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ABSTRACT
Sexual harassment is a prevalent problem in the business world today. It interferes with effective organizational performance and has significant physical and psychological consequences for the direct victim (e.g., Gutek & Koss, 1993, Hanisch, 1996) and any indirect victims (e.g., Glomb, Richman, Hulin, Drasgow, Schneider, & Fitzgerald, 1997). The past two decades have seen a proliferation of research on the frequency of sexual harassment (Cohen & Gutek, 1985; Fitzgerald & Hesson-McInnis, 1989; Gutek & Koss, 1993), as well as how individuals perceive the harasser, the victim, and the situation (Corr & Jackson, 2001; Henry & Meltzof, 1998; Perry, Schmidtke, & Kulik, 1998). Unfortunately, few studies have examined the effects of racial or ethnic differences on perceptions of sexual harassment. In addition, most research has used the stereotypical female victim/male harasser scenario and ignored males as potential victims. The present study addressed these gaps in the literature by analyzing perceptions of harassment utilizing both male and female victims from different racial classifications.

Perceptions of Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment involves any behavior that the recipient finds offensive and, in turn, unreasonably interferes with the recipient's work performance or creates an intimidating work environment. There have been many attempts to define the vague and complex construct of sexual harassment (e.g., Corr & Jackson, 2001; Shelton & Chavous, 1999; Waldo, Berdahl, & Fitzgerald, 1998). The present study will define sexual harassment in a manner similar to Corr and Jackson (2001) by identifying two continuous dimensions: 1) unwanted sexual attention and 2) gender harassment. Although other researchers (e.g., Fitzgerald, Gelfand, & Drasgow, 1995; Waldo, Berdahl, & Fitzgerald, 1998) have identified additional dimensions of sexual harassment (i.e., sexual coercion, lewd comments, enforcing gender roles), this study contends that these behaviors fit within the primary dimensions of unwanted sexual attention (sexual coercion, request for sexual favors, and sexual touching) and gender harassment (lewd comments and enforcing gender roles). Thus, the present study defines sexual harassment as two continua of behaviors, one that constitutes unwanted sexual attention and the other that constitutes gender harassment.

In past research, the most commonly addressed independent variables included the respondent's sex (e.g., Corr & Jackson, 2001; Perry, Schmidtke, & Kulik, 1998; Rosen & Martin, 1998), the power status of the harasser (e.g., Corr & Jackson, 2001; Sheets & Braver, 1999; Shelton & Chavous, 1999), and the observer's response to the harassment (e.g. Shelton & Chavous, 1999). Because race is rarely addressed in studies regarding respondent's perceptions of sexual harassment and research is still inconclusive regarding perceptual differences of sexual harassment based on sex, this study

treats them as independent variables while also manipulating the sex of the harasser.

Effects of Race on Perceptions of Harassment

A study by Rosen and Martin (1998), although it focused on negative attitudes toward females among male soldiers in the military, did address racial differences in sexual harassment perceptions. This study included 1,060 male soldiers and 305 female soldiers. They examined male tolerance of sexual harassment by analyzing three predictor variables: hostility toward women, negative masculinity, and acceptance of women as equals. Hostility towards women was measured with a scale developed by Check (1985). Negative masculinity was measured with the Extended Personal Attributes Questionnaire (EPAQ; Spence, Helmreich, & Holohan, 1979). Acceptance of women was measured with a six-item scale that resulted from an earlier study on the integration of males and females in combat support groups (Rosen, Durand, Bliese, Halverson, Rothberg, & Harrison, 1996).

The results of Rosen and Martin's (1998) study indicated that ethnicity or racial classification affects a person's level of tolerance for sexually harassing behavior. They found that black male and female soldiers in the U.S. Army exhibited lower levels of tolerance to sexual harassment than did white male and female soldiers. In addition, white female soldiers were more tolerant of sexual harassment than were black female soldiers. Hispanic and other ethnic female soldiers were neither more nor less tolerant of sexual harassment when compared with white and black female soldiers. Rosen and Martin (1998) speculated that black male and female soldiers exhibited lower levels of tolerance to sexual harassment because they are members of a minority group and therefore may empathize with someone who is vulnerable to discrimination.

In a study done by Shelton and Chavous (1999), 46 black females and 89 white females completed two separate self-report measures, a scenario questionnaire and the Sexual Harassment Attitude Scale (SHAS; Mazer & Percival, 1989). The scenario questionnaire was in third person form and depicted a scene in an elevator. The target of the harassment was a black female and the harasser was either a black male or a white male. In addition, the harasser was identified as a coworker or a supervisor. The harassment was characterized as sexual glances and nonverbal sexual gestures.

