Assessing Sexual Harassment Among Latinas: Development of an Instrument

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This study draws from multiple data sources and analytic approaches to offer preliminary evidence on how to assess sexual harassment among Latinas working in the United States, particularly working-class Mexican American women with moderately low acculturation. First, focus group data were collected from 45 Latinas to identify culture-specific manifestations of sexually harassing behavior. These data informed the development of new items for the Sexual Experiences Questionnaire (SEQ; L. F. Fitzgerald et al., 1988), making it more appropriate for administration to Latinas with limited education. A 2nd Latina sample (N = 476) then completed this and other scales in a paper-and-pencil survey. Complete-link hierarchical cluster analyses of the SEQ data, based on a random half-sample of these women, revealed an underlying 3-factor structure. Confirmatory factor analyses on the 2nd half-sample confirmed that this factor model fit the data well, and both the individual factors and the larger scale appear highly reliable. Implications of both new and discarded SEQ-Latina items, the 3-factor structure, and relationships among the factors were discussed.

- sexual harassment • Latinas • working women • scale development • culturally sensitive assessment

Violence against women takes many forms and transcends boundaries of class, culture, and country. Research has recognized sexual harassment as the most widespread form of this violence (Koss et al., 1994), the impact of which ranges from lowered job satisfaction and performance to debilitating psychological and physical disorders (e.g.,

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Fitzgerald, Drasgow, Hulin, Gelfand, & Magley, 1997; Gutck & Koss, 1993). This research, however, has focused almost exclusively on non-Latina White women, despite the fact that some of the most prominent sexual harassment cases have involved victims of color (e.g., Anita Hill in the Senate confirmation hearings of Clarence Thomas; Mechelle Vinson in *Meritor Savings Bank v. Vinson*, 1986). Little is known about whether and how harassment conceptualizations, instruments, and models extend to women from other cultural groups.

The present study begins addressing this dearth in the literature by developing and testing an instrument for assessing sexual harassment among Latinas. Recent population analyses (based on a 1994 estimate of the resident population consistent with the 1990 census; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1996) project that, out of all racial and ethnic groups, Hispanics will contribute the largest number of people to the U.S. population each year until 2050. Over half of the women within the Hispanic population work outside the home (Chapa & Valencia, 1993), and these rates continue to increase (Herrera & DelCampo, 1995; Rojas & Metoyer, 1995). Thus, it is imperative that we learn more about Latina workplace experiences, including their encounter with the widespread problem of sexual harassment.

### Background

Throughout the 1980s—the first decade of sexual harassment research—most studies on sexual harassment suffered from methodological problems concerning instrumentation. Harassment questionnaires were administered without any theoretical rationale supporting their development or information about their psychometric properties. However, in 1988, Fitzgerald and her colleagues published the Sexual Experiences Questionnaire (SEQ: Fitzgerald et al., 1988), which they based on Till's (1980) now-classic conceptualization of sexually harassing behavior. The SEQ has since been recognized as the most theoretically and psychometrically sophisticated instrument available for assessing incidence and prevalence of sexual harassment (Arvey & Cavanaugh, 1995; Beere, 1990).

Barak (1997) reviewed cross-cultural studies of sexual harassment and concluded that "it is not the phenomenon of sexual harassment that is different among countries, but rather the way it is being behaviorally manifested, which is probably due to different behavioral standards related to different cultures" (p. 268). Supporting this conclusion, Donovan and Drasgow (1997) conducted differential item functioning analyses of SEQ items administered to American, Brazilian, and Italian samples, and they found that only the most behaviorally ambiguous items (e.g., “implied better treatment if you were sexually cooperative”) functioned similarly across cultures; items describing more specific behaviors (e.g., “was staring or leering at you”) failed to show measurement equivalence. In other words, the general concept of sexual harassment appears etic or universal, but specific behavioral expressions of harassment vary by culture. Thus, it does not appear tenable to assume that SEQ items—particularly the more specific items—can readily apply to non-Anglo American cultures such as Latino culture.

A number of Latino collectivist cultural norms suggest that Latinas may be more likely than non-Latinas to take offense at unwanted sex-related behavior in the workplace (for comprehensive reviews of research on Latino cultural norms, see Garcia & Zea, 1997; Knouse, Rosenfeld, & Culbertson, 1992; Padilla, 1995). For example, norms of respeto and dignidad as well as emphases on social power dictate that interpersonal relations be respectful, allowing individuals to feel that their personal power is being acknowledged (e.g., Hofstede, 1980; G. Marin & Marin, 1991; Triandis, 1994). Further, Latinas and Latinos traditionally endorse simpatia and thus often have high expectations for harmony in in-group rela-
tions (e.g., G. Marin & Marin, 1991; Triandis, 1994). Greater sensitivity to violations of these cultural norms could theoretically lower Latina thresholds for what “feels” disrespectful or hostile (i.e., harassing). Reflecting greater sexual conservatism than non-Latinas (Baird, 1993; B. V. Marin & Gomez, 1995), Latinas may also have stricter standards for what types of interpersonal behavior they find acceptable from men who are not their husbands or boyfriends. These possibilities suggest that the SEQ may not be sensitive enough to measure the full spectrum of specific behaviors that Latinas experience as sexual harassment.

