

When Sexism and Feminism Collide: The Sexual Harassment of Feminist Working Women

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Abstract

The current study examined how feminism relates to women's experiences of sexual harassment—that is, unwanted sexual and sexist conduct in the workplace. We posited that feminism would have both costs (e.g., increasing exposure to harassment) and benefits (e.g., decreasing harassment-related outcomes). We assessed two indicators of feminism: self-identification as “feminist” and engagement in feminist activism. We also measured two subtypes of sexual harassment: sexual-advance and gender harassment. According to survey data from 424 working women, feminist *identification* predicted fewer gender harassment experiences; once harassed, however, feminist-identified women reported the greatest decrease in job satisfaction and increase in turnover intentions. In contrast, feminist *activism* related to greater experiences of both kinds of harassment, and activism attenuated some negative outcomes. We further found that (regardless of feminist identification or activism) women who had faced sexual-advance harassment were over 7 times more likely to attach the “sexual harassment” label to their experiences, compared to women who had experienced gender harassment alone. In light of our findings, we recommend that sexual harassment laws, policies, and trainings be broadened to encompass all varieties of sexual harassment, including non-stereotypical, non-sexual conduct. Organizations would also benefit from interventions that reduce bias against undervalued persons, including feminists.

Keywords

sexual harassment, sexism, feminism, activism, organizational climate

Sexual harassment is a common occupational hazard for women, primarily manifesting as sexist and gendered hostility (Leskinen, Cortina, & Kabat, 2011). One meta-analysis found that 58% of women report some form of on-the-job sexual harassment (Ilies, Hauserman, Schwochau, & Stibal, 2003). Previous research has extensively addressed risk and protective factors for being targeted with sexual harassment, but women's relationship to feminism is a factor that requires further investigation. About one third of American women identify with feminism (Duncan, 2010; McCabe, 2005). What happens when sexism and feminism collide? Perhaps, in the context of sexual harassment, feminism increases women's vulnerability in some ways, but enhances their resilience in others.

Our aim in this research was to examine how feminism links with sexual harassment experiences, labeling, and outcomes in a sample of working women. In this study, we considered the potential costs of feminism (specifically, increased risk of harassment) as well as its benefits (increased recognition of behaviors as “sexual harassment” and increased protection from negative outcomes). Self-identification as a feminist and engagement in women's rights activism are both important aspects of feminism (Downing & Roush, 1985; Duncan,

1999); thus, another goal of our study was to investigate how both cognitive (feminist identification) and behavioral (feminist activism) indicators of feminism related to harassment. Moreover, we examined these relationships across two different types of sexual harassment: sexual-advance harassment and gender harassment.

Background on Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment manifests in many ways, falling within (at least) three broad categories (Fitzgerald et al., 1988). The first is *sexual coercion*, in which the harasser uses job-related threats or bribes to establish a sexual relationship (Fitzgerald et al., 1988; Fitzgerald, Gelfand, & Drasgow, 1995). For example, a manager implies that he will terminate an

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employee if she does not perform sexual acts. Sexual coercion is the most stereotypical form of sexual harassment but also the rarest (Fitzgerald et al., 1988; Langhout et al., 2005; Schneider, Swan, & Fitzgerald, 1997). The second is *unwanted sexual attention*, in which the harasser makes romantic or sexual advances that are unwelcome, unreciprocated, and/or offensive (Fitzgerald et al., 1988, 1995). Examples include unwanted massaging, inappropriate touching, and pressure for dates or sexual behavior. Sexual coercion and unwanted sexual attention both involve inappropriate sexual pursuit, but sexual coercion has the added component of professional threats or bribes to force compliance. Some studies combine experiences of sexual coercion and unwanted sexual attention under the rubric of “sexual-advance harassment” (SAH; Leskinen, Cortina, & Kabat, 2011; Lim & Cortina, 2005), a practice we followed here. Drawing a distinction between sexual coercion and unwanted sexual attention is sensible for legal purposes, but behaviorally, these two types of sexual harassment are often more similar than different (Konik & Cortina, 2008; Lim & Cortina, 2005). That is, unwanted sexual attention and coercion both entail unwelcome behaviors that aim (inappropriately) to gain sexual access to a target.

The last form of sexual harassment is *gender harassment* (GH). Unlike sexual coercion and unwanted sexual attention, GH does not involve any expression of romantic or sexual interest. Rather, GH includes a very broad range of behaviors that convey hostile, insulting, and/or degrading attitudes about women (Fitzgerald et al., 1988, 1995), such as displaying pornography or making deprecating jokes about women. In simplest terms, the difference between SAH and GH is analogous to the difference between a “come-on” and a “put-down” (Fitzgerald et al., 1995; Leskinen et al., 2011). Although GH is the most common form of sexual harassment (Langhout et al., 2005; Leskinen et al., 2011; Schneider et al., 1997), gender harassing behaviors are the least likely to be identified as sexual harassment (Fitzgerald & Ormerod, 1991; Lored, Reid, & Deaux, 1995). Due to the differing natures of SAH and GH, we examined these two behaviors separately in the current study.

Furthermore, any analysis of sexual harassment must consider the social and historical contexts of power disparity between women and men (Berdahl, Magley, & Waldo, 1996). Popular perspectives view sexual harassment as an expression of sexual attraction or desire, but research connects it more to power and dominance. Pryor (1987) found that men who endorse male dominance are more likely to sexually harass women. Berdahl (2007) argued that sexual harassment is both motivated and made possible by the pervasive and entrenched stratification of social status by sex, and it is often used to protect or enhance one’s sex-based social status.

Given the origin, it is unsurprising that sexual harassment is most frequently committed by men against women (Cortina & Berdahl, 2008; Gutek, Choen, & Konrad, 1990; U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, 1994). Men do report experiencing sexual harassment, but women often perceive sexually

harassing behaviors as more anxiety-provoking and threatening than men (Berdahl & Aquino, 2009; Fitzgerald et al., 1988; Fitzgerald, Swan, & Fischer, 1995). There are also some major differences in what behaviors constitute sexual harassment for men—for example, challenging masculinity or exerting pressure to engage in lewd conversations about women (Berdahl et al., 1996). Therefore, our study focused specifically on women’s sexual harassment experiences.

The Sexual Harassment of Feminists

Many previous studies have examined personal and contextual factors that may place women at greater risk for sexual harassment (e.g., job gender context, organizational climate, and job status), but a factor rarely examined in this literature is feminism. According to social identity theory, group members are motivated to defend their group and their position within that group, as well as engage in out-group derogation when they feel that their group is being threatened (Branscombe, Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1999). Building upon this theory, Maass, Cadinu, Guarnieri, and Grasselli (2003) asserted that high-status group members would be motivated to protect their privileged social position when the legitimacy of their privilege is threatened. Feminism directly questions male privilege, so men may perceive feminist women as a source of threat. Men may therefore feel greater motivation to sexually harass women who endorse feminist ideology.

In support of these claims, experimental studies have found that men are more likely to sexually harass when they feel threatened by women; this is especially true when women display feminist (rather than traditional) attitudes (Dall’Ara & Maass, 1999; Hitlan, Pryor, Hesson-McInnis, & Olson, 2009; Maass et al., 2003; Siebler, Sabelus, & Bohner, 2008). In one example of this research, using a computer task, Maass et al. (2003) instructed undergraduate male participants to choose and send images to a (fictitious) female participant. Before the task, participants were asked to exchange brief self-introductions; the self-description of the “female participant” included statements expressing gender attitudes that were either radically feminist or very traditional. The men who believed they were interacting with a feminist partner were significantly more likely to send her pornographic images. Another study, using a similar computer harassment paradigm, found that men were more likely to send sexist jokes to a “female participant” when she expressed feminist attitudes (Siebler et al., 2008).

