

The (Un)reasonableness of Reporting: Antecedents and Consequences of Reporting Sexual Harassment

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This study places the *reporting of sexual harassment* within an integrated model of the sexual harassment process. Two structural models were developed and tested in a sample ($N = 6,417$) of male and female military personnel. The 1st model identifies determinants and effects of reporting; reporting did not improve—and at times worsened—job, psychological, and health outcomes. The authors argue that organizational responses to reports (i.e., *organizational remedies*, *organizational minimization*, and *retaliation*) as well as *procedural satisfaction* can account for these negative effects. The 2nd model examines these mediating mechanisms; results suggest that these mediators, and not reporting itself, are the source of the negative effects of reporting. Organizational and legal implications of these findings are discussed.

From an organizational perspective the key is to create and provide top management support that encourages everyone to report illegal, immoral, or illegitimate acts or omissions. . . . [Reporting] should be viewed as an attempt to improve the organization and to contribute to the public good, not as a betrayal or something to be punished. (Paul & Townsend, 1996, p. 157)

The U.S. Supreme Court has held that an organization can provide an affirmative defense to sexual harassment liability if it meets two elements (*Burlington Industries v. Ellerth*, 1998; *Faragher v. City of Boca Raton*, 1998). The first element is “that the employer exercised reasonable care to prevent and correct

promptly any sexually harassing behavior” (*Burlington Industries v. Ellerth*, 1998, p. 20); the second element is that the employer must demonstrate that the plaintiff “*unreasonably* [italics added] failed to take advantage of any preventive or corrective opportunities provided by the employer” (*Burlington Industries v. Ellerth*, 1998, p. 20). The U.S. Supreme Court noted that failure to use formal organizational reporting systems would, in most cases, satisfy the second component of this defense standard.

Most harassment targets do not report their experiences (Brooks & Perot, 1991; Culbertson & Rosenfeld, 1994; Fitzgerald et al., 1988), despite the supposed benefits of doing so. From a theoretical perspective, reporting should benefit the complainant by resolving the harassing situation and initiating recovery from the psychological damage that occurred (Munson, Hulin, & Drasgow, 2000). For organizations, resolving harassing incidents should buffer exposure to liability and rectify the productivity and group process losses known to be associated with harassment.

It has become increasingly clear, however, that individuals who report harassment experiences generally fare no better than their nonreporting counterparts. For example, although the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board (1987) found that most people who told the harasser to stop said it “made things better,” empirical outcomes have actually demonstrated the opposite pattern (Hesson-McInnis & Fitzgerald, 1997). Stockdale (1998) found that men and women who responded assertively to sexual harassment experienced worsened job outcomes above and beyond the effects of the sexual harassment itself. Adams-Roy and Barling (1998) found that women who reported harassment perceived their organization to be less just. It appears that assertive coping responses at best have little substantive impact; at worst, they appear to increase damage to the target’s job, psychological, and health status. These results call into question the *reasonableness* of using organizational reporting procedures.

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In this article, we provide a more comprehensive examination of the experience of reporting sexual harassment. We define *reporting* as the act of telling an organizational authority (e.g., supervisor, equal employment opportunity representative) about unwanted or offensive sex-related behavior (whether or not the target explicitly labeled this experience as “sexual harassment”) and examine this process through two models. The first model describes the process of reporting, including hypothesized antecedents and consequences; although a number of studies have examined the incidence of reporting as well as some antecedents or outcomes (e.g., Brooks & Perot, 1991; Hesson-McInnis & Fitzgerald, 1997), to our knowledge, the present effort provides the first attempt to place reporting within a comprehensive theoretical framework.

The second model examines the apparent contradiction between conventional wisdom that reporting should benefit individuals and empirical results that demonstrate otherwise. This model proposes that organizational and individual reactions to reporting may account for these counterintuitive findings by mediating relationships between reporting and target outcomes. Focusing on reactions of both the organization and the targets, we investigated why reporting fails to improve outcomes. Figure 1 presents an integrated theoretical framework for these two models.

Model 1: Reporting in the Context of an Integrated Theory of Sexual Harassment

Fitzgerald, Swan, and Magley (1997) proposed a “model of harm” for the psychological experience of sexual harassment. They proposed that subjective psychological appraisal of the stimulus situation (i.e., the target’s evaluation of the harassment as stressful, offensive, threatening, etc.) is a function of individual factors (e.g., vulnerability, attitudes), stimulus factors (e.g., frequency of sexual harassment), and contextual factors (e.g., organizational climate for sexual harassment). This subjective primary appraisal should, in turn, affect secondary appraisal, that is, the cognitive determination of how to respond to or cope with the stressful situation (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Thus, reporting should be influenced by primary appraisal as well as stimulus, individual, and organizational variables (Fitzgerald, Swan, & Magley, 1997; Knapp, Faley, Ekeberg, & DuBois, 1997). Brooks and Perot (1991) provided support for this concept; not only did perceived offensiveness strongly relate to reporting in their sample of college women, but it also mediated the relationships between reporting and other antecedents of reporting. On the basis of

Fitzgerald, Swan, and Magley’s framework, we considered three sets of factors as determinants of primary (threat) and secondary (response) appraisal.

Individual Variables

Appraisal of the situation should theoretically exert a strong effect on the responses that a person chooses (Fitzgerald, Swan, & Fischer, 1995; Fitzgerald, Swan, & Magley, 1997; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984); respondents who appraise their situations as more severe should be more likely to seek organizational relief. The extent of prior experiences of harassment in the organization (i.e., the individual’s *sexual harassment history*) should influence this severity appraisal. In addition, *attitudes toward sexual harassment* should also influence appraisal; those who perceive sexual harassment as a serious social problem should more seriously evaluate their own experiences than those who do not perceive sexual harassment as a serious social problem (Fitzgerald, Swan, & Magley, 1997). The *organizational power* or status of the target may also be relevant to reporting; yet, the direction of this relationship is presently unclear. Although high-status targets may be more likely to believe that their reports will be taken seriously, they may also fear that “rocking the boat” will jeopardize their future.