Conversely, many Latinas working in the United States emigrated from countries where sexual harassment may be more accepted. Although no methodologically rigorous cross-cultural studies have compared rates of sexual harassment across North and South America, Ore-Aguilar (1997) discussed cross-cultural legal differences. United States law treats sexual harassment as a civil rights violation; by contrast, few Latin American countries have specific laws or legislation that effectively address sexual harassment. This lack of legal recourse for sexual harassment victims implies greater tolerance of it in Latin America. Women residing in the United States who trace their heritage to Latin America might therefore experience fewer traditional SEQ behaviors as harassing.

The Present Study

Given the need for more culturally sensitive assessment instruments, the present project sought to revise the SEQ to be more appropriate for administration to Latinas residing in the United States. Owing to the complete absence of any sort of harassment instrument for Latinas, the aim was to develop a more general measure that could be administered to women from diverse Latino backgrounds. The study involved multiple stages.

Study 1

Method

To understand experiences of sexual harassment from the perspective of Latinas and then develop a culturally relevant measurement instrument, one must explore the concept from within the cultural system. Qualitative data collection methods facilitate this goal, allowing Latinas to speak in their own voices and describe their own realities.

Participants. Forty-five Latinas were recruited through a public adult vocational school (offering training for clerical and health professions) in downtown San Diego, California, to participate in focus group interviews. Participants’ ages ranged from 18 to 53 years, with a mean age of 25.4 years. Participants worked primarily in service delivery and unskilled labor (n = 25) and clerical/office positions (n = 14). Six women did not indicate their employment histories.

Sixteen participants were born in Latin America and had lived in the United States for a range of 2 to 30 years, averaging 19.09 years of residency. Participants born in the United States spanned second, third, and fourth generations (n = 8, 5, and 1, respectively). In addition, 10 U.S.-born women indicated that one parent was also U.S.-born and one parent had emigrated from Latin America. The countries of origin of participants’ families included Mexico (n = 36), the United States (West and Southwest; 16), Puerto Rico (1), Guatemala (1), Peru (1), and “other” (3).† Five women chose not to describe their heritage.

Procedure. Focus group interviews were conducted using procedures outlined by Sherraden and Barrera (1995; also G. Marin & Marin, 1991) for approaching sensitive or

†Because participants could identify more than one country of heritage, these numbers sum to more than N = 45.
intimate topics in interviews with Latinas. Consistent with these procedures, the focus group facilitator was a native Spanish-speaking Mexican American woman who understood the culture and life experiences of the participants, spoke both English and Spanish fluently, and possessed the skills necessary to guide focus group discussions. In total, she conducted five focus groups of 8 to 10 participants, each lasting 60 to 90 min.

Focus groups began with a discussion of the rights and roles of participants, followed by assurance that participation was both voluntary and confidential. The facilitator then worked through a series of questions, maintaining a balance between semi-structured questions and free-flowing discussion led by participants. Specific open-ended questions, some followed by more focused probes, were developed to guide these interviews. These questions tapped into perceptions and behavioral definitions of sexual harassment. Women received $20 for participating in the focus groups.

All of the focus group interviews were audiotaped and transcribed by a bilingual researcher. The author then examined all transcripts (in both languages) twice and noted all (a) specific behavioral examples of harassing behaviors and (b) references to categories of harassing behaviors. This list of behaviors and categories was then compared with the SEQ, and all unique concepts from the list were retained to develop new SEQ items.

Results

All new items were developed to assess behaviors that are particularly relevant to Latina experiences but general enough to apply to all Latino subgroups. On the basis of the focus group material, six new items were written to tap into dimensions already built into the SEQ. These included two specific verbal behaviors: "addressed you informally when a formal manner of address was more appropriate (for example, used "tú" rather than "usted")" and "called you inappropriate 'pet names' in Spanish (for example, 'mamacita' or 'mi hija')." In addition to these verbal behaviors, a number of focus group participants perceived nonverbal behaviors with no explicit sexual connotation to be sexually harassing. The following focus group quotes exemplify this:

The way they look at you. . . . Because they're checking you out. . . . They can check you from the feet, you know, breasts, every single thing, and that would insult you.

The way they sometimes come to you and just like, ask you a question real close or something. Get away from me!

Just getting too close. There's a distance, especially if you don't know him that well.

Or the whistling noises sometimes.

