05	.02	4.83*

* $p < .05$.

cantly to the prediction of sexualized harassment over and above the variance accounted for the two main effects, $R^2_{cha} = .02$, $p < .05$. At high levels of perspective taking ($> +1 SD$), sexualized harassment is unrelated to perception of company sanctions, $\beta = -.01$. At low levels of perspective taking ($< -1 SD$), there is a significant association between sexualized harassment and perceptions of company sanctions, $\beta = -.27$.

Adversarial sexual beliefs also interacted with the employees' perception of company sanctions in predicting sexualized harassment. After controlling

for the variance contributed by adversarial sexual beliefs and perception of company sanctions, their interaction accounted for a significant proportion of variance in sexualized harassment, $R^2_{cha} = .03$, $p < .01$. When adversarial sexual beliefs were high ($> +1 SD$), sexualized harassment was associated with perception of company sanctions, $\beta = -.29$; at low levels of adversarial sexual beliefs ($< -1 SD$), this relationship is weaker, $\beta = -.10$.

Sexual harassment beliefs also moderated the effects of perceptions of company sanctions on sexualized harassment after controlling for the two main effects, $R^2_{cha} = .02$, $p < .01$. When sexual harassment beliefs were inappropriate ($> +1 SD$), there was a negative association between sexualized harassment and perception of company sanctions, $\beta = -.46$. Under conditions of appropriate sexual harassment beliefs ($\leq -1 SD$), the same relationship was weaker, $\beta = -.20$.

Discussion

The main goal of this study was to use men's self-reports to investigate the personal and organiza-

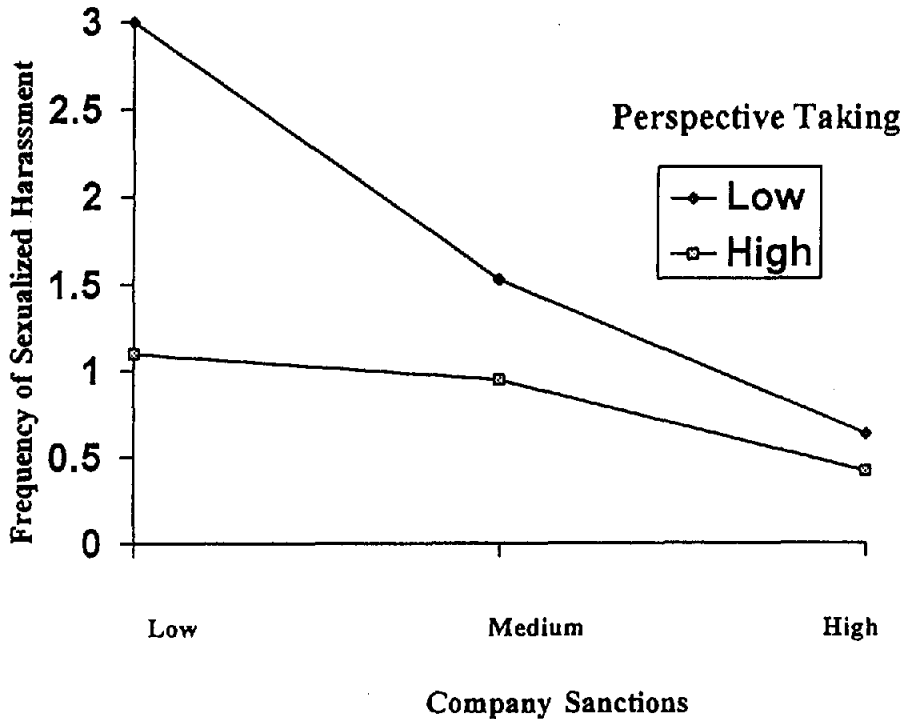


Figure 1. Diagrammatic presentation of the significant interaction between the perception of company sanctions and perspective taking.