In the current study, we further addressed the relationship between feminism and harassment by surveying women about their experiences in real-world work contexts (as opposed to lab settings). We also extended the literature by separating out two distinct subtypes of harassment, SAH and GH (for the reasons articulated above). Additionally, we examined two different indicators of feminism: self-identification as “feminist” and engagement in feminist activism.

Our decision to distinguish between feminist identity and activism merits some explanation. Classic models of feminist identity assert the importance of endorsing the label and engaging in activism (Downing & Roush, 1985). Feminist identification is a strong predictor of feminist activism, above and beyond holding feminist attitudes or beliefs (Yoder, Tobias, & Snell, 2011). However, research suggests that women who are activists for feminist causes (e.g., reproductive rights) do not always label themselves “feminists.” For instance, Duncan (2010) found great variability in feminist attitudes, identity, and behavior within a group of women’s rights activists. Some of these activists identified strongly as feminist, whereas others identified weakly or not at all. Zucker and Bay-Cheng (2010) argue there are many reasons why women who would engage in feminist activism may not take up the feminist label, including stigmatization of the term “feminist.” Personal critiques of the feminist movement (e.g., racism and classism within the movement) have also led some activists to dis-identify with feminism “in favor of more radical or inclusive political identities” (Zucker & Bay-Cheng, 2010, p. 1904). Thus, personally identifying as “feminist” and engaging in activism for feminist causes are related in important ways, but they are not synonymous.

Although unexplored to date, it remains possible that effects of feminist activism vary as a function of one’s feminist identity and vice versa. For instance, a self-identified “feminist” woman engaged in lesbian rights advocacy may be perceived and treated differently from a woman who engages in that activism but denies that she is a feminist; both these women may also be treated differently from a woman who (privately) considers herself a feminist but engages in no feminist activism of any kind. These women’s experiences and perceptions of harassment on the job may diverge in important ways. If feminist activists are at greater risk for harassment than non-activists, does explicit endorsement of a feminist identity signal even greater threat to men and therefore *amplify* activists’ risk? Or, alternatively, perhaps, the “feminist” self-label indicates strength and *attenuates* risk for activist women. The only way to capture these complex possibilities is to operationalize feminist activism and identity as separate constructs as well as consider not only additive but also multiplicative effects (i.e., both main effects and their interaction). This approach would yield a highly nuanced perspective on the relationship between women’s feminism and their experiences of harassment.

Bearing in mind the need to distinguish among subtypes of harassment and to separate feminist identity from activism, we derived the general prediction that women who identify as feminist and/or engage in feminist activism will experience sexually harassing behaviors more frequently than women who do not (Hypothesis 1). In investigating this hypothesis, we aimed to consider both the additive and the multiplicative impact of identity and activism. It seemed premature, however, to pose a specific hypothesis about the

precise nature of the multiplicative effect; we therefore left this research question open as exploratory.

Sexual Harassment Labeling

Research widely finds that women who experience sexually harassing behaviors often do not label their experiences as “sexual harassment” per se (Ellis, Barak, & Pinto, 1991; Magley, Hulin, Fitzgerald, & DeNardo, 1999; Magley & Shupe, 2005). Over half of working women report being targeted with sexually harassing conduct while at work, but less than one quarter of those harassed women labels their experience as “sexual harassment” (Ilies et al., 2003). However, sexual harassment victims who do and do not label have similar negative psychological and occupational outcomes (Magley et al., 1999; Woodzicka & LaFrance, 2005).

Several factors may fuel sexual harassment labeling. Magley and Shupe (2005) found that endorsement of negative attitudes toward sexual harassment and belief that sexual harassment is a problem both predicted labeling experiences as “sexual harassment.” Early work connected explicitly feminist attitudes to harassment labeling: Schneider (1982) reported that endorsement of feminist perspectives about unwanted sexual approaches in the workplace related to harassment labeling. Brooks and Perot (1991) found that women with higher feminist ideology tend to perceive harassing behaviors as more offensive; this could make these women more likely to label these behaviors “sexual harassment.” It is also possible that feminist women are more aware of the social and legal implications of sexual harassment, and therefore they are more likely to attach the “sexual harassment” label to unwanted sexual and sexist conduct in the workplace. Given that attitudes, awareness, and laws have evolved since Schneider’s (1982) and Brooks and Perot’s (1991) investigations, new research is needed on the relationships between feminism and harassment labeling. Building on these earlier studies, we predict that women who identify as feminist and/or engage in feminist activism will be more likely to label harassing experiences as “sexual harassment,” compared to non-feminist and non-activist women (Hypothesis 2).

Sexual Harassment Outcomes

Previous research indicates that victims of sexual harassment experience many negative psychological outcomes, including more symptoms of posttraumatic stress, heightened depression and anxiety, low self-esteem, and decreased life satisfaction (Fitzgerald, Drasgow, Hulin, Gelfand, & Magley, 1997; Glomb, Munson, Hulin, Bergman, & Drasgow, 1999; Larsen & Fitzgerald, 2011). Sexual harassment also predicts negative occupational outcomes, such as decreased job satisfaction and productivity as well as increased job stress and job turnover (Fitzgerald et al., 1997; Lim & Cortina, 2005; Magley et al., 1999). Summarizing this literature, recent meta-analyses provide strong support for the link between sexual

harassment experiences and negative psychological and occupational outcomes (Chan, Lam, Chow, & Cheung, 2008; Hershcovis & Barling, 2010; Willness, Steel, & Lee, 2007). Given the plethora of outcomes linked with sexual harassment, it is essential for researchers to identify factors that may help protect women against such outcomes.

Feminist theorists assert that feminist consciousness may reduce the negative impact of sexist events (Klonoff & Landrine, 1995), and empirical research has supported this theory. Women who endorse traditional gender role beliefs (suggesting that they are low on feminist ideology) are more likely to blame themselves for sexual harassment experiences (Jensen & Gutek, 1982). These women are also more likely to accept sexual harassment myths defined as “attitudes and beliefs that are generally false but widely held and serve to deny and justify male sexual harassment of women” (Lonsway, Cortina, & Magley, 2008, p. 600; see also Schneider, 1982). Self-blame for sexual harassment is associated with increased psychological distress, worsened health, and decreased job satisfaction (Collinsworth, Fitzgerald, & Drasgow, 2009; Harned & Fitzgerald, 2002; Larsen & Fitzgerald, 2011). Feminist women may be more likely to attribute blame to the harasser or organizational system rather than themselves, which may protect against negative outcomes. Indeed, Gurin (1985) concluded that women with greater gender consciousness are more aware of power inequalities related to gender and are more likely to attribute those inequalities to the system rather than individual causes. Research has further found that feminist-identified women, compared to neoliberal non-feminist-identified women, are more likely to view their struggles as sexist injustices rather than personal shortcomings (Fitz, Zucker, & Bay-Cheng, 2012; Zucker, 2004).