The results of the study indicated that black and white females tend to perceive sexual harassment as more "appropriate" if the harasser is a black male in comparison to a white male. In addition, both black and white women saw this behavior as more appropriate from a co-worker than from a supervisor. However, a three-way interaction indicated that both black and white women rated supervisor harassment as less tolerable than co-worker harassment when the harasser was black. For the white harasser however, white women showed the same pattern but black women saw both supervisor and co-worker harassment as equally intolerable.

Taken together, the two studies listed above are inconclusive with respect to the effects of racial differences in harassment perceptions. In addition, studies that have analyzed other aspects of sexual harassment, such as racial differences in the amount of exposure to sexual harassment (Piotrkowski, 1998; Wyatt & Rierderle, 1995) and racial differences in responses to sexual harassment (Gruber & Bjorn, 1986; Wyatt & Rierderle, 1995) have also yielded inconsistent results.

Males as Victims

Sexual harassment is not the stereotypical female victim/male harasser arrangement it was once thought to be (Dubois, Knapp, Faley, & Kustis, 1998). Same sex harassment, such as males being the victims of harassment by another male, occurs particularly in jobs in which the majority of workers are male. Males are most often harassed by more powerful males in organizations such as the military in order to force them to conform to unofficial masculine roles within the organization (Waldo, Berdahl, & Fitzgerald, 1998).

Waldo, Berdahl, and Fitzgerald (1998) examined the frequency of sexual harassment among males and the degree to which males found such experiences to be negative in a psychological sense. This study divided sexual harassment into three major dimensions: 1) gender harassment (lewd comments, enforcement of gender roles, and negative gender-related remarks), 2) unwanted sexual attention, and 3) sexual coercion. The measure used was the Sexual Harassment of Men scale, which is a revised form of the Sexual Experience Questionnaire (Fitzgerald, Gelfand, & Drasgow, 1995) where all items apply to the harassment of males.

Results showed that the sex of the harasser of a male was generally identified as male. Further, enforcement of male gender roles was considered the most upsetting form of sexual harassment. These findings suggest that male same sex sexual harassment is more common than researchers have assumed. In addition, males are more likely to be harassed on the basis of (a) actual or perceived sexual orientation and/or (b) gender role that is considered inconsistent with the male's biological sex (Waldo, Berdahl, & Fitzgerald, 1998). This form of harassment can create higher degrees of trauma, both psychological and job related, than female victim/male harasser incidents. A

suggested reason for this is that males find sexual harassment to be a challenge to their masculinity (DuBois, Knapp, Faley, & Kustis, 1998).

DuBois, Knapp, Faley, and Kustis (1998) also examined same sex sexual harassment. The sample consisted of active-duty military personnel; 5,312 females, and 1,357 males. The survey used in the study listed nine specific types of sexual harassment and requested the respondent to indicate their experience with any of these in the last twelve months, the sex of the harasser, and the duration. The nine categories were: 1) sexual attention in the form of whistles or hoots; 2) sexual teasing or jokes; 3) nonverbal sexual gestures or behavior; 4) materials or calls of a sexual nature; 5) pressure for dates; 6) sexual touching, grabbing, or brushing against; 7) pressure to participate in sexually oriented activities; 8) pressure for sexual favors; and 9) actual or attempted rape or assault.

The results of this study indicate that only 1% of females reported being harassed by females and 35% of males reported being harassed by males. Most of the harassment reported by male respondents was in the form of gender harassment (rape, sexually explicit jokes, and sexual teasing). However, males reported that overall they were not as offended by the harassment as females have reported.

Opposite vs. Same Gender Harassment

Katz, Hannon, and Whitten (1996) examined the perception of sexual harassment across the respondent's sex, the four combinations of sex in sexual harassment (i.e. males harassing females, females harassing males, and same sex harassment), and power differentials between the harasser and the victim. Results showed that male and female respondents rated the harassment at similar levels of low tolerance when the harasser was identified as male. However, when the harasser was identified as a female, female respondents continued to rate the harassment as intolerable while male respondents rated the harassment as more tolerable.

LaRocca and Kromrey (1999) examined differences in the level of tolerance for both male and female respondents perceptions of sexual harassment by manipulating the gender of the harasser, the attractiveness/unattractiveness of the harasser, and the attractiveness/unattractiveness of the victim. Interestingly, a three-way interaction was found between respondent sex, harasser sex, and the harasser's attractiveness. Female respondents perceived an attractive female harasser as more harassing than an unattractive female harasser. Male respondents perceived an attractive male harasser as more harassing than an unattractive male harasser. However, female respondents perceived an attractive male harasser as more tolerable than an unattractive male harasser and male respondents perceived an attractive female harasser as more tolerable than an unattractive female harasser. Overall, female respondents rated the harassment as less tolerable regardless of the harasser's sex while male respondents rated harassment instigated by a female as more tolerable when compared to harassment instigated by a male.