Attitudes toward sexual harassment should, in turn, affect *labeling*, the psychological process of naming an experience as sexual harassment. People with more negative attitudes about sexual harassment should be more likely to label their own unwanted sex-related experiences as sexual harassment. In addition, although labeling harassment experiences apparently has little effect on job, psychological, and health outcomes (Magley, Hulin, Fitzgerald, & DeNardo, 1999; Munson, Miner, & Hulin, 2001), it may affect the reporting process. By labeling experiences as sexual harassment, individuals recognize the inappropriate, unethical, or illegal nature of such experiences; they thus may be more likely to report them.

Stimulus Variables

Individual variables alone cannot account for reporting. Various aspects of the situation itself certainly are also influential. To be specific, the *frequency* of the offensive behavior is known to affect reporting (Brooks & Perot, 1991). Some behaviors (e.g., suggestive jokes or stories) may seem innocuous when encountered

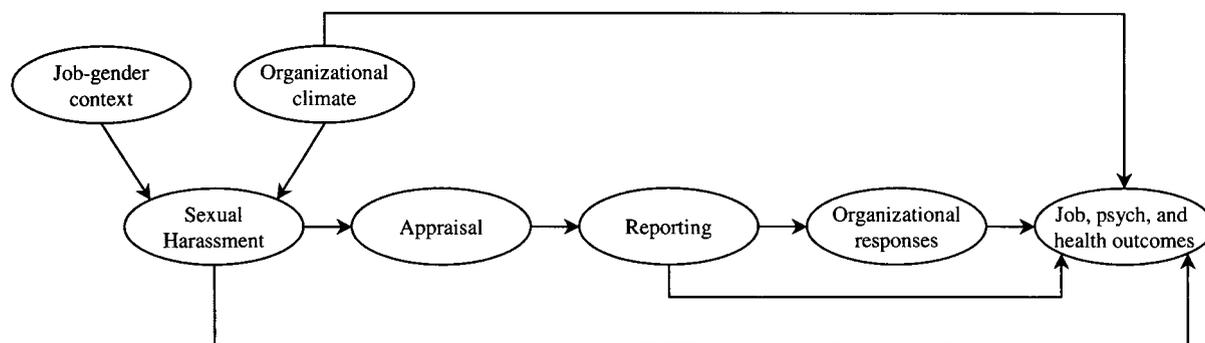


Figure 1. Conceptual model of reporting sexual harassment. psych = psychological.

infrequently; as the frequency increases, however, so does the perceived severity (Langhout et al., 1999).

Furthermore, research has shown that harassment perpetrated by more *powerful organizational members* is considered more offensive and negative (Cortina, Fitzgerald, & Drasgow, in press; Dougherty, Turban, Olson, Dwyer, & Lapreze, 1996; Swan, 1997; Thacker & Gohmann, 1993). These intuitively obvious findings likely reflect the target's recognition that organizational authorities have a greater ability to retaliate or to make good on threats of sexual coercion (Cortina et al., in press). This previous research suggests competing hypotheses regarding the effects of the perpetrator's power on reporting. On the one hand, the target's fear of power abuses along with doubts that the organization would take action against highly placed members might reduce the likelihood of reporting. On the other hand, the target may be more willing to report authority-perpetrated harassment because the potential for power abuses presents a greater threat to the target's professional well-being.

Organizational Variables

Reporting should also vary as a function of the organizational context, including organizational climate toward sexual harassment. When harassment targets believe that the organization will actually respond in a fair manner, they should be more likely to report their experiences (Fitzgerald et al., 1988; Knapp et al., 1997; Rudman, Borgida, & Robertson, 1995). Organizations that take sexual harassment seriously should be more likely to judiciously apply sexual harassment grievance policies. Implementation of grievance and prevention policies appears to be an important part of the sexual harassment climate (Hulin, Fitzgerald, & Drasgow, 1996; Williams, Fitzgerald, & Drasgow, 1999).

Finally, reporting sexual harassment is conceptually similar to whistle-blowing in organizations; both are intended to end an illegal or unethical situation. The literature on whistle-blowing suggests several person-organization variables that may affect reporting behavior. Individuals who (a) know where to report, (b) do not fear retaliation, (c) expect that reporting will not be personally costly, (d) believe that reports are treated fairly, and (e) are in organizations with formal policies and procedures for reporting are more likely to blow the whistle (Keenan, 1990, 1995; Miceli & Near, 1985). All of these indicators are hallmarks of an organizational climate that does not tolerate sexual harassment.

Sexual Harassment Context

Complaints of sexual harassment do not exist in isolation but rather occur against the backdrop of the entire harassment experience. Thus, it is important to take into account an individual's history of harassment in the organization and the effects of such experiences on that individual. Thus, Model 1 incorporates the theoretical propositions of Fitzgerald, Hulin, and Drasgow (1995), positing that sexual harassment, as an organizational stressor, has organizational antecedents (e.g., organizational climate toward sexual harassment, job-gender context) and affects job, psychological, and health-related outcomes. This model has extensive empirical support (Fitzgerald, Drasgow, Hulin, Gelfand, & Magley, 1997; Fitzgerald, Drasgow, & Magley, 1999).

Effects of Reporting on Individuals

In addition to sexual harassment history and reporting, other variables may also influence job, psychological, and health-related outcomes. Williams et al. (1999) demonstrated that sexual harassment climate directly affects outcomes, such that greater organizational tolerance of harassment is related to lower job and health satisfaction and psychological well-being. Furthermore, the organizational psychology literature demonstrates a robust phenomenon that employees who hold positions higher in the organizational hierarchy tend to have greater job satisfaction. We thus incorporated these relationships into the model to control for their effects on harassment targets' job, psychological, and health-related outcomes.

Consistent with previous empirical research (Hesson-McInnis & Fitzgerald, 1997; Magley, 1999; Stockdale, 1998), we expected reporting to have little effect or negative effects on the outcomes of sexual harassment. In the next section, we explain Model 2 and this expected, although counterintuitive, result.

Model 2: Responses to Reporting

Reporting does not occur in a vacuum. The organization and its members respond to reports of sexual harassment; responses may run the gamut from supporting the complainant, to ignoring the report, to retaliating against the reporter. We refer to these responses as *organizational remedies*, *organizational minimization*, and *retaliation*, respectively. The complainant, in turn, evaluates the way the organization handles the report, which we refer to as *procedural satisfaction*. We expected these variables to mediate relationships between reporting sexual harassment and the reporters' job, psychological, and health-related well-being. In context, these responses to reporting should function like sexual harassment, with similar antecedents and effects on outcomes.