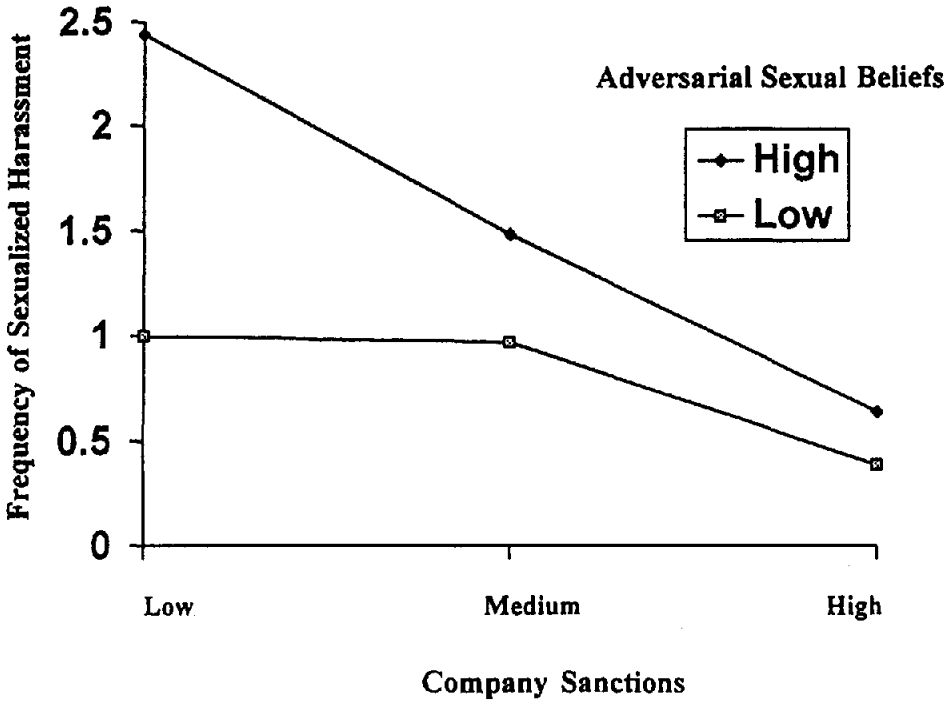


Figure 2. Diagrammatic presentation of the significant interaction between the perception of company sanctions and adversarial sexual beliefs.

tional factors that predict gender and sexual harassment in the workplace. After controlling for the effects of age, education, and biased responding, perceived company sanctions against sexual harassment and workplace sexuality (both organizational variables) and inappropriate beliefs about sexual harassment (a personal variable) predicted gender and sexualized harassment. Thus, both forms of sexual harassment are more likely if male employees perceive their employer as unwilling to deal seriously with sexual harassment complaints and punish those found guilty of sexual harassment. Likewise, respondents who perceive sexualized workplace relationships and interactions between coworkers as acceptable are likely to self-report more sexualized and gender harassment. Whereas a sexualized workplace atmosphere acts as a disinhibitor, perceiving that the organization will not tolerate sexual harassment inhibits such behavior. Last, men who hold beliefs that discredit the authenticity of sexual harassment and impact on the harassment victim and who believe that harassment victims bring their problems on themselves are more likely to engage in gender and sexualized harassment behaviors. As expected, sexual harassment beliefs are more predictive of harassment

behavior than the more general adversarial sexual beliefs (which was not a significant predictor in the regression equations).

The results of the present study go further in isolating the organizational and personal conditions under which sexual harassment is likely. More specifically, three significant interaction effects emerged. The effects of perceived company sanctions on sexualized harassment was moderated by three personal beliefs, namely sexual harassment beliefs, adversarial sexual beliefs, and perspective taking. Any effects of employees' perceptions that their organization would not take reports of sexual harassment seriously were much higher under conditions of high adversarial sexual beliefs and inappropriate sexual harassment beliefs.

When perspective taking was high, there was no association between perceived company sanctions and sexualized harassment. In contrast, when perspective taking was lower, perceptions that the organization would take complaints about harassment seriously was associated with lower levels of sexualized harassment. This probably reflects the notion that when individuals have not developed the ability to take the perspective of another individual, a proactive