Prior research suggests that feminist ideologies benefit women in a variety of ways (Sabik & Tylka, 2006; Saunders & Kashubeck-West, 2006; Yakushko, 2007; Yoder, Snell, & Tobias, 2012). When facing sexual harassment, feminist-identified women may be more inclined to lay the guilt on harassers, organizational systems, or sexist inequities rather than blame themselves for “inviting” the abuse (Gurin, 1985; Jensen & Gutek, 1982); the result may be a lessening of negative outcomes. In the current study, we explore this possibility with four different outcomes: general psychological well-being, job satisfaction, turnover intentions, and work withdrawal (e.g., completing assignments late, leaving early). Additionally, some interesting questions remain untested. For instance, do feminist behaviors (e.g., activism) offer benefits above and beyond feminist identity? Does a disjuncture between identity and behavior (e.g., identifying as “feminist” but not getting involved in activism, or being highly engaged in feminist change efforts while disassociating with the “feminist” label) affect the protective benefits of feminist consciousness? To begin addressing these questions, we propose that feminist identification and engagement in feminist activism will moderate (specifically, attenuate) the relationship between sexual harassment experiences and negative

psychological and occupational outcomes (Hypothesis 3). Once again, we sought to explore these issues from both an additive and a multiplicative perspective.

The Current Study

In summary, our primary aim was to elucidate relationships between women’s feminism and their experiences of on-the-job sexual harassment. More specifically, we examined whether feminism would be related to increased experiences of sexual harassment behaviors, increased labeling of those behaviors as “sexual harassment,” and buffering of negative personal and professional outcomes. Furthermore, we examined both the main effects and the products of both cognitive (identity) and behavioral (activism) indicators of feminism. We also explored whether these relationships differed by the type of sexual harassment experienced (i.e., SAH vs. GH).

Method

Participants and Procedure

We gathered data for our study in a survey of women working in the greater Detroit metropolitan area (including suburbs). First, women were invited to complete a short “snapshot survey” online, which was used to pre-screen and select participants for a longer paper survey. Participants for the snapshot survey were recruited in several ways, including flyers posted in businesses and cafes as well as e-mails sent to women employed by a large university and university health system, local women’s organizations (e.g., Women Business Owners of Southeast Michigan), and local professional networking web sites. In total, 4,954 women completed the snapshot survey.

From this larger pool of snapshot participants, we drew a non-proportional stratified sample of 500 women, oversampling ethnic and sexual minorities to ensure diversity. These 500 women received a packet within 2 weeks of completing the snapshot survey that included the paper survey, an introduction letter explaining the purpose of the study and the role and rights of participants, a \$2 bill as a token incentive, a postcard (to be mailed back for tracking purposes), and a pre-stamped envelope. Two weeks later, all participants received reminder/thank you postcards. Two weeks after that, all non-respondents received a second paper copy of the survey. These survey procedures followed Dillman, Smyth, and Christian’s (2008) recommendations for maximizing survey response rates. Participants were compensated \$10 for completing the paper survey. A total of 425 women responded, yielding a response rate of 85%. Data from one participant were discarded due to excessive missing data (over 50% of eligible items skipped).

The 424 women who provided complete data ranged in age from 22 to 67, with a mean age of 41 (standard deviation (*SD*) = 10.29). The racial/ethnic backgrounds of participants were diverse: 19% (*n* = 79) African American/Black,

15% ($n = 63$) Asian/Pacific Islander American, 7% ($n = 32$) Latina, 0.5% ($n = 2$) Middle Eastern, 3% ($n = 13$) Native American, 55% ($n = 233$) White/Caucasian, and 0.5% ($n = 2$) "Other." A majority (83%; 353) identified as "completely" or "mostly" heterosexual; an additional 3% ($n = 15$) identified as bisexual, and the remaining 14% ($n = 55$) identified as "completely" or "mostly" lesbian, gay, or "other." Most participants were well-educated: 47% ($n = 199$) reported a graduate or professional degree, 9% ($n = 39$) graduate education (without degree), 31% ($n = 133$) a college degree, 11% ($n = 48$) some college (without degree), and 2% ($n = 5$) high school degree or general equivalency diploma. These women worked in a wide variety of fields; examples include accounting, education, health care, engineering, sales and marketing, food service, and clerical.

Measures

To reduce demand characteristics in the survey, demographic and outcome variables (e.g., job satisfaction) preceded SAH and GH items. For the multi-item scales below, we reverse-scored items as appropriate, scaling them such that higher scores reflected higher levels of the underlying construct. We then created scale scores by averaging across the items. The only exception to this procedure was in the computation of the activism score, detailed below.

Sexual advance harassment. SAH (i.e., sexual coercion and unwanted sexual attention) was measured with 7 items from the Sexual Experiences Questionnaire (SEQ; Fitzgerald et al., 1988). Respondents described whether anyone associated with their work, in the prior year, had directed any of the behaviors toward them; response options ranged from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*very often*). Example items include "Attempted to establish a romantic or sexual relationship with you despite your efforts to discourage it" and "Implied better treatment if you were sexually cooperative." No item included terms such as harassed or harassment. Cronbach's α for these items was .69. The SEQ is a measure of discrete behaviors, which may explain this lower internal consistency among items. Across a number of studies, the psychometric soundness of the SEQ has been well established (Fitzgerald et al., 1988, 1995; Willness et al., 2007).

Gender harassment. A broad range of gender-harassing behaviors were measured with 18 items from a scale developed by Leskinen and Cortina (2012). This measure combines existing SEQ items with new items, assessing five dimensions of GH: sexist behavior, crude behavior, work/family policing, infantilization, and gender role policing. Leskinen and Cortina discuss the theoretical rationale and psychometric properties of this instrument, providing evidence of high reliability and validity. The stem and response options matched those of the SAH items, from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*very often*). Example items include "Made sexist remarks or jokes about women in your

presence"; "Suggested women belong at home, not in the workplace"; and "Treated you negatively because you were not 'feminine enough.'" Once again, no item included the term "harassment"; Cronbach's α was .92.

Labeling sexual harassment. Following the items detailed above, participants were asked (*yes* or *no*) if they had experienced "sexual harassment" in the past year at work. When developing the SEQ, Fitzgerald et al. (1988, 1995) determined that the term "sexual harassment" should not appear in a survey before the participants had completed the entire measure of harassing behaviors so as to avoid demand characteristics. It is standard to use this item as an indicator of sexual harassment *labeling*, not experience (Magley et al., 1999; Magley & Shupe, 2005).

Feminist identification and activism. Feminist identification was assessed by endorsement of the feminist label. Participants responded (*yes* or *no*) to the question, "Do you consider yourself to be a feminist?" Based on a measure of feminist activism by Duncan (1999), respondents indicated whether they had been involved with "Women's Rights" causes in the past 2 years by checking all of the following that apply: "Signed a petition," "Gave money," "Wrote a letter or called a public office," "Attended a meeting," "Was an active member of an organization," and "Attended a rally or demonstration." This measure allowed participants to self-define their own women's rights activism. Unlike our other measures, these responses were summed so that participants' scores ranged from 0 (*no activism*) to 6 (*engaging in all six types of activism*). The mean activism score for our sample was 0.91 ($SD = 1.41$, range = 0–6), which is similar to previous studies using this measure with non-student samples of women (Curtin, 2011; Duncan, 1999). In other words, when adult women engage in feminist activism, that activism tends to include one or two specific activities.

Psychological well-being. The short 5-item version of the Mental Health Inventory (Berwick et al., 1991) assessed general psychological well-being. Example items include "Felt calm and peaceful?" and "Felt so down in the dumps that nothing could cheer you up?" (reverse scored). Participants indicated how often in the last month they had felt this way on a 4-point scale ranging from 1 (*little or none of the time*) to 4 (*all or most of the time*). Cronbach's α was .79.