Antecedents of Responses to Reporting

The whistle-blowing literature suggests that organizational climate should influence organizational responses to reporting (Miceli & Near, 1992). For example, organizational support for the whistle-blower inhibits retaliation; that is, the more support a reporter receives from important others in the organization (e.g., management), the less retaliation reporters experience (Near & Miceli, 1986). Such support would include attempts to substantiate the report of sexual harassment and to remedy substantiated situations. Organizational intolerance of sexual harassment probably facilitates this type of support.

Because power is central to sexual harassment, we expected that aspects of both perpetrator and victim power would relate to organizational responses, although we could not specify these directions a priori. On the one hand, reports of harassment perpetrated by low-ranking individuals could be treated very seriously because there would be little perceived organizational disruption from investigating and punishing low-ranking individuals. Organizations may also be likely to more seriously treat harassment reports involving high-ranking individuals because of the potential organizational damage arising from a high-profile incident. On the other hand, these same considerations might lead an organization to minimize such a complaint and "sweep it under the rug."

particularly if the complainant is an organizationally low-power individual.

It is also likely that job-gender context affects postreporting events. Masculinized job-gender contexts are consistently related to higher incidence of sexual harassment for women (e.g., Fitzgerald, Drasgow, et al., 1997), although the relationship between job-gender context and sexual harassment for men is unclear. Organizational responses may function as a continuation of the harassing behaviors, in that negative organizational responses (e.g., retaliation) may further victimize the harassment target. Thus, job-gender context may influence responses to reports in much the same way that it affects sexual harassment.

Finally, in the whistle-blowing literature, greater seriousness of the reported situation was related to lower retaliation rates and scope (Miceli & Near, 1989). The seriousness of sexually harassing behaviors depends, in part, on their frequency (Langhout et al., 1999). Thus, we expected greater frequency to result in more remedies, less minimization, and less retaliation.

Effects on Outcomes

We expected the three organizational responses to predict satisfaction with the reporting process. Such procedural satisfaction likely varies with action taken against the alleged perpetrator, the degree to which the complaint is taken seriously, and the occurrence of retaliation. Near and Miceli (1996) argued that some retaliatory behaviors are more problematic for certain individuals than for others; for example, being passed over for a promotion may differentially affect persons, depending on the stages of their careers. This differential effect of some retaliatory behaviors may influence the relationships between the organizational responses to reporting and the evaluation of these responses that a person makes.

We expected procedural satisfaction to mediate relationships between postreporting organizational responses and complainant outcomes. We conceptualized this satisfaction variable as a specific form of perceived procedural justice. Procedural justice refers to the fairness of the process used to achieve certain outcomes, regardless of the fairness of those outcomes. Past research has shown strong relations between procedural justice and job-related variables such as job satisfaction (Mossholder, Bennett, & Martin, 1998; Roberson, Moye, & Locke, 1999) and organizational withdrawal (Hendrix, Robbins, Miller, & Summers, 1998; for a comprehensive review, see Greenberg, Bies, & Eskew, 1991).

As in Model 1, we expected that victims' rank and organizational climate would directly affect job, psychological, and health-related outcomes. In a similar manner, we hypothesized that climate, job-gender context, and target power would affect the extent of sexual harassment, which in turn would directly influence outcomes. Note that sexual harassment is included in the model as a control variable because the postreporting experiences occur against the backdrop of the entire sexual harassment experience.

Method

Participants

This study used data collected by the Defense Manpower Data Center from the U.S. Armed Forces. Stratified random sampling procedures ensured adequate sample sizes of particular subgroups. Stratification categories

included *gender* (male and female), *race* (African American, Asian American/Pacific Islander, Hispanic, Native American, and White), *Service* (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, and Coast Guard), *personnel category* (enlisted, warrant officer, and commissioned officer), and *location* (continental United States and noncontinental United States). Approximately 50,000 individuals were selected for the initial sample and were mailed a copy of the 1995 Status of the Armed Forces—Gender Issues survey (Bastian, Lancaster, & Reyst, 1996). A full 28,500 Service members (22,543 women and 5,957 men) completed the survey, yielding an overall response rate of 57%. This article focuses on only women and men who answered the portion of the survey describing a particular unitary incident of sexual harassment (see Mazzeo, Bergman, Buchanan-Biddle, Drasgow, & Fitzgerald, 2001, for an in-depth explanation of this methodology) that occurred at their current duty location. Including only those Service members currently stationed at the duty location where the harassment occurred was necessary to eliminate the confounding effects of reassignment to a new command, and thus a different organizational climate. A total of 5,757 women and 660 men met these conditions and provided complete data.

Participants ranged in age from 18 to 58 years, with a mean age of 31 years. Tenure in the Armed Services averaged 9.5 years. More than two thirds of the participants (69%) were White. Approximately one fifth (19%) of the sample were African American, 8% were Hispanic, 2% were Asian American/Pacific Islander, and 3% were Native American. Just over half (53%) of the sample were married, and just over one fourth (29%) were single. The remainder were divorced (15%), separated (4%), or widowed (0.4%). Participants were fairly evenly distributed between the Army (31%), Air Force (26%), and Navy (24%), followed by the Marines (11%) and Coast Guard (8%). With respect to rank, approximately 70% of the men and the women were enlisted, 25% were commissioned officers, and the remainder were warrant officers.

Procedure

Data were collected through the Defense Manpower Data Center by means of a mail survey. All selected individuals received a letter from the Under Secretary of Defense introducing the survey; approximately 6 weeks later, the survey was mailed to respondents. Individuals who did not return their surveys by the suggested deadline were mailed up to three additional letters encouraging their participation. Bastian et al. (1996) presented a detailed description of the sampling design and administration.

Instrumentation

The measures included in this study are described in Table 1 and discussed at greater length by Hay and Elig (1999). Table 1 includes the type of measure, the number of items, and the possible range of scores for each scale as well as the means, standard deviations, and Cronbach's alphas (when applicable). Higher scores indicate higher levels of the construct, unless otherwise noted.

The scales created for this article are discussed in greater detail below. Subjective appraisal is also discussed because of its centrality to this article.

Reporting. Respondents were asked by means of a checklist of 10 possible reporting mechanisms (e.g., immediate supervisor, commanding officer, a special military office responsible for handling these kinds of complaints) whether they reported the unwanted sex-related attention that they described in the significant experience. Any respondent who reported an experience to one or more organizational members was considered a reporter. Although we used a dichotomous rule to classify respondents as either reporters or nonreporters, when this variable appears in the analyses, it is a continuous variable counting the number of offices or people to whom the individual reported sexual harassment experiences.