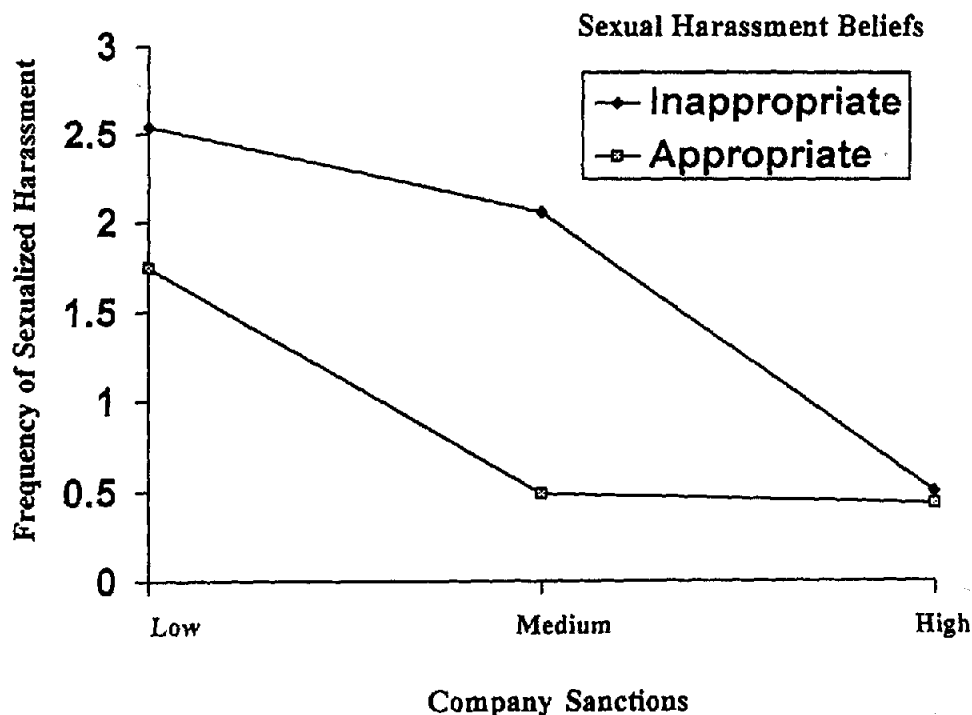


Figure 3. Diagrammatic presentation of the significant interaction between the perception of company sanctions and sexual harassment beliefs.

organizational policy that creates the perception that the organization will take reports of harassment seriously could serve as a deterrent to sexual harassment.

These findings support those of Pryor et al. (1993). In that study, the authors found that "sexual harassment is more likely to occur when the local norms permit such behaviour" (p. 79). In the present study, local norms may in fact be set or influenced by relevant supervisors or department heads or through observation of previous sexual harassment policy implementation (leading to differential individual perceptions of sexual harassment policy). Pryor et al. (1993) showed that men high in the likelihood to sexually harass (LSH) were more likely to do so when a role model (a confederate in an experimental situation) behaved in a harassing way toward a female trainee in a training demonstration (a situation that may be analogous to some events that occur in a sexualized workplace). The LSH has been found to be related to adversarial sexual beliefs and difficulty assuming others' perspectives (perspective taking in the present study; (Pryor, 1987). Thus, the interaction of adversarial sexual beliefs and perspective taking

with perceptions of company sanctions in the present study reflects Pryor et al.'s interaction between local norms and LSH.

Consistent with previous research (Bond et al., 1993; Fitzgerald & Hesson-McInnis, 1989), we treated gender harassment and sexualized harassment as two unique aspects of sexual harassment in this study. Our results, however, do not enable us to make any conclusive statement about the unique nature of these two variables. On the one hand, they were substantially correlated (.64) and shared the same workplace and personal predictors, which might suggest considerable overlap. On the other hand, however, the three significant interactions that did emerge related to sexualized harassment only, and no significant interactions were found for gender harassment, indicating that some differences exist between these two constructs. A better indication of construct validity would be provided were it possible to conduct a (confirmatory) factor analysis on the data for these two constructs. However, this was not possible because the unequal number of items used to measure sexual harassment (12 items) and gender harassment (5 items) would constitute an unfair

comparison (see Cooper & Richardson, 1986). It remains for future research, therefore, to establish the construct validity of different aspects of sexual harassment in which there is a greater sampling of the domain of gender harassment.

A potential threat to the interpretation of the present results emerges from the sole use of self-report data and an identical questionnaire format for the two sexual harassment variables. We addressed this threat by including items that assessed nonsexual cross-gender interactions but were measured with the identical format as gender and sexual harassment. If monomethod bias is present, then all three outcomes should share the same predictors. Yet the regression of nonharassing behaviors on the predictor variables showed a unique set of predictors and was only moderately correlated with the two sexual harassment outcomes, thus providing some evidence for the absence of monomethod bias as a serious threat. In addition, the results of the exploratory factor analysis suggest that common method variance is not present in the data. Last, although monomethod bias may threaten interpretations of main effects, this is not the case with interactions. Evidence from Monte Carlo simulations suggests that correlated measurement errors do not produce spurious interactions. Instead, they may attenuate the estimates of interaction effect sizes (Aiken & West, 1991). Thus, we suggest that the threat posed by monomethod bias is not plausible.