Occupational well-being. Three measures assessed aspects of occupational well-being: turnover intentions, job satisfaction, and work withdrawal. Two items measured turnover intentions on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*): "I often think about quitting this job" and "I will probably look for a new job during the next year" (Porter, Crampon, & Smith, 1976; $r = .68$, $p < .001$). Job satisfaction was measured with 3 items from the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire (Cammann, Fichman, Jenkins, & Klesh, 1979). An example item is "All in all, I am satisfied with my job." Participants rated these statements from 1

(*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*); Cronbach's α was .91. Work-withdrawal behaviors (i.e., attempts to disengage from work activities without actually quitting) were measured with 5 items adapted from Hanisch and Hulin (1990, 1991). With items such as "Made excuses to get out of the office," respondents reported how frequently they engaged in these behaviors in the last year on a scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*many times*); Cronbach's α was .68. Hanisch and Hulin (1990, 1991) established an acceptable α of .70 for this measure, but α s just below .70 are often reported (Lonsway & Welch, 2005; Shupe, Cortina, Ramos, Fitzgerald, & Salisbury, 2002).

Control variables. Our analyses controlled for age, race/ethnicity, gender composition of the workgroup, and organizational tenure because these factors can affect the frequency, type, and evaluation of sexual harassment in the workplace (Berdahl & Aquino, 2009; Buchanan, Settles, & Woods, 2008; Chamberlain, Crowley, Tope, & Hodson, 2008). Thus, the purpose of including these variables is to account for shared variance with our independent variables when predicting outcomes. Participants self-reported their age, race/ethnicity, and job tenure (i.e., length of employment in their current organization). They also described the gender composition of their workgroup on a scale from 1 (*all men*) to 7 (*all women*).

Results

Means, *SDs*, and correlations among all study variables appear in Table 1. Slightly over half the sample identified as "feminist" (52%, $n = 219$), and 40% ($n = 167$) had engaged in some form of feminist activism. These women's activism involved signing a petition (27% of the sample), giving money to a cause (19%), attending a meeting (14%), writing a letter or calling a public office (13%), being an active member of an organization (12%), and/or attending a rally or demonstration (6%). Of the women who identified themselves as "feminist," 56% ($n = 122$) also engaged in some form of feminist activism and 44% ($n = 97$) had not engaged in any activism. Of the women who indicated they did not identify as "feminist," 78% ($n = 138$) did not engage in any feminist activism and 22% ($n = 40$) had engaged in some form of feminist activism. Additionally, 79% of our sample ($n = 335$) described at least one experience of a sexually harassing behavior during the prior year at work. Among these harassed women, 72% ($n = 240$) had encountered some form of GH (without SAH), 1% ($n = 4$) had faced SAH (without GH), and 27% ($n = 91$) had experienced both kinds of harassing behavior. Of the women who had experienced at least one harassing behavior (of either variety), 8% ($n = 27$) labeled their experience as "sexual harassment." In all of the following analyses, age, race/ethnicity, job tenure, and the gender composition of participants' workgroup constituted control variables.

Hypothesis 1

To test the first hypothesis (women who identify as feminist and/or engage in feminist activism will experience sexually harassing behaviors more frequently than women who do not), we conducted two linear regressions with SAH and GH as the dependent variables. Being heavily skewed, both dependent variables violated the assumption of normality. For this reason, we tested the variables using common data transformations (e.g., square root and logarithm), but results using transformed data did not differ from results using the original raw data variables. Thus, for ease of interpretation, the original variables were used in all of the following analyses. In the regressions, we entered the control variables on Step 1, and the main effects of feminist identification and feminist activism on Step 2. To explore whether the effects of one of these variables depends on the other, in Step 2 we also included the interaction between feminist identification and activism. All continuous variables were centered before creating interaction terms.

Table 2 contains the regression results for both SAH and GH. In support of our hypothesis, feminist activism was a significant positive predictor of SAH and GH. Contrary to our hypothesis, feminist identification was a significant *negative* predictor of GH (i.e., greater feminist identification was associated with *less* GH), and it did not predict SAH. For GH, we also found a significant interaction between feminist identification and activism. When graphing significant interactions, we dichotomized activism into activists (1 = *engaged in at least one form of activism*) versus non-activists (0 = *no activism*) for ease of interpretation. As Figure 1 illustrates, women who engaged in activism reported significantly more GH than non-activist women; this effect, however, was stronger for non-feminists. This interpretation was further supported by a simple slopes analysis, which revealed a steeper slope for non-feminist-identified ($b = .19, p < .001$) than feminist-identified women ($b = .08, p < .001$).

Hypothesis 2

To address our second hypothesis (women who identify as feminist and/or engage in feminist activism will be more likely to label harassing experiences "sexual harassment," compared to non-feminist and non-activist women), we tested a logistic regression model, with the dependent variable being labeling of sexual harassment (coded 1 = *labeled*, 0 = *did not label*). This analysis included only the participants who indicated they had experienced at least one form of sexual harassment ($n = 335$). Type of sexual harassment experienced (i.e., GH by itself vs. SAH with or without GH) constituted a control variable, because sexually advancing forms of harassment are more often recognized as "sexual harassment" compared to GH (Magley & Shupe, 2005). We entered sexual harassment type and the other control variables (race/ethnicity, age, job tenure, and workgroup gender composition)

Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations Among All Study Variables ($n = 424$).

Variables	M (SD)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Sexual-advance harassment	1.07 (0.18)	—												
2. Gender harassment	1.38 (0.47)	.49***	—											
3. Feminist identification	0.55 (0.50)	-.07	-.01	—										
4. Feminist activism	0.91 (1.41)	.14**	.32***	.29***	—									
5. Psychological well-being	3.14 (0.53)	-.15**	-.24***	-.05	-.05	—								
6. Turnover intentions	3.12 (1.95)	.16**	.27***	-.02	.04	-.24***	—							
7. Job satisfaction	5.41 (1.43)	-.12*	-.32***	.04	.01	.24***	-.75***	—						
8. Work withdrawal	2.01 (0.64)	.03	.19***	.15**	.15**	-.26***	.20***	-.15**	—					
9. Labeled harassment	0.08 (0.27)	.46***	.44***	.16**	-.00	-.17**	.14*	-.20***	.10	—				
10. Age	40.77 (10.29)	-.11*	-.08	.04	-.05	.10*	-.10*	.08	-.16**	-.15**	—			
11. Race/ethnicity	0.45 (0.50)	.06	-.10*	-.19***	-.20***	.03	.05	.04	-.08	-.10	-.06	—		
12. Job tenure (in months)	88.28 (87.15)	-.04	-.04	-.01	-.02	.06	-.04	.07	-.03	-.60	.50***	.04	—	
13. Workgroup gender composition	4.36 (1.21)	-.12*	-.13**	.01	-.09	.05	-.07	.11*	-.05	-.16**	.07	.23***	.05	—

Note. M = mean; SD = standard deviation. Race/ethnicity was coded 0 (White) and 1 (Women of Color). * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 2. Linear Regressions Predicting Sexual-Advance and Gender Harassment.

Variable	Sexual-Advance Harassment (n = 386)		Gender Harassment (n = 386)	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
	β	β	β	β
Age	-.12*	-.11	-.10	-.09
Race/ethnicity	.09	.11*	-.10	-.05
Job tenure	.03	.02	.02	.00
Workgroup gender composition	-.14**	-.15**	-.10	-.11*
Feminist identification		-.10		-.11*
Activism		.26**		.59***
Feminist \times Activism		-.09		-.28**
R ²	.04	.07	.03	.16
F	3.64**	4.06***	3.05*	9.96***
df	(4, 381)	(7, 378)	(4, 381)	(7, 378)

Note. df = degrees of freedom. Feminist \times Activism = interaction between feminist identification and activism. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

on Step 1, and feminist identification, feminist activism, and their interaction on Step 2.