Organizational remedies. Respondents checked four actions that the organization may have taken to redress the situation (i.e., "The person who

Table 1
Descriptions and Descriptive Statistics of Variables

Scale	Type of measure	No. of items	Range	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	α
Sexual harassment history	Antecedent	23	1–91	12.47 6.19	11.54 7.33	.91 .87
Respondent rank	Antecedent	1	1–9	5.06 4.72	1.40 1.54	
Enlisted						
Warrant officer			10–14	11.39 11.74	0.83 1.04	
Commissioned officer			15–20	17.08 17.45	1.20 1.21	
Frequency of sexual harassment	Antecedent	1	1–5	2.48 2.03	1.21 1.11	
Labeling	Antecedent	1	1–5	3.17 2.00	1.39 1.22	
Perpetrator rank	Antecedent	1	1–7	3.86 3.23	1.65 1.48	
Climate	Antecedent	18	0–46	32.38 34.99	9.43 8.04	.90 .88
Sexual harassment attitudes	Antecedent	2	2–10	7.17 6.18	1.77 1.71	.59 .56
Job-gender context	Antecedent	3	5.68–15.29	9.95 9.37	2.09 1.59	.49 .28
Subjective appraisal	Antecedent	6	0–24	12.19 7.94	5.66 5.45	.84 .86
Reporting	Reporting	10	0–10	0.83 0.38	1.44 1.11	.74 .79
Procedural satisfaction ^a	Response to reporting	6	5–25	15.93 15.75	5.39 5.72	.95 .96
Organizational remedies ^a	Response to reporting	4	0–4	0.96 0.64	0.99 0.89	.54 .52
Organizational minimization ^a	Response to reporting	5	0–5	0.65 0.75	0.90 0.94	.40 .31
Retaliation ^a	Response to reporting	4	0–4	0.27 0.23	0.63 0.56	.55 .36
Coworker satisfaction	Outcome	3	3–15	10.61 10.90	2.47 2.25	.70 .66
Supervisor satisfaction	Outcome	6	6–30	20.29 21.15	5.93 5.36	.89 .87
Work satisfaction	Outcome	15	16–75	50.89 51.31	10.54 10.57	.88 .88
Psychological well-being	Outcome	6	0–25	17.05 17.60	4.62 4.33	.85 .84
Health satisfaction	Outcome	4	4–20	16.61 16.65	3.19 2.92	.81 .75
Organizational commitment	Outcome	11	11–55	38.06 39.45	7.86 7.86	.81 .81
Work-group cohesion	Outcome	5	5–25	19.53 19.91	4.33 3.92	.90 .88

Note. For means, standard deviations, and alphas, in each cell the first entry is the women's result, and the second entry is the men's result. Higher scores indicate higher levels of the construct, except for job-gender context, with lower values indicating a more masculinized context.

^a These values were computed only for those individuals who reported (for women, $n = 2,228$; for men, $n = 97$).

bothered me was counseled," "The person who bothered me was talked to about the behavior," "The person who bothered me was transferred or reassigned," and "They took action against the person who bothered me"). We counted the number of items checked to provide a composite score.

Organizational minimization. Respondents answered the following five items that tapped into organizational minimization (i.e., "I was encouraged to drop the complaint," "My complaint was discounted or not taken seriously," "No action was taken," "They found my complaint to be unsubstantiated," and "They did nothing"). Item responses were counted to provide a composite score.

Retaliation. Four items measured retaliation (i.e., "My supervisor [or others in my chain of command] was hostile toward me," "My co-workers were hostile toward me," "I was reassigned against my will," and "They took action against me"). Checked items were counted to create a composite score.

Procedural satisfaction. Six items assessed reporters' satisfaction with procedural aspects of reporting. Response options were made on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*very dissatisfied*) to 5 (*very satisfied*). Sample questions included "How satisfied were you with your treatment by personnel handling your complaint?" and "How

satisfied were you with the availability of information about how to report or file a complaint?"

Subjective appraisal of distress. Respondents' subjective evaluation of the stressfulness or threat of the significant experience was measured with four items from Swan's (1997) Feelings Scale, plus two additional items. Respondents were asked whether they experienced a list of negative emotions (e.g., offensive, threatening) in response to the significant experience; participants responded on a scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*extremely*). These six items were summed such that higher scores indicate that the participant found his or her experiences to be offensive, threatening, and so forth.

Analysis Plan

Analyses tested the theoretical propositions captured by Models 1 and 2. These analyses were conducted separately for men and women. Although we expected results to be similar across sexes, we were concerned that the discrepancies in sample sizes would allow the larger sample (women) to drive the results of the analyses. Thus, we thought that combining the male and female samples could obscure possible differences.

Because of the large size of our female sample ($N = 5,757$), we were able to use cross-validation techniques by dividing the overall sample into two random half-samples. We used one half-sample ($n = 2,901$) to derive a final Model 1, which we then confirmed on the second half-sample ($n = 2,856$). The women's Model 2 derivation ($n = 665$) and confirmation ($n = 665$) samples included subsets of the Model 1 female samples that reported harassing behaviors. The size of our male sample ($n = 660$) was not sufficiently large to permit derivation and cross-validation samples. The Model 2 male sample ($n = 130$) represented the subset of the Model 1 male sample that reported.

We conducted all tests of Model 1 and women's tests of Model 2 by using maximum-likelihood path analysis, as implemented by LISREL 8 (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1993). To test Model 2 on the male sample, we conducted linear and logistic regression analyses. Regression equations are conceptually similar to path analysis—attempting to capture covariation among variables—with smaller sample-size requirements.