Limitations of Previous Studies

To accurately assess the role of race and sex in harassment perceptions, we must study all possible combinations of race and sex. The studies reviewed above have generally focused on some, but not all of these combinations. For example, Shelton and Chavous (1999) only studied female respondents. Rosen and Martin (1998) focused their analysis on male respondents and differences between ethnic groups were not addressed explicitly. In Waldo, Berdahl, and Fitzgerald (1998), no female respondents were used and the emphasis was on male-male harassment. The studies by LaRocca and Kromrey (1999) and Katz et al. (1996) compared same and opposite sex harassment perceptions for both males and females but did not address racial differences. By examining various combinations of race and sex in a single study, the present investigation will further our understanding of the effects of these variables.

The types of measures used in sexual harassment research presents an additional concern in formulating an accurate assessment of perceptions. The most commonly used measurement of sexual harassment is the questionnaire (e.g., Rosen & Martin, 1998) and the scenario vignette (e.g., Shelton & Chavous, 1999). Scenario presentations are normally written from a third-person perspective, which forces the respondent into an observer role. The respondents do not directly assess how they would feel if they were the recipients of the harassment. The present research contends that a first-person scenario is the most effective in eliciting true emotional reactions from the participants. In sum, the use of all combinations of race and sex combined with a first-person scenario provides a more accurate picture of the role that race and sex play in harassment perceptions.

Present Study

The focus of this experiment was to investigate potential differences in the level of tolerance based on respondent's sex and racial classification using a first-person sexual harassment scenario. In addition, the present study sought to determine if the harasser's sex makes a significant difference to the respondent

when they are cast as the victim of a perceived sexually harassing situation. Both the respondent's sex and the respondent's race were employed as independent variables. In addition, the harasser's sex was manipulated within the questionnaire. The primary dependent variable was tolerance of sexual harassment (measured by an eight-item scale). Attitudes toward sexual harassment were also measured using the nineteen-item Sexual Harassment Attitude Scale (Mazer & Percival, 1989).

A study done by Rosen and Martin (1998) showed that black male and female soldiers were less tolerant of sexual harassment than white male and female soldiers were. On the other hand, Shelton and Chavous (1999) found that black females exhibited higher tolerance of sexual harassment than white females but only when the harasser was a black male. The overall findings suggest that black and white females differ in their ratings of whether or not the harasser's behavior is sexual harassment. Since these findings suggest that Blacks and Whites differ in their tolerance levels, the present study predicted a main effect of respondent race. Specifically, there will be a higher tolerance of sexual harassment among white participants than among black participants.

Males on average have more organizational, physical, and informal power than do females (DuBois et al., 1998; Waldo et al., 1998). For this reason, a male harasser may be considered more threatening than a female harasser. It has also been suggested that males may perceive unwanted sexual attention from a female harasser as trivial or even benign (Waldo et al., 1998). Based on this assessment, the present study predicted a main effect for sex of the harasser such that tolerance will be higher for a female harasser than it will be for a male harasser.

In the study by DuBois et al. (1998), only one percent of the female victims reported harassment by female harassers as compared to 35 percent of male victims who reported being harassed by male harassers. Although this percentage is small, females who were harassed by females reported that the experience negatively effected their view of their own sex. In addition, the work of Waldo et al. (1998) found that males perceived harassment in all its forms as only "slightly upsetting", with the exception of same sex harassment. Because previous research has not explicitly examined tolerance level for same sex harassment, the present research hypothesized a main effect for respondent sex. Specifically, male respondents will be more tolerant of sexual harassment than female respondents.

Finally, this study hypothesized an interaction between respondent sex and harasser sex. Specifically, male participants will perceive harassment instigated by a female as less offensive than harassment instigated by a male. Female participants will perceive sexual harassment at higher levels of intolerance regardless of the harasser's sex. Given the inconsistent results of previous studies, no additional interactions were hypothesized.

Method

Participants

The sample consisted of 28 white males, 46 white females, two black males, seven black females, four Hispanic males, three Hispanic females, one Asian male, one Asian female, one multiracial female, and one Native-American female from a mid-sized undergraduate university located in the Midwest. Subjects were chosen based on if they were male or female, their racial category, and had to be at least 18 years old or over. In regards to their age, the subjects were required to be of legal adult age in order to give their consent to participate. To check for this, the participants were asked to indicate their age, sex, and racial classification before they began the study.