These types of quotes suggested four new nonverbal items: "gave you a sexual 'look' that made you feel uncomfortable or dirty," "slowly looked at your entire body ('looked you up and down')," "made you uncomfortable by standing too close," and "made kissing noises or whistled at you."

In addition, participants alluded to harassment that can be termed sexual racism, that is, harassment based on both gender and ethnicity. The following quotes illustrate this:

"Most of the time they talk about Mexicans, behind my back, and they think we're cholas, and we don't know how to dress, we don't know how to talk. . . . Especially us women."

"He thinks that Latinas, to work there you have to wear a skirt, you have to show your legs."

Theorists on the sexual harassment of ethnic minority women (e.g., Adams, 1997; DeFour, 1990; Murrell, 1996) have discussed at length the concept of sexual racism: "forms of sexual aggression [that are] embedded in a system of interlocking race, gender, ethnicity, and class oppression" (Murrell, 1996, p. 56). They refer to this as a simultaneous manifestation of sex discrimination and race discrimination. Behaviors falling into this category include not only those that disproportionately target women
of color but also behaviors that perpetuate stereotypes about women in particular ethnic groups or communicate expectations derived from such stereotypes.

On the basis of this idea suggested by focus group participants and theoretical literature, five new items were written to assess the concept of sexual racism: “said things to insult LATINA women specifically (for example, saying Latinas are ‘hot-blooded’ and ‘loose’),” “told jokes or stories that described LATINA women negatively,” “displayed pictures or cartoons that showed LATINA women negatively,” “called you insulting names that referred to your gender AND ETHNICITY (for example, ‘Mexican bitch’),” and “said they expected you to behave certain ways because you are a LATINA woman (for example, expecting you as a Latina woman to wear sexy clothes).”

Note that these sexual-racism items are “double-barreled” by definition, involving behaviors that have two features (gender basis and ethnic basis). An affirmative response could refer to only one of these features (for example, a respondent may indicate that she has heard “jokes or stories” describing women negatively, without realizing that the question is specific to Latina women only). To avoid this psychometric problem and differentiate these behaviors from harassment based only on gender, each sexual-racism item appeared immediately following a parallel item referring only to gender. These 10 paired items constituted the end of the SEQ. In summary, a total of 16 new items were developed for the present study.

Study 2

Method

The purpose of the second study was to test and validate the SEQ containing the 16 new items: the SEQ–Latina (SEQ–L).

Participants. Survey data were collected from a second sample of 476 Latinas. Of these women, 400 came from public adult schools or job-training centers in San Diego and its southern suburbs. These institutions primarily offer vocational, language, and general equivalency diploma courses. In the interest of surveying women not pursuing formal educational or vocational development, an additional 30 women were recruited from a San Diego area “swap meet.” The remaining 46 women were students at a public adult school (offering similar classes) in a Chicago suburb. Among participants who provided usable data,2 ages ranged from 18 years to 55 and older. Two hundred and fifteen participants were single, 178 were either married or living with a partner, 60 were divorced or separated, and 7 were widowed. Participants indicated that their families had originated from Mexico (n = 422), Central America (11), Puerto Rico (5), Cuba (1), and other countries not included in this list (17). Average acculturation levels, as measured by the Short Acculturation Scale for Hispanics (G. Marin, Sabogal, Marin, Otero-Sabogal, & Perez-Stable, 1987), were low to moderate (with a possible range of 8–40, M = 19.59, SD = 8.25). Education levels ranged from less than a high school diploma (n = 167) to high school (with or without additional vocational training; 192) to college (74) to graduate school (22).

In terms of job characteristics, participants had worked in the following types of positions for an average of 3 years: child care or teacher’s aide (n = 57), clerical/office work (102), factory or warehouse (61), housekeeping (61), restaurant or fast food (44), retail (30), grocery store (10), management (8), and “other” (78). Fifty percent reported that their immediate supervisor was

2Data were discarded from 7 participants who completed less than 50% of the items they were eligible to complete. Data from an additional 7 participants were discarded because of unusual response patterns, such as identical responses for each item in the latter half of the survey. Analyses then focused on the remaining 462 surveys.
Latino. In addition, slightly over half of the participants had female supervisors. A majority of participants also worked primarily with Latino coworkers: 58% had coworkers who were disproportionately or all Latino, 21% worked with about equal numbers of Latinos and non-Latinos, and only 22% reported that most of their coworkers were not Latino. Forty-eight percent of participants worked primarily with other women, 32% worked with similar numbers of women and men, and only 20% worked with mostly or all men.