Results

Model 1: Women

Path analyses of Model 1 for women began with the model shown in Figure 2. Model 1 attempts to place reporting within the context of an integrated model of sexual harassment (Fitzgerald, Hulin, & Drasgow, 1995) and tests the assertions of Fitzgerald, Swan, and Magley (1997) that organizational, individual,¹ and situational variables together determine responses to sexual harassment experiences. Initial analysis of Model 1, using the female derivation sample, suggested that the model fit moderately well (Table 2). However, the fit and modification indices suggested that the model did not adequately account for some relationships. We subsequently revised Model 1 by adding paths from sexual harassment history to labeling and to reporting. This revision makes theoretical sense, in that responses to a specific harassment incident would likely be related to the victim's sexual harassment history. This modification significantly improved the model ($\Delta\chi^2/\Delta df = 173.61$; see Table 2 for additional fit statistics). However, the fit and modification indices suggested that problems remained; an additional path, from organizational climate to sexual harassment frequency, was needed. Given that climate predicts overall sexual harassment history and that frequency of sexual harassment is highly related to sexual harassment history, this revision seems

appropriate. This change significantly improved the model ($\Delta\chi^2/\Delta df = 215.83$; see Table 2 for additional fit statistics), yielding an acceptable fit. This second revision was deemed the final model and was cross-validated using the confirmatory half-sample. The cross-validation results suggested that the model fit well (Table 2). Figure 2 and Tables 3 and 4 present path coefficients for this final cross-validated model.

Model 1: Men

In general, we expected Model 1 to function similarly for the male respondents as it did for the female respondents. However, because little is known about job-gender context for men, we did not specify a direction for this path; that is, we were uncertain whether a masculine or a feminine context would lead to harassment. The small sample size for the men's data precluded derivation analyses; therefore, Model 1 analyses for the men were based on the women's cross-validated model, shown in Figure 2. Fit statistics for this model for the men appear in Table 2; Figure 2 and Tables 3 and 4 present path coefficients. These results indicate that the tested model fit the data well. As such, no model revisions were undertaken.

Model 1: Summary

Much of what Fitzgerald, Swan, and Magley (1997) proposed was substantiated here for both women and men. It is interesting that organizational climate had no direct effect on reporting sexual harassment; in fact, the only strong effects on reporting appeared to come from sexual harassment history and appraisal. Importantly, reporting sexual harassment had little effect on outcomes for either sex, and what little effect it did have was negative.

A striking feature of the results presented in Figure 2 and Tables 3 and 4 is the similarity of the path coefficients for the men and the women. In general, paths that were significant for one sex were also significant for the other sex; those paths that were not significant for one sex tended to be smaller (weaker) in the sample in which the paths were significant. It is interesting that the path from job-gender context to sexual harassment was negative for women and positive for men. This finding is explored further in the Discussion section.

Model 2: Women

Model 2 attempts to explicate the multifaceted reporting process among the subset of respondents who sought organizational relief. Although initial analyses on the women's derivation sample indicated that Model 2 sufficiently fit the data (see Table 2 for fit statistics), some fit and modification indices suggested the need for revision. Thus, we revised the model to include a negative path from organizational minimization to organizational remedies. This

¹ Two variables, sexual harassment history and frequency of harassment experiences, provided a considerable methodological concern. Neither of these variables logically antecedes the other. Thus, frequency was included in the model as an endogenous variable, even though the original model did not contain paths leading to frequency. Also, the element of the psi matrix corresponding to these two variables was freely estimated, allowing a correlation between the error terms of these two variables.

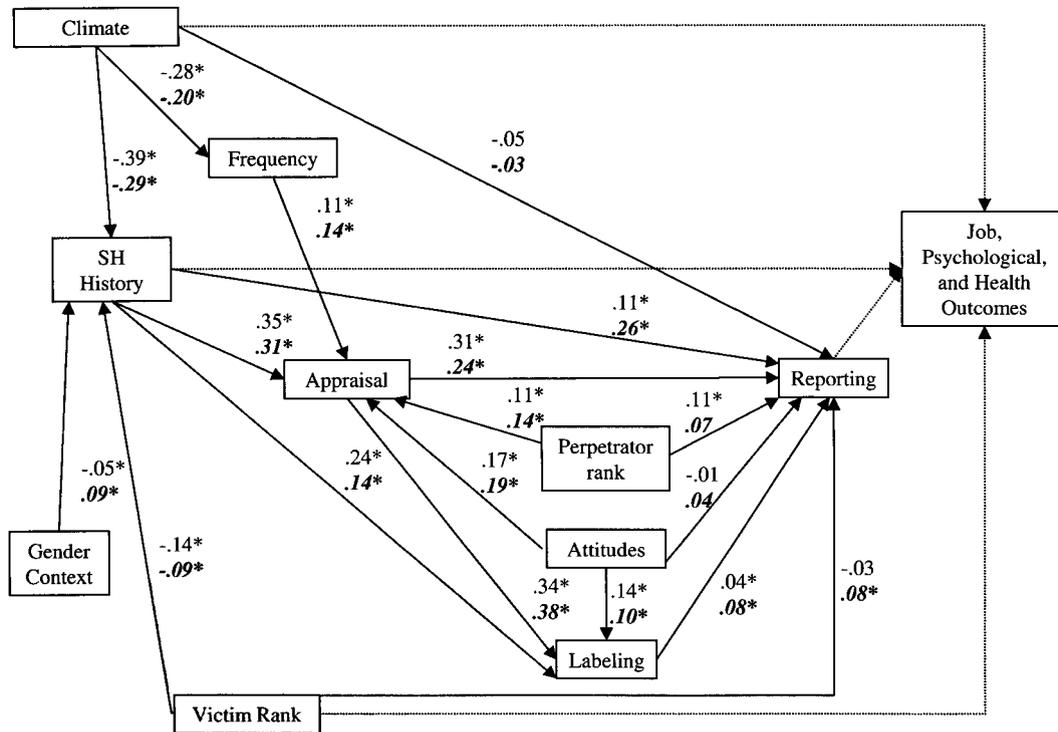


Figure 2. Antecedents and consequences of reporting sexual harassment (Model 1). Cross-validation female sample (plain type) and male sample (**bold italic** type) path values are shown. Path coefficients for dotted lines are listed in Tables 3 and 4. SH = sexual harassment. * $p < .05$.

revision makes sense theoretically because an organization is unlikely to ignore complaints against an alleged perpetrator while at the same time taking action. This revision significantly improved model fit ($\Delta\chi^2/\Delta df = 57.53$). This revised model was cross-validated using the confirmatory half-sample, providing a good fit to these data as well (see Table 2). Figure 3 and Tables 5, 6, and 7 present significant path coefficients for the cross-validation.