Materials

The scenario created for this study depicted a situation, in the first-person perspective, that placed the respondent in a potentially harassing predicament. The harasser's sex was manipulated with the two values being male and female. All other information within the scenario remained constant (See Appendix).

The scale following the scenario consisted of eight Likert-scaled items. Response choices for each item had seven selections ranging from "Strongly Agree" through "Neutral" to "Strongly Disagree." The Likert scale was used to assess the participant's perception of the sexual harassment in the scenario. Participants were asked to circle the choice that most directly represented their agreement with each item.

The second measurement utilized in this study was the 19-item Sexual Harassment Attitudes Scale (SHAS) developed by Mazer and Percival (1989). In addition to the 19 items, the following item, "I have been sexually harassed", was added to assess whether or not experience of sexual harassment effected the respondent's perceptions. The 20 items were measured according to a seven-point Likert scale from "Strongly Agree" through "Neutral" to "Strongly Disagree." This scale assisted in identifying respondents' attitudes towards, and understanding of, sexual harassment. A pilot study was conducted to refine each measurement.

Procedure

The participants were asked to fill out two brief surveys for a psychology research project. Before the participants were given the two surveys, each was

asked to fill out an informed consent to take part in the study. The students read a scenario and subsequently completed an eight-item Likert scale following the scenario. The participants received no more information than what was presented in the scenario. They also responded to the Sexual Harassment Attitudes Scale (SHAS). Upon completing both surveys, participants were thanked and debriefed about the purpose of the study.

The research method was a 2 x 2 x 2 factorial-design experiment. The dependent variables were the respondent's tolerance of the sexual harassment in the scenario (as measured by the eight items following the scenario) and their general attitudes toward sexual harassment (SHAS). The three independent variables were the respondent's sex (male/female), the respondent's racial classification (Black/White), and the harasser's sex (male/female). Harasser sex was manipulated with half of the questionnaires using a male harasser and the other half using a female harasser (See Appendix). The respondents were randomly assigned to one of the two scenarios.

The major procedural control was that the scenario, with the exception of the sex of the harasser, was held constant. That is, the formal relationship between the harasser and the victim, the issue of formal and informal power, the physical contact of the harasser, and the derogatory remark of "sweetie" by the harasser was the same in each scenario. In addition, the directions, response choices, and the ordering and wording of the response choices were all held constant.

Results

Of the 94 participants sampled in this study, 74 were white, nine were black, seven were Hispanic, two were Asian, one was multiracial, and one was Native American. Based on the unequal distribution of race, this study was not able to make reasonable comparisons on perceptions of sexual harassment across respondent race. However, the distribution of respondent sex (males = 35, females = 59) and harasser sex (male = 49, female = 45) provides sufficient power to conduct a 2 (subject sex) x 2 (harasser sex) analysis of variance (ANOVA) on the sex variables. Therefore, the data was collapsed across race and 2 x 2 ANOVAS were run on each dependent measure.

The internal consistency for each measure was exhibited by the coefficient alphas. Coefficient alphas for the scenario (α = .90) and the SHAS (α = .79) were sufficient to estimate sexual harassment perceptions and also justify the use of total scores on both measures.

The analysis of the scenario questionnaire resulted in one main effect. The main effect for harasser sex showed that participants were less tolerant of sexual harassment instigated by a female ($x = 4.1$) than harassment instigated by a male ($x = 3.83$, $p = .009<.05$). Respondent race and respondent sex showed no significant effects.

The analysis of the SHAS questionnaire resulted in one main effect. The main effect for respondent sex showed that female participants ($x = 4.49$) were more sensitive to sexual harassment issues than male participants ($x= 3.74$, $p = .000<.05$). The predicted interaction of respondent sex and harasser sex was not significant. Respondent race showed no significant effects. The majority of the respondents indicated that they had not been sexually harassed. Because of this, no comparisons were made to determine if life experience made a difference in perceptions.

Discussion

The main effect for harasser sex, namely a female harasser seen as less tolerable than a male harasser, was surprising, especially since previous research indicates that a male harasser is generally considered more intolerable (i.e. LaRocca & Kromrey, 1999). We assume the reason why a female harasser may be considered more offensive is that a female should know better since, in instances of sexual harassment, females themselves make up the majority of the victims. It seems that this study's sample believed that it would be more offensive that a female would resort to sexually harassing behavior when placed in a power position. This may be related to the double-standard view of businessmen and businesswomen as discussed by Lemme (2002). Businessmen are seen as confident, sophisticated, and "exercises authority diligently." However, businesswomen are seen as stuck up, power hungry, and having "been around." This discrepancy in how businessmen and businesswomen are viewed may effect how the participants perceived both male and female harassers.