The full model was significant, $\chi^2(8, N = 279) = 44.07, p < .001$, which implies that the model was able to differentiate between women who labeled their experiences as “sexual harassment” and those who did not. The model correctly classified 91.4% of all cases, and the amount of variance explained in labeling ranged from 14.6% (Cox and Snell R^2) to 31.1% (Nagelkerke R^2); see Table 3 for the results of all individual predictors. Contrary to our hypothesis, neither feminist identification nor feminist activism was a significant predictor of labeling sexual harassment, after controlling for the large impact of sexual harassment type, $\text{Exp}(B) = 7.50, p < .001$. (Note, however, that endorsing a feminist identity did correlate significantly with harassment labeling, $r = .16, p < .01$, when *not* controlling for other variables; see Table 1.) The results for sexual harassment type suggest that when participants experienced any form of SAH (compared to experiencing “only” GH), they were 7.5 times more likely to label their experiences as “sexual harassment.”

Hypothesis 3

For our third hypothesis (feminist identification and activism will attenuate the relationship between sexual harassment experiences and negative psychological and occupational outcomes), we conducted a separate moderated regression analysis for each of the four outcomes variables: psychological well-being, turnover intentions, job satisfaction, and work withdrawal. For these analyses, we used a Bonferroni correction to protect against the risk of Type I error ($p = .05/4 = .012$). In one set of these regressions, the independent variables

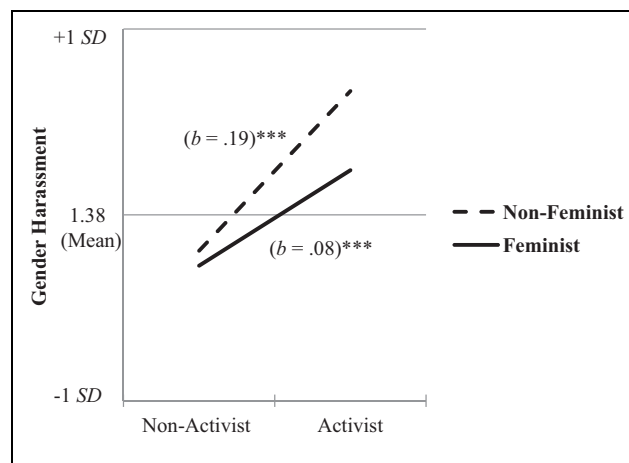


Figure 1. Two-way interaction between feminist identification and activism predicting gender harassment. b = unstandardized regression coefficient (simple slope). *** $p < .001$.

were the control variables (race/ethnicity, age, job tenure, and workgroup gender composition); the main effects of SAH, feminist identification, and activism; the three two-way interactions (SAH \times feminist identification, SAH \times activism, and feminist identification \times activism), and the one three-way interaction (SAH \times feminist identification \times activism). We tested a parallel set of moderated regression models replacing SAH with GH. In all analyses, SAH, GH, and activism were centered in both their main effect and product terms.

Results of these analyses appear in Tables 4 (SAH models) and 5 (GH models). We found a significant main effect of SAH on psychological well-being and turnover intentions as well as a significant main effect of GH on all four outcomes. There was also a significant main effect of feminist identification on work withdrawal in the GH model. In contrast, the main effect of activism and the two-way interaction between feminist identification and activism did not predict any of the four outcome variables.

We had hypothesized that feminist identification and activism would moderate the relationship between sexual harassment and negative psychological and occupational outcomes, and this was confirmed for a few of the relationships tested. Specifically, a three-way interaction among feminist identification, activism, and SAH significantly predicted turnover intentions. For job satisfaction, the two-way interaction between feminist identification and GH was significant. Finally, the two-way interaction between activism and GH was significant for work withdrawal.

As recommended by Holmbeck (2002) and Aiken and West (1991), we used post hoc probing and simple slopes analyses to further understand the moderated effects for all significant interactions. Per Holmbeck, we began by testing reduced regression models that only included the control variables, main effects, and *significant* interactions. The two-way interactions that included GH were still significant for job satisfaction and work withdrawal, and the three-way

Table 3. Logistic Regression Predicting Labeling Sexual Harassment ($n = 279$).

Predictor	β	SE β	Wald χ^2	df	p	Odds Ratio	95% CI
Sexual harassment type	2.01	0.49	16.69	1	<.001	7.50	[2.85, 19.71]
Age	-0.07	0.03	4.63	1	.03	0.93	[0.87, 0.99]
Race/ethnicity	-1.10	0.53	4.38	1	.04	0.33	[0.12, 0.99]
Job tenure	0.00	0.00	0.55	1	.46	1.00	[0.99, 1.01]
Workgroup gender composition	-0.35	0.19	3.59	1	.06	0.70	[0.49, 1.10]
Feminist identification	0.43	0.51	0.72	1	.40	1.54	[0.57, 4.19]
Activism	0.40	0.22	3.24	1	.07	1.50	[0.96, 2.32]
Feminist \times Activism	-0.27	0.28	0.93	1	.33	0.76	[0.44, 1.32]
Constant	-5.39	0.87	38.04	1	<.001	0.00	

Note. CI = confidence interval; df = degrees of freedom; SE = standard error. Sexual harassment predictors coded as 1 (*gender harassment only*) and 2 (*sexual-advance harassment with or without gender harassment*). Feminist \times Activism = feminist identification and activism interaction.

Table 4. Hierarchical Moderated Regressions Including Sexual-Advance Harassment Predicting Four Outcome Variables.

Variable	Psych Well-Being ($n = 385$)			Job Satisfaction ($n = 382$)			Turnover Intentions ($n = 382$)			Work Withdrawal ($n = 382$)		
	R^2	F	β	R^2	F	β	R^2	F	β	R^2	F	β
Step 1	.03	2.47		.02	1.93		.03	2.56		.05	3.85*	
df		(5, 379)			(5, 376)			(5, 376)			(5, 376)	
Control variables												
SAH			-.14*			-.09			.14*			.02
Step 2	.04	1.80		.03	1.44		.03	1.68		.08	3.92**	
df		(8, 376)			(8, 373)			(8, 373)			(8, 373)	
Fem ID			-.05			.03			.00			.12
Activism			-.07			-.06			.08			.02
Fem ID \times Act			.09			.11			-.07			.09
Step 3	.01	1.67		.04	1.58		.06	2.28*		.09	3.35**	
df		(11, 373)			(11, 370)			(11, 370)			(11, 370)	
Fem ID \times SAH			.04			-.15			.16			.02
Act \times SAH			-.04			-.08			.18			-.15
Fem ID \times Act \times SAH			-.08			.16			-.26*			.05

Note. Act \times SAH = activism and sexual advance harassment interaction; df = degrees of freedom; Fem ID = feminist identification; Fem ID \times Act = feminist identification and activism interaction; Fem ID \times Act \times SAH = three-way interaction among feminist identification, activism, and sexual-advance harassment; Fem ID \times SAH = feminist identification and sexual-advance harassment interaction; Psych well-being = general psychological well-being; SAH = sexual-advance harassment. Control variables included age, race, job tenure, and workgroup gender composition. Control variable β weights are available from the first author upon request. * $p < .012$. ** $p < .001$.

interactions that included SAH was still significant for turnover intentions. Therefore, we computed new conditional moderator variables for feminist identification and activism (coding both variables dichotomously as *yes* = 1 or *no* = 0). We then computed new interaction terms using these conditional moderator variables, and we conducted simple slopes analyses for job satisfaction, turnover intentions, and work withdrawal. The results of these regressions allowed us to plot and interpret the nature of the significant interactions. Again, we dichotomized activism into activists versus non-activists for ease of graphical interpretation.