Because of the controversial nature of the topic we were studying, and because of our decision to use men's self-reports of sexual harassment, we anticipated the possibility that response bias would be present. Impression management was significantly correlated with all three outcome variables. These findings are consistent with previous research that obtained self-reports from perpetrators and victims of marital violence (Dutton & Hemphill, 1992), suggesting that future research on sexual harassment should account for the effects of social desirability in general, and impression management in particular. Moreover, because we asked respondents about behaviors they had engaged in without labeling these behaviors as sexual harassment, self-report biases may be reduced (Spector, 1994). Even if social desirability were operating, this would underestimate any relationships found. Social desirability would lead respondents to underestimate the occurrence and frequency of sexual harassment, which would also decrease the variability in the outcome measures and presumably truncate any relationships.

Impression management also shows a consistent

pattern of correlations with the predictor variables in the study. Perception of company sanctions, perspective taking, and self-esteem are all positively and significantly related to impression management. That is, a higher level of impression management was associated with reporting of socially positive attitudes. Conversely, reporting high levels of sexuality in the workplace was associated with low levels of impression management (as were the three outcome variables). These results provide some support for the validity of the impression management construct.

As is the case with all research (and field research in particular), some restraints exist on the interpretation and generalization of the findings. First, the response rate of 18% raises questions of whether the present sample is biased. However, low response rates are typical in sexual harassment research, even when victims' rather than perpetrators' reports were studied (see, for instance, Barling et al., 1996; Gutek, 1985). A related issue is the representativeness of the present sample. In the present sample, most respondents had a graduate-level degree. This is especially important because education was correlated with several of the predictor variables and negatively correlated with both harassment behaviors. Thus, replication of the present findings across a variety of workplaces and samples is necessary before the conclusions can be applied to other types of organizations. It is possible that professors and senior administrators have been more thoroughly schooled in the issues surrounding sexual harassment and its consequences and may also see themselves as having more to lose in a sexual harassment suit than those in less senior positions. This may lead to less harassment behavior and underreporting of harassment by these same people.

It should be stressed that it is the differences in the perception of the content and enforcement of the sexual harassment policy and not the policy itself that predicts the behavior reported in this study. All respondents in this study worked for the same employer and so were nominally subject to the same policy. Prior research has shown that there are "microclimates" within large organizations that consist of norms and attitudes that can vary a great deal from the official organizational policy (Bond et al., 1993). The present results suggest that organizations may benefit from an investment of time and resources that would ensure that the organization's sexual harassment policies are equally understood and applied throughout all levels and departments. One way that this might be achieved is through the centralization of training and policy dissemination. If

one central office or department is responsible for all contact, both proactive and reactive (and efforts are made to ensure that every employee gets the required training), then there will be less dependence on individual department heads or supervisors to interpret the policy idiosyncratically. In this way, it can be ensured that all employees get direct exposure to the policy as it is meant to be understood by the organization.

In the same vein, it is useful to consider altering perspective taking, adversarial sexual beliefs, and beliefs about sexual harassment. Perspective taking and adversarial sexual beliefs both interact with perception of company sanctions in the prediction of harassing behavior. Sexual harassment beliefs is a direct predictor of harassment behavior and also interacts with the employees' perceptions of company sanctions. Both perspective taking and sexual harassment beliefs may be addressed in special training-information sessions that might allow the participants to become more aware of the negative impact that sexual harassment has on the victims and offer them examples that are familiar and empathy-evoking. Adversarial sexual beliefs may be harder to alter as they are more general and (presumably) more ingrained in the individual. The efficacy of sexual harassment programs in changing these attitudes should be tested in future research, but the results of the present research suggest that some sexual harassment could be prevented by effectively targeting these attitudes.

In conclusion, accumulating data suggest that workplace sexual harassment has widespread negative consequences for employees and their organizations (Barling et al., 1996). The results of this study provide information regarding the possible prevention of sexual harassment in the workplace. Specifically, a sexual harassment policy that is both fair and firm; that is equally understood by, and applied to, all employees; that is well communicated throughout the organization; and that is administered without prejudice can reduce sexual harassment. This is especially so for employees who for personal reasons (e.g., low perspective taking, inappropriate sexual harassment belief, and adversarial sexual beliefs) are more likely to engage in sexual harassment. Also, a work environment that is overtly sexualized encourages sexual harassment. Organizational sanctions against sexual harassment and the sexualized nature of the work environment are (to a great extent) within the control of management. Given the organizational, personal, and legal costs associated with sexual harassment, organizations must ensure that appropri-

ate workplace conditions discourage employees from engaging in sexual harassment. This study represents one step in identifying those conditions.

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