The path analysis revealed interesting findings regarding the four postreporting variables. Retaliation and minimization were associated with higher perpetrator rank, more negative organizational climates, and greater frequency of sexual harassment. In

addition, more masculine job-gender contexts predicted retaliation. Fewer organizational actions were taken against the perpetrator when the complainant was high-ranking. One possible explanation for this result might be that high-ranking victims are more likely to be harassed by perpetrators of even higher rank. The more powerful the perpetrators are, the less likely it is that action will be taken against them. Finally, retaliation, organizational minimization of reports, and climates tolerant of sexual harassment led to lower reporting satisfaction, whereas organizational remedies were related to increased satisfaction with reporting.

Regarding outcomes, positive organizational climate and higher respondent rank were associated with higher supervisor, coworker,

Table 2
Fit Statistics for the Models

Model	<i>n</i>	χ^2	<i>df</i>	χ^2/df	$\Delta\chi^2/\Delta df$	SRMSR	RMSEA	GFI	AGFI	NNFI
Model 1: Women										
Derivation sample	2,901	1,248.91	76	16.43		.074	.073	.95	.90	.83
Revision 1		901.69	74	12.19	173.61	.064	.062	.97	.93	.87
Revision 2 (final)		685.86	73	9.40	215.83	.041	.054	.97	.94	.91
Cross-validation of final model	2,856	701.37	73	9.61		.042	.055	.97	.94	.91
Model 1: Men	660	202.94	73	2.78		.046	.052	.96	.93	.91
Model 2: Women										
Derivation sample	665	284.58	69	4.12		.048	.066	.95	.90	.87
Revision 1		227.05	68	3.34	57.53	.043	.058	.96	.92	.90
Cross-validation	665	295.29	68	4.34		.048	.069	.95	.89	.86

Note. *n* = effective sample size following LISREL's listwise deletion for missing data; SRMSR = standardized root-mean-square residual; RMSEA = root-mean-square error of approximation; GFI = goodness-of-fit index; AGFI = adjusted goodness-of-fit index; NNFI = nonnormed fit index.

Table 3
Paths to Job, Psychological, and Health-Related Outcomes for Model 1 for Women and Men

Outcome	Antecedent			
	Climate	Sexual harassment history	Rank	Reporting
Supervisor satisfaction	.40	-.11	.08	-.06
	.36	-.14	.10	-.08
Coworker satisfaction	.24	-.15	.11	-.06
	.26	-.16	.15	-.11
Work satisfaction	.38	-.05	.17	-.04
	.30	-.13	.16	<i>ns</i>
Psychological well-being	<i>ns</i>	-.08	<i>ns</i>	-.02
	<i>ns</i>	-.08	.10	<i>ns</i>
Health satisfaction	.05	-.03	.09	<i>ns</i>
	<i>ns</i>	-.08	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>

Note. The first entry in each cell is for the results for the women's cross-validation sample; the second entry in each cell is from the men's sample. All entries shown are significant at $p < .05$.

and work satisfaction; higher rank was also associated with greater health satisfaction. As we hypothesized, procedural satisfaction mediated the effects of organizational remedies, organizational minimization, and retaliation on outcomes; respondents who were satisfied with their reporting experiences were also more satisfied with their work, coworkers, and supervisors.

In summary, the results suggest that postreporting variables affect outcomes in both positive and negative ways, a situation that would account for the overall absence of impact of reporting itself found in other studies. Thus, it is not the act of reporting itself, but rather what happens subsequently, that drives the impact of reporting on the individual. These postreporting variables themselves are affected by a variety of organizational, stimulus, and individual characteristics.

Regressions Based on Model 2: Men

We began our examination of the men's experiences by regressing (a) organizational remedies, (b) organizational minimization, (c) retaliation, and (d) procedural satisfaction onto perpetrator rank, job-gender context, organizational climate, and target rank. Regressions proceeded hierarchically, to determine each predictor's unique variance; those regressions² that led to the most parsimonious solution are shown in Table 8, along with variance accounted for and other model parameters. All betas reported below are standardized.

In all regressions, climate had a strong association with the dependent variable. Climates intolerant of sexual harassment were significantly related to organizational remedies ($\beta = .22$). Climates more tolerant of sexual harassment were associated with greater organizational minimization ($\beta = -.44$). In addition, there was an associational trend between more masculinized job-gender contexts and organizational minimization ($\beta = -.12$). Furthermore, as sexual harassment tolerance increased, so did retaliation ($\beta = -.42$). More positive climates ($\beta = .24$) and less powerful perpetrators ($\beta = .27$) were related to greater satisfaction with the reporting process.

Model 2 hypothesized that organizational remedies, organizational minimization, and retaliation would predict procedural satisfaction. Both organizational minimization and retaliation were

associated with procedural satisfaction ($\beta = -.61$ and $-.16$, respectively; see Table 8); more minimization and retaliation were associated with less satisfaction.

Finally, we next regressed the outcomes onto procedural satisfaction (see Table 8). In addition, because of the negative effects of sexual harassment on outcomes, sexual harassment scores were entered as a covariate before satisfaction with reporting was entered into the equation. With respect to work-related outcomes, procedural satisfaction was positively related to supervisor satisfaction ($\beta = .25$) and work satisfaction ($\beta = .18$). No significant relationships emerged between procedural satisfaction and coworker satisfaction, psychological well-being, or health satisfaction. In sum, men's regression results, based on Model 2, were consistent with the women's Model 2 path analysis results.

Discussion

The research described here suggests that the concept of reasonableness in reporting sexual harassment is not as straightforward as suggested by the *Faragher v. City of Boca Raton* (1998) and *Burlington Industries v. Ellerth* (1998) decisions. The present findings demonstrate that reporting often triggers retaliation; our results and others (Hesson-McInnis & Fitzgerald, 1997; Magley, 1999) also show that reporting can harm the victim in terms of lowered job satisfaction and greater psychological distress. Such results suggest that, at least in certain work environments, the most "reasonable" course of action for the victim is to avoid reporting.

What, then, can be done to encourage reporting of sexual harassment while reducing its associated drawbacks, thus making reporting a reasonable action? We believe that the answer lies within the organization's climate toward sexual harassment. One of the most striking features of both models tested in this study is the importance of organizational climate. Although organizational climate did not directly affect reporting, it did influence reporting and its outcomes through sexual harassment history, frequency of sexual harassment, organizational minimization of reporting, retaliation, and procedural satisfaction. It is clear that organizational

² All regressions can be provided by contacting Mindy E. Bergman.