For job satisfaction, the two-way interaction between feminist identification and GH suggested that as GH increased, there was a steeper drop in job satisfaction for feminist women ($b = -1.24, p < .001$) than for non-feminist women

($b = -.71, p = .001$). This interaction is illustrated in Figure 2. Women who identified as a feminist showed a stronger relationship between GH and job (dis)satisfaction.

The three-way interaction among feminist identification, activism, and SAH was significant in the prediction of turnover intent, as depicted in Figure 3. A simple slopes analysis revealed that among *non-feminist-identified* women, the slopes for both activists and non-activists were not significant. However, among *feminist-identified* women, non-activists reported a significant increase in turnover intentions as a function of SAH ($b = 3.70, p = .008$), but activist women did not. Feminist-identified but non-activist women, facing low SAH, reported the least turnover intent.

For work withdrawal, the significant two-way interaction suggested that as GH increased, non-activist women reported

Table 5. Hierarchical Moderated Regressions Including Gender Harassment Predicting Four Outcome Variables.

Variable	Psych Well-Being (n = 385)			Job Satisfaction (n = 382)			Turnover Intentions (n = 382)			Work Withdrawal (n = 382)		
	R2	F	β	R2	F	β	R2	F	β	R2	F	β
Step 1	.07	5.97**		.11	9.48**		.09	7.51**		.09	7.08**	
df		(5, 379)			(5, 376)			(5, 376)			(5, 376)	
Control variables												
GH			-.25**			-.32**			.28**			.19**
Step 2	.08	4.11**		.13	6.90**		.09	4.82**		.11	5.79**	
df		(8, 376)			(8, 373)			(8, 373)			(8, 373)	
Fem ID			-.07			-.01			.03			.14*
Activism			.06			.12			-.06			-.09
Fem ID × Act			.02			.02			.00			.14
Step 3	.08	3.10*		.15	6.15**		.11	4.00**		.14	5.70**	
df		(11, 373)			(11, 370)			(11, 370)			(11, 370)	
Fem ID × GH			.04			-.25*			.17			-.07
Act × GH			.09			-.06			.10			-.32**
Fem ID × Act × GH			-.09			.20			-.16			.19

Note. Psych well-being = general psychological well-being; df = degrees of freedom; GH = gender harassment; Fem ID = feminist identification; Fem ID × Act = feminist identification and activism interaction; Fem ID × GH = feminist identification and gender harassment interaction; Act × GH = activism and gender harassment interaction; Fem ID × Act × GH = three way interaction between feminist identification, activism, and gender harassment. Control variables included age, race, job tenure, and workgroup gender composition. Control variable β weights are available from the first author upon request. *p < .012. **p < .001.

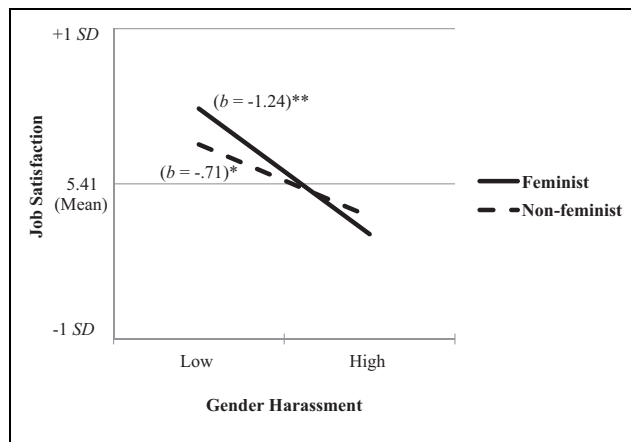


Figure 2. Two-way interaction between feminist identification and gender harassment predicting job satisfaction. *b* = unstandardized regression coefficient (simple slope). **p* < .012. ***p* < .001.

a significant increase in work-withdrawal behaviors (*b* = .48, *p* < .001), but activist women did not (*b* = .05, *p* = .53). Activist women reported high levels of work withdrawal regardless of harassment experiences. Figure 4 displays this interaction graphically. Overall, women who had not engaged in activism showed the strongest relationship between GH and work withdrawal.

Discussion

In our sample of employed U.S. women, the overall harassment rate was higher than prior investigations of nonmilitary

samples: 79% of women described at least one encounter with sexually harassing behavior in the prior year. We attribute this higher-than-average harassment incidence to our broad assessment, using a GH instrument that expands upon conventional scales to assess five facets of experience: sexist behavior, crude behavior, work/family policing, infantilization, and gender role policing (Leskinen & Cortina, 2012). Despite the high rate of reported harassment experiences, the rate of labeling sexual harassment in the current study was low compared to previous studies: only 27 (8%) of our 335 harassed women reported that they had encountered “sexual harassment.” This could be because 72% (*n* = 240) of these harassed women had “only” faced GH (in the absence of SAH); prior research finds women less likely to identify gender-harassing behavior as “sexual harassment,” compared to perceptions of behaviors involving unwanted sexual attention/coercion (Fitzgerald & Ormerod, 1991; Loredo et al., 1995).

Feminism and Sexual Harassment

We examined how both cognitive (feminist identification) and behavioral (feminist activism) indicators of feminism related to sexual harassment risk, labeling, and outcomes. Over half the women in our sample identified as a “feminist,” and 40% had engaged in some form of feminist (i.e., women’s rights) activism. This rate of feminist identification is higher than average. Much of our sample was highly educated and urban-dwelling (residing in the greater Detroit metropolitan area), and both of these factors predict greater

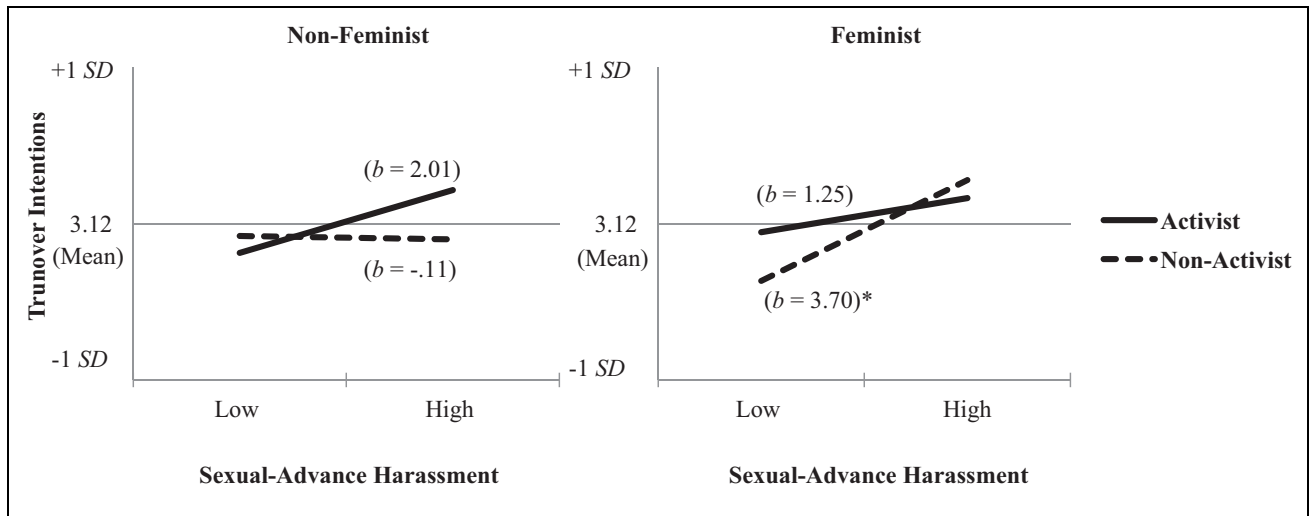


Figure 3. Three-way interaction among feminist identification, activism, and sexual-advance harassment predicting turnover intentions. b = unstandardized regression coefficient (simple slope). * $p < .012$.