Another possible explanation refers back to the problem of labeling particular behaviors as sexual harassment (Stockdale & Vaux, 1993, Marin & Guadagno, 1999). This is especially true with milder forms of unwanted sexual attention and gender harassment (e.g., Ellis, Barak, & Pinto, 1991). A male harasser may be viewed as less offensive because many participants may not have even labeled the harasser's behavior as sexual harassment.

The main effect for respondent sex showed that female respondents tend to have less tolerance for and knowledge about sexual harassment and issues of male/female relationships. This is consistent with the findings by Ford and Donis (1996) who also used the SHAS. In addition, many other studies found that females were more likely to perceive

more subtle behaviors as sexual harassment than males were (Fitzgerald & Ormerod, 1991, Kenig & Ryan, 1986). For example, in the study by Kenig and Ryan (1986), males were more likely to place the blame of the harassment on the female victim. Male participants generally concluded that the female contributed to the harassment by provoking the harasser or by not effectively dealing with the "normal" sexual behavior of males. It can be assumed that the present study's female participants are more aware of the potential behaviors that can lead to sexual harassment. One of the reasons as to why females may have more awareness is that they tend to lack the formal power in organizations (Cleveland & Kerst, 1993). They are also more susceptible to harassing situations than males are (Barak, Pitterman, & Yitzhaki, 1995, Fain & Anderson, 1987).

Limitations and Future Research

There are some limitations to the present study. Because the majority of the respondents were 19 years of age, there was not a favorable distribution of age. There is an assumption that the respondents have little life or job experience outside of summer employment. In addition, the sample size was limited in that the minimum of 120 participants was not attained. Unfortunately, of the 94 participants only nine were black, making it unreasonable to make any comparisons across racial classification.

It is important for future research to determine if female harassers are truly perceived as less tolerable than male harassers. In addition, what effect does a first-person scenario have on perceptions of sexual harassment versus a scenario that places the participant in the observer role? Perhaps the perceptions of the participant change when the hypothetical incident is directed at them instead of a co-worker. When observing a co-worker being sexually harassed, the participant may be making internal attributions of the victim, in a sense blaming the victim for actually instigating the harasser's behavior. When the hypothetical incident is directed at the participant, the participant may place the internal attributions on the harasser and external attributions on their reactions, making the situation more offensive.

In order to determine if there are any racial differences in perceptions of sexual harassment, a more racially diverse sample must be gathered. With a more diverse sample, a more variable age range, and more racial diversity among participants, future research on sexual harassment perceptions should yield interesting and important differences in perceptions among the races. In the meantime, the results of the present study suggest, along with additional research, that there are specific differences in perceptions of sexual harassment between men and women. It is important for those who take responsibility for developing sexual harassment policies, training programs, and reporting procedures to be aware of these differences and incorporate them into their educational and employee development efforts.

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Appendix

Sexual Harassment Scenario and Questionnaire

Are you ____male or ____female
Are you over the age of 18? ____yes ____no
Which description most closely matches your racial classification?:
____Asian ____Black ____Hispanic ____White ____Other (please specify _____)

> In this questionnaire, you are asked to play the role of an individual who has just begun working for the We 'R' Us Corporation. Please assume that the information in the following account is true and is about you. We ask that you seriously consider both the information and the statements presented. Please respond based on exactly how you would feel in this situation.

You just started working for an organization. Your new job gives you real satisfaction and utilizes your talents. However, since the day you started, your immediate supervisor, who is a (male/female), has the habit of putting his/her hand on your shoulder in greeting and whenever you perform your work assignments well. On top of that, (he/she) has addressed you as "sweetie" and has regularly asked you to have dinner with (him/her) after work so you can discuss work-related issues.

The statements below refer to the account you just read. Please write the number that corresponds with the response that you most agree with, using the following scale:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly Agree Neutral Strongly Disagree

_____1) The supervisor's behavior offends me.

_____2) It does not bother me that my supervisor touches my shoulder in this manner.

_____3) The supervisor addressing me as "sweetie" is completely harmless.

_____4) The shoulder touching is just the way my supervisor shows approval.

_____5) My supervisor is sexually harassing me.

_____6) I would consider going out to dinner with my supervisor.

_____7) It bothers me that my supervisor addresses me as "sweetie".

_____8) I would not go out to dinner with my supervisor because I do not feel comfortable with the situation.

Are there any other comments that you would like to make about this situation?

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for your participation!