Table 4
Paths Among Job, Psychological, and Health-Related Outcomes for Model 1 for Women and Men

Outcome	Antecedent			
	Supervisor satisfaction	Coworker satisfaction	Work satisfaction	Psychological well-being
Psychological well-being	.10 .20	.16 .09	.21 .24	— —
Health satisfaction	— —	— —	— —	.34 .41
Work-group productivity	.17 .23	.33 .31	.24 .16	— —
Organizational commitment	.24 .12	<i>ns</i> .10	.46 .51	.17 .17

Note. Dashes indicate that the parameter was not estimated. The first entry in each cell is for the results for the women's cross-validation sample; the second entry in each cell is from the men's sample. All entries shown are significant at $p < .05$.

climate affects not only individuals and sexual harassment situations themselves but also the way that the organization handles reports of sexual harassment.

Fostering a climate that does not tolerate sexual harassment should alleviate many of the problems faced by organizations. First and foremost, climates that do not tolerate sexual harassment are associated with lower levels of sexual harassment; this relationship has been demonstrated repeatedly by the research of Fitzgerald and colleagues (e.g., Fitzgerald, Drasgow, et al., 1997; Glomb, Munson, Hulin, Bergman, & Drasgow, 1999; Glomb et al., 1997; Wasti, Bergman, Glomb, & Drasgow, 2000) and shown here yet again. Furthermore, when an organization conveys to its members that sexual harassment is a serious issue, it may affect the attitudes of the employees. These attitudes toward sexual harassment affect

reporting behavior. In addition, improving the climate may make the organization more likely to take reports seriously, which should increase reporters' procedural satisfaction, alleviating some of the negative effects of reporting sexual harassment.

If an organization's climate strongly opposes sexual harassment, then reports of sexually harassing behaviors may increase and may occur earlier in the harassment experience. Paired with the increased gravity with which the organization would treat the report, this may allow the organization to more swiftly rectify situations, thus potentially reducing negative individual and organizational consequences, including litigation. Thus, we believe that reporting is, in large part, an organizational climate issue.

This study also identifies other important issues related to reporting. For example, one interesting finding is that less organi-

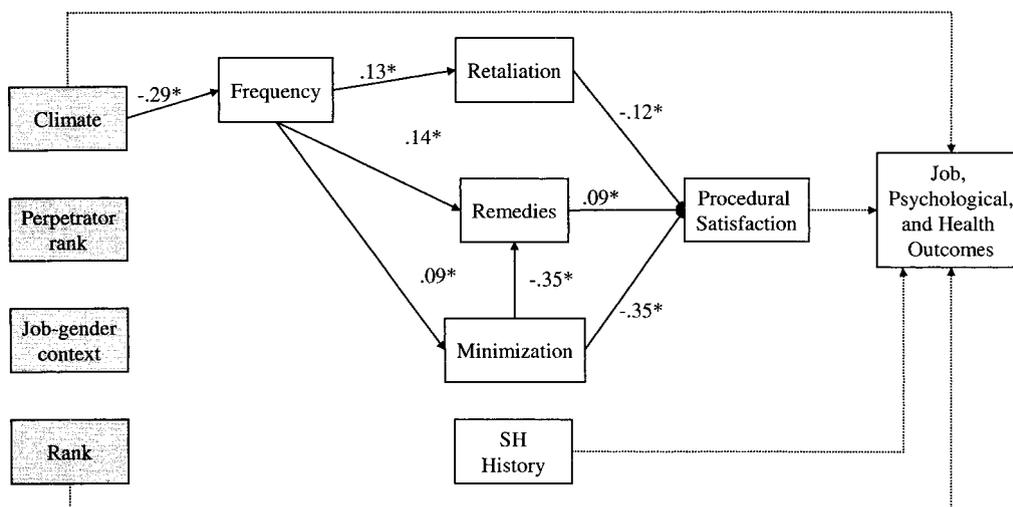


Figure 3. Antecedents and effects of responses to reporting sexual harassment (Model 2). Results for the cross-validated female sample are shown. Variables shown with gray backgrounds were hypothesized to predict organizational responses to reporting, procedural satisfaction, and sexual harassment history; these results are presented in Table 5. Path coefficients for relationships between antecedents and outcomes, represented by dotted lines, are presented in Table 6; relationships among outcomes appear in Table 7. SH = sexual harassment. * $p < .05$.

Table 5
Antecedents of Responses to Reporting and Sexual Harassment History in the Women's Cross-Validation Sample for Model 2

Mediating factor	Antecedent			
	Perpetrator rank	Climate	Job-gender context	Rank
Retaliation	.12	-.29	-.15	<i>ns</i>
Remedies	-.08	.14	<i>ns</i>	-.08
Minimization	.14	-.36	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>
Procedural satisfaction	<i>ns</i>	.43	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>
Sexual harassment history	—	-.39	-.07	-.12

Note. The dash indicates that the path was not estimated. Reported path values are significant at $p < .05$.

zational action was taken against perpetrators who harassed high-status targets. This finding seems counterintuitive, until one considers the possibility (indeed, likelihood) that high-ranking individuals are harassed primarily by even higher ranking individuals. Organizations are less likely to take action against high-status perpetrators, and as the organizational power and status of the perpetrator increase, the likelihood of organizational action decreases. Thus, current systems of reporting may be less effective in resolving situations for reporters with greater organizational power.

This result may also be related to organizational climate issues. A military sample lends itself particularly well to close examinations of power issues. Its emphasis on tradition and hierarchy strengthens the numerous sources of power (e.g., different expectations and norms, access to valued resources, prestige; Carli, 1999; French & Raven, 1959) available to those who are high-ranking. In organizations with strong and highly vertical hierarchies, power is clearly communicated and highly valued. In contrast, more egalitarian organizations may not place a premium on power; such organizations may be more likely to take action against highly placed perpetrators.

These results concerning power are not expected to occur only in the military. Although many civilian organizations are less hierarchical than the military, a good number probably could be characterized as vertical and rigid. Furthermore, personal power as well as position power of both the perpetrator and the target may affect an organization's willingness to respond to a charge of harassment. It may be a combination of both absolute and relative power that determines an organization's willingness to sanction a perpetrator. Although not the main focus of this research, the results here suggest that power issues are important—and possibly

more complex than anticipated. This would be a fruitful direction for future research.