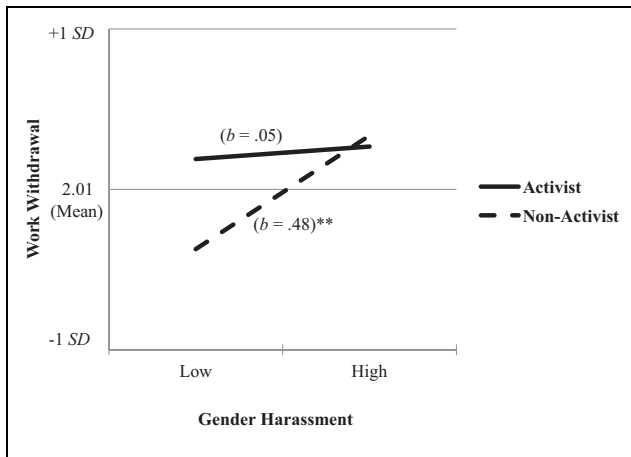


Figure 4. Two-way interaction between activism and gender harassment predicting work withdrawal. b = unstandardized regression coefficient (simple slope). ** $p < .001$.

feminist identification (Duncan, 2010; McCabe, 2005). Readers should keep these points in mind when considering the generalizability of the following findings.

Experimental studies have found that men are more likely to sexually harass (i.e., send pornography or sexist jokes to) feminist women than women with traditional attitudes (Maass et al., 2003; Siebler et al., 2008). Extending that research, we found that women who engaged in feminist activism were more likely to report being targeted with both SAH and GH, compared to non-activist women. Contrary to our hypothesis, however, we further found that women who self-identified as “feminist” reported *less* GH than women who did not identify as feminist. A possible explanation for this pattern is that feminist *activism* is an observable behavior (which could trigger harassment), but feminist *identity* is not. That is, a woman who personally adopts the feminist label

may not “out” herself as such to others. Women openly engaging in activism for women’s rights may pose a more obvious threat to the existing gender hierarchy—a hierarchy that grants more power to men than women. Men may react to this threat with sexually harassing behavior, degrading women in an attempt to maintain a system of male dominance and female subordination (Berdahl, 2007). A second possibility is that a blatantly feminist identity may be seen as an indicator of power; field research suggests that harassers tend to prey *less* on seemingly “powerful” women, instead favoring those who appear “vulnerable” (e.g., young, financially vulnerable, lower in organizational status or job security; Chamberlain et al., 2008; Uggen & Blackstone, 2004).

We also found that activist women who did *not* identify as feminist reported experiencing the most GH at work. Perhaps, non-feminist-identified women are more likely to work in environments that are conducive to GH. For example, harassment is more common in traditionally male-dominated fields and organizations with no established sexual harassment policies and procedures (Fitzgerald et al., 1997; Gruber, 1988). Dutton, Ashford, Lawrence, and Miner-Rubino (2002) also found that gender-equity issues were less of a concern in organizations that valued the inclusion of both male and female employees. Feminist-identified women may seek employment in contexts that are more gender-balanced and equitable. If *non-feminist-identified* women work in environments that are more tolerant of GH, engaging in feminist activism may place these women at even greater risk. Organizational tolerance of sexual harassment is a well-established antecedent to harassment experiences (Willness et al., 2007); thus, our future work will examine the relationships between feminism and organizational climates of tolerance. These findings, while complex, demonstrated the importance of examining feminist identification and activism as independent constructs.

In the current study, we also examined how feminist identification and activism affect sexual harassment labeling. Earlier research suggests that feminist-identified and activist women, compared to other women, may be more aware that workplace sexual harassment is a widespread problem with serious ramifications, and therefore they would be more likely to label behaviors as “sexual harassment” (Brooks & Perot, 1991; Schneider, 1982). According to bivariate correlations in Table 1, endorsing a feminist identity did relate to naming harassing behaviors “sexual harassment.” However, we found neither feminist identity nor activism predicted harassment labeling in multivariate analyses (Table 3), which controlled for type of harassing behavior. In other words, it appears that the relationship between feminist identity and harassment labeling is overpowered by the strong effect of experiencing sexually advancing types of harassment. Dominant understandings of sexual harassment, both in the lay public and in the law, emphasize sexually advancing behaviors that are unwanted and/or coercive (Leskinen et al., 2011; Schultz, 1998). Thus, unwanted sexual advances may activate women’s schemas of sexual harassment more frequently than gender derogation does (Magley & Shupe, 2005) and, in turn, increase labeling. In support of this assertion, we found that women who had faced SAH were over seven times more likely to attach the “sexual harassment” label to their experiences, compared to women who had experienced GH alone. The wide divergence in our findings on GH versus SAH supports a call for research to tease apart these two constructs (Leskinen et al., 2011; Lim & Cortina, 2005).

The literature widely reports that all forms of sexual harassment are associated with negative psychological and occupational outcomes in women victims (Chan et al., 2008; Hershcovis & Barling, 2010; Willness et al., 2007). In line with prior research, we found that experiencing GH predicted a decrease in women’s general psychological well-being and job satisfaction as well as an increase in both their turnover cognitions and work-withdrawal behaviors. We also found that SAH was associated with less psychological well-being and more intent to leave the job.

According to theory, feminist consciousness should increase awareness of sexist events but also decrease self-blame for such events—which should presumably decrease their negative impact (Klonoff & Ladrine, 1995; Larsen & Fitzgerald, 2011). Thus, we hypothesized that feminist identification and activism would attenuate the negative personal and professional outcomes of experiencing sexual harassment. We found some evidence that feminist activism may help protect against negative professional outcomes of sexist and sexually inappropriate harassment on the job. For example, as GH increased, so did non-activist women’s work-withdrawal behaviors (actions such as arriving late—that is, conduct that removes the employee from day-to-day workings of the job). However, the relationship between GH and work withdrawal did *not* emerge for *activist* women, who reported high levels of work withdrawal regardless of harassment experiences.

Perhaps, other negative work experiences (e.g., gender discrimination or poor family-friendly policies) are both motivating women to engage in feminist activism and leading them to disengage from work. However, given that activist women did not report an increase in work withdrawal at high levels of GH (like non-activist women), it is possible they are more likely to blame the harasser or organizational system (not themselves) for this harassment and are therefore less likely to disengage further as a result of being harassed.

Our results further indicated that, although identifying as a “feminist” may reduce a woman’s exposure to sexual harassment at work, it may not reduce her negative outcomes once harassed. We found that feminist identity was associated with positive occupational outcomes when sexual harassment was low, but also that feminist-identified women reported a greater decrease in job satisfaction and increase in turnover intentions when sexual harassment increased. Although feminist identification alone was not protective, our results suggest that activism attenuated some negative outcomes for feminist women. More specifically, as SAH increased, feminist-identified women who did *not* engage in activism reported greater intentions to leave their jobs; in contrast, we found no significant harassment→turnover relationship among women who were *both feminist and activist*. Again, it is possible that women who openly adopt the term feminist for themselves may be more likely to work in environments that hinder sexual harassment. If sexual harassment is generally rare, feminist-identified women may experience stronger negative reactions when it does occur. Another possible explanation for these findings may be that engaging in activism serves as a coping mechanism, whereas having a feminist identity does not. A recent study by Larsen and Fitzgerald (2011) found that women who felt a greater sense of control over the recovery process had better outcomes after experiencing sexual harassment. In psychological research, “control” has been broadly defined as the belief that one’s responses can affect the averseness of an event (Thompson, 1981). Perhaps, the women who engaged in activism for women’s rights had a greater sense of control after experiencing sexual harassment, as a result of behaviorally promoting social change, which then helped mitigate some negative occupational outcomes. We plan to examine this possibility in future research. Overall, these results demonstrate the complex nature of non-traditional women’s experiences of sexual harassment, and they suggest that feminist identification and activism each contribute unique and important information.

Contrary to our hypothesis, our results suggest that neither identifying as a feminist nor engaging in activism protects against negative psychological outcomes of sexual harassment. In the current study, we examined one measure of general psychological well-being; however, other research suggests that feminist women have greater psychological well-being on many specific dimensions, including perceptions of autonomy, personal growth, and purpose in life (Saunders & Kashubeck-West, 2006; Yakushko, 2007; Yoder et al., 2012). Future studies should investigate whether

feminism buffers negative psychological outcomes of sexual harassment across specific dimensions such as these.

Practice Implications

Our findings have implications for both policy and practice. We found that harassing situations virtually always included GH—conduct that derogates women (and some men) but does not try to engage them sexually. In fact, 72% of harassed women *only* reported GH, absent any kind of unwanted sexual advance. This GH predicted declines in women's psychological and occupational well-being, consistent with prior research (Fitzgerald et al., 1997; Langhout et al., 2005; Leskinen et al., 2011). These results call for expansion in sexual harassment policies, awareness trainings, and prevention programs. Organizational and legal understandings of sexual harassment should be broadened to reflect the reality of women's experiences—including not only unwanted come-ons but also gender-related put-downs. We urge employers to educate their workforce about all forms of sexual harassment. For example, trainings should include information about non-stereotypical and non-sexual conduct (e.g., sexist behavior, gender policing, and policing of the work/family divide; see Leskinen & Cortina, 2012). Becker and Swim (2011) found that raising awareness of the pervasiveness and harm of subtle forms of sexism decreases sexist beliefs.

Our study and others (Maass et al., 2003; Siebler et al., 2008) suggest that people are more likely to sexually harass non-traditional women. If anti-feminist biases are at play, sexual harassment trainings should also address the more general problem of stereotyping and bias against members of undervalued groups. Social psychologists have identified a range of actions that can interrupt biased thought, emotion, and behavior. For instance, interventions based on Gaertner and Dovidio's (2000) *common in-group identity model* shift people's conceptions of social group membership from many separate groups to a more inclusive, superordinate group. The common group identity reduces negative stereotyping and fosters greater respect among members of different groups (Dovidio, Gaertner, Niemann, & Snider, 2001; Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000). Social research has also demonstrated that various conditions promote individuated processing in lieu of stereotyping; these include situations that involve high stakes, prioritize accuracy, relax time pressures, hold people accountable for their judgments, or require cooperation to work toward shared goals (Devine & Monteith, 1999; Fiske, 2002; Greenwald & Banaji, 1995). Organizational practitioners could apply this stereotype research to interventions that reduce biases against undervalued persons, including feminists and activists, hopefully reducing harassment as well.

Limitations and Future Directions

Like any research, our study has limitations that warrant mention. One is that it was based entirely on cross-sectional,

correlational data, thus limiting our ability to draw definitive causal conclusions. Additionally, the reliabilities for our measures of SAH and work withdrawal were lower than desirable, which could have reduced our ability to predict these events. Also note that we proposed many interactions among feminist identity, activism, and harassment when predicting personal and organizational outcomes, but we only found a few of these relationships to be significant. Perhaps, feminist identity and activism are not central risk or protective factors for all outcomes of sexual harassment. Nonetheless, our findings do suggest that feminism is an important factor to consider in sexual harassment experiences.

Future research should test the generalizability of findings to more sociodemographically diverse samples. In particular, our sample contained few working-class women; almost half our respondents held a graduate or professional degree. It would also be beneficial to explore how these relationships may be similar or different across racial/ethnic groups. For example, Cole and Zucker (2007) found that racial tensions in the women's movement may complicate the relationship between African American women and the term feminist. In the future, we plan to investigate further how women's unique understanding of feminism may affect sexual harassment experiences and outcomes across diverse groups of women. Additionally, we hope to further explore the feminist causes women are supporting. For instance, how may sexual harassment experiences differ between women who are activists for marriage equality and those who are activists for reproductive rights?

Future studies should also investigate the relationship between feminism and sexual harassment among lesbian and bisexual women. Research has found that lesbian compared to heterosexual women report more sexual harassment (Konik & Cortina, 2008) and believe that unwanted sexual attention is a more common problem facing working women (Schneider, 1982). Furthermore, Konik and Cortina (2008) argued that harassment based on gender and harassment based on sexuality are inextricably linked, and both abuses function to enforce rigid gender roles and maintain a gender hierarchy that privileges masculinity. For example, a woman who refuses a male coworker's advances may be harassed with anti-lesbian epithets, regardless of her actual sexual orientation. Feminist ideologies undoubtedly complicate this picture.

It will be important for future work to explore how feminist identification and activism relate to sexual harassment using additional research methodologies. Experimental studies, for example, could investigate causal mechanisms behind the relationships we observed in our project. Qualitative research may also help uncover a more nuanced understanding of how activist and feminist-identified women perceive and respond to workplace sexual harassment.

Finally, future research on these topics should consider additional indicators of feminism. Our measure of feminist identification had the advantages of simplicity and brevity, but it undoubtedly missed important aspects of being

“feminist.” Feminist identification can be complicated— involving cognitive, affective, developmental, attitudinal, and behavioral components (Henley, Meng, O’Brien, McCarthy, & Sockloskie, 1998; Moradi & Subich, 2002). Using broader or developmental measures of feminist identity may provide further insight into our current findings. That said, a recent study by Yoder et al. (2011) suggests that endorsing or rejecting the feminist label offers unique insight into feminism, above and beyond beliefs, particularly when used in combination with other indicators of feminism (e.g., activism). Our measure of feminist activism could also be expanded to include newer vehicles for activism, such as use of social media to promote feminist causes.

Conclusions

Much like real life, the results of our research are complex and multifaceted, additive and multiplicative. It appears that feminism has both costs and benefits in women’s work lives. Women who engaged in feminist activism were more likely to report experiencing both sexually advancing behavior and gender-harassing behavior in the workplace. Conversely, women who openly called themselves “feminist” were less likely to report experiences of GH. Sexual harassment can be devastating to women, both personally and professionally; however, we found evidence that engagement in feminist activism may help protect against or remediate some negative occupational outcomes. Overall, our findings suggest that women’s relationship to feminism is an important factor to consider in models of sexual harassment risk.

In closing, it appears that the intersection of feminism and harassment presents working women with a catch-22. On one hand, behavioral displays of feminism (e.g., activist conduct) could prompt sexist and sexualized hostilities from coworkers. On the other hand, *not* engaging with feminism could increase the chance that women will suffer professionally if harassed (not to mention the fact that avoiding feminist activism diverts energy from a cause committed to advancing women in employment). Given the negative implications of sexual harassment at individual (e.g., psychological well-being) and organizational (e.g., turnover) levels, it is clear that organizations should continue taking action to eradicate harassment and make the work domain safe and fair for all women (and men)—including feminists.

Authors’ Note

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Declaration of Conflicting Interests

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