Limitations of the Study

As with any study, our results are tempered by several limitations. Most obviously, the data were self-reported and cross-sectional. Although the power afforded by the large sample size does offset some of this concern, it would be preferable to study this dynamic process longitudinally. In addition, incorporating organizational records of harassment reports, responses, and investigation outcomes would strengthen a study of reporting sexual harassment.

Another limitation is that several of the scales used here lack long psychometric histories. As described by Hay and Elig (1999), many of these scales were created by the military for internal use. It would be preferable to use measures with psychometric properties established across a variety of populations and occasions. Nevertheless, our results are consistent with both theory and previous empirical research, suggesting that the measures used adequately represent the underlying nomological net.

In addition, there are probably some constructs omitted from this study that would aid in the explanation of the variance of some of the included variables. Such constructs would certainly include actual health conditions and their effect on health satisfaction or knowledge of reporting procedures and their effect on reporting behavior. Despite some obvious omissions, we are reasonably confident that the process of reporting was well captured. We found no evidence in our analyses that omitted variables were substantially affecting the relationships among the variables included. Furthermore, most dependent variables had significant,

Table 6
Paths to Job, Psychological, and Health-Related Outcomes for Model 2 for Women

Outcome	Antecedent			
	Climate	Rank	Sexual harassment history	Procedural satisfaction
Supervisor satisfaction	.30	.11	-.09	.18
Coworker satisfaction	.19	.17	-.09	.10
Work satisfaction	.27	.15	<i>ns</i>	.18
Psychological well-being	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	-.14	<i>ns</i>
Health satisfaction	<i>ns</i>	.09	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>

Note. Reported path values are significant at $p < .05$.

Table 7
Paths Among Job, Psychological, and Health-Related Outcomes for Model 2 for Women

Outcome	Antecedent			
	Supervisor satisfaction	Coworker satisfaction	Work satisfaction	Psychological well-being
Psychological well-being	<i>ns</i>	.15	.25	—
Health satisfaction	—	—	—	.35
Work-group productivity	.15	.35	.26	—
Organizational commitment	.25	<i>ns</i>	.47	.21

Note. Dashes indicate that the parameter was not estimated. Reported path values are significant at $p < .05$.

Table 8
Hierarchical Linear Regressions for Men

Model	ΔF	df	p	ΔR^2 (Adjusted R for final model)
Antecedents predicting reporting-related variables				
Organizational remedies				
C ^a	4.21	1, 86	.043	.047 (.036)
C, F	0.02	1, 85	.878	.000
C, P	0.13	1, 85	.725	.001
C, R	0.01	1, 85	.937	.000
Organizational minimization				
C ^a	18.87	1, 78	<.001	.195 (.184)
C, P	1.26	1, 77	.266	.013
C, R	0.60	1, 77	.440	.006
C, F	3.89	1, 77	.052	.039
Retaliation				
C ^a	18.81	1, 86	<.001	.179 (.170)
C, P	2.56	1, 85	.114	.024
C, R	0.05	1, 85	.817	.001
C, F	1.69	1, 85	.197	.016
Procedural satisfaction				
C	12.56	1, 105	.001	.106
C, F	0.01	1, 104	.913	.000
C, P ^a	8.32	1, 104	.005	.066 (.152)
C, P, R	0.16	1, 103	.694	.001
Organizational responses predicting procedural satisfaction				
Om	65.35	1, 93	<.001	.413
Om, Or	1.28	1, 92	.260	.008
Om, Re ^a	4.30	1, 92	.041	.026 (.427)
Procedural satisfaction predicting outcomes				
Supervisor satisfaction				
S	12.81	1, 124	>.001	.094
S, Ps ^a	8.73	1, 123	.004	.060 (.140)
Coworker satisfaction				
S ^a	13.34	1, 126	>.001	.096 (.089)
S, Ps	0.07	1, 125	.793	.001
Work satisfaction				
S	6.70	1, 125	.011	.051
S, Ps ^a	4.09	1, 124	.045	.030 (.066)
Psychological well-being				
S ^a	9.20	1, 125	.003	.069 (.061)
S, Ps	0.75	1, 124	.388	.006
Health satisfaction				
S ^a	9.80	1, 124	.002	.073 (.066)
S, Ps	0.17	1, 123	.685	.001

Note. C = climate; F = feminine job-gender context; P = perpetrator rank; R = rank; Om = organizational minimization; Or = organizational remedies; Re = retaliation; S = Sexual Experiences Questionnaire—Department of Defense; Ps = procedural satisfaction.

^a Retained model.

strong relationships with their predictors; none, however, were so strong as to suggest that a third unaccounted variable was affecting the relationships. In short, although we certainly omitted variables that could account for additional variance in the variables included in the model, these excluded variables did not seem to have a great effect on the unfolding of the reporting process.

We have proposed and evaluated models that theory and previous research support; however, we acknowledge that alternate models might explain the relationships in the data as well as those that we have presented. For example, experience with organizational reporting mechanisms may affect perceptions of organizational climate toward sexual harassment; thus, climate may be an outcome rather than an antecedent of reporting. Furthermore, reporting may be an outcome of job, psychological, and health-related distress; that is, job dissatisfaction, psychological distress, or health problems may help drive the decision to report sexual harassment experiences. Despite such possibilities, we believe that our framework well represents the real-world process of reporting.

We do, however, believe that many relationships in the model are likely nonrecursive. For example, organizational climate does affect postreporting variables, but these organizational responses likely affect individuals' perceptions of climate as well. Given that the available data were cross-sectional, we could not assess these nonrecursive relationships. Thus, we propose that our models represent good "snapshots" of the reporting process and can usefully inform theory as well as organizational action.

Concluding Remarks

As we noted above, the U.S. Supreme Court recently created an affirmative defense to sexual harassment liability, a defense hinging on whether the plaintiff "unreasonably" refused to make use of available organizational complaint procedures. The findings that we report suggest that legal scrutiny might better focus on the organization's responsibility to create a climate in which victims have no reason to fear reporting mechanisms or their aftermath. That is, courts should require that the organization demonstrate a climate intolerant of sexual harassment through a documented history of taking complaints seriously, protecting complainants from retaliation, and holding perpetrators responsible for their actions. Only in such an organizational context would it be reasonable for victims to avail themselves of grievance mechanisms. The burden should be on the organization, not the victim, to prove reasonableness.

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