**PROCEDURE.** Women were asked to participate in 60-min, group survey-administration sessions. Inclusionary criteria included (a) Latino background, (b) current employment, and (c) age 18 or older. After reporting to the survey room, they received both written and oral instructions, in both English and Spanish, about their rights and roles as participants and about the survey. They then completed paper-and-pencil surveys. When given the option of completing surveys in either Spanish or English, 304 participants chose Spanish, and 158 chose English. Female University of Illinois researchers, as well as native Spanish-speaking women from the local communities, facilitated these sessions in both English and Spanish and assisted participants with apparent reading difficulties. Survey respondents received $10 for their participation.

**INSTRUMENT.** Participants completed measures of demographics, job attitudes, psychological and health symptoms, organizational tolerance for sexual harassment, and personal experiences with sexual harassment. This article focuses only on this last construct, as measured by the SEQ–L (additional results from this survey appear in Cortina, Fitzgerald, & Drasgow, 2001). Traditional SEQ (Fitzgerald et al., 1988) items selected for this administration assessed two broad categories of sexually harassing behaviors: gender harassment and unwanted sexual attention. Gender harassment consisted of behaviors targeting women because of their gender, and thus conveying sexist, degrading, and misogynistic attitudes about women. These items can be further divided into two subtypes: sexist and sexual hostility (Fitzgerald, Magley, Drasgow, & Waldo, 1999). Sexist hostility referred to misogynistic behaviors that degrade women (e.g., de-basing jokes about women) but have no sexual content, whereas sexual hostility involved crude jokes, comments, or gestures of an explicitly sexual nature. Unwanted sexual attention included unwanted touching, hugging, stroking, or repeated unwanted requests for dates or sexual behavior. These items were supplemented with those measuring sexual racism. The words “sexual harassment” did not appear until the last item to reduce demand characteristics and increase reliability. Instructions asked respondents whether they had experienced any of the behaviors from any man in their current workplaces during the previous 2 years. Participants responded to each item on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = never, 2 = once or twice, 3 = sometimes, 4 = often, and 5 = most of the time). Tables 1 and 2 present all SEQ–L items.

**SPANISH TRANSLATION.** All SEQ–L items were submitted to double translation using a committee approach (Brislin, 1980; see also G. Marin & Marin, 1991; Triandis, 1994; Werner & Campbell, 1970). First, the wording on some original SEQ items was simplified or clarified slightly to facilitate translation (for example, replacing “pornography” with “pictures of naked women”). Next, two bilingual native-Spanish speakers independently translated items into Spanish, avoiding regional or dialectical variations in vocabulary. They then met to resolve any discrepancies between their two Spanish translations. Two bilingual native-English speakers then translated the Spanish text.

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6Items assessing a third type of sexual harassment—sexual coercion—were not included in this survey because of its very low base rates and the need to shorten the survey.
TABLE 1 Items Excluded From Final SEQ–L and Reasons for Exclusion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Reasons for exclusion from final SEQ–L</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Addressed you informally when a formal manner of address was more</td>
<td>Low variance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>appropriate (for example, used “tu” rather than “usted”)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Showed, used, or handed out dirty pictures or stories</td>
<td>Ambiguous meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(for example, pictures of naked women)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Made crude or obscene gestures (for example, grabbing his crotch)</td>
<td>Clustered poorly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Made dirty remarks about you to others (for example, called you a</td>
<td>Misc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“slut”)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Called you inappropriate “pet names” in English (for example, “honey”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or “baby”)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Made dirty remarks about women in general (for example, saying all</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>women are whores)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tried to stroke your leg or other body part</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Called you a lesbian or a “dyke”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Displayed pictures or cartoons that showed women IN GENERAL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>negatively(^a)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Displayed pictures or cartoons that showed LATINA women negatively(</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(^a)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Called you insulting names that referred to your gender</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(for example, “bitch”)(^a)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Called you insulting names that referred to your gender</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AND ETHNICITY (for example, “Mexican bitch”)(^a)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Said they expected you to behave certain ways because</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you are a woman (for example, expecting you as a woman to smile a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lot)(^a)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Said they expected you to behave certain ways because</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you are a LATINA woman (for example, expecting you as a Latina</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>woman to wear sexy clothes)(^a)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexually harassed you</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\) Item developed for the present study.

Note: SEQ–L = Sexual Experiences Questionnaire—Latina; Misc. = miscellaneous.

back into English, again working independently. These two translators then met to resolve discrepancies and agree on one English version of the scales. The author then compared this translation to the original English text, to identify any discrepancies in meaning. Next, all four translators, along with the author, met to review these discrepancies and to make final changes to the Spanish translation. Finally, three linguists independently reviewed the items in both languages and made final adjustments to maximize the clarity and linguistic equivalency of the English and Spanish versions and also to eliminate any remaining parochial wording.

Results

Prior to structural tests of the SEQ–L data, distributions of responses to each item were examined for severe deviations from normality. Less than 10% of the sample endorsed eight items. In addition, on most of these eight items, less than 1% of the sample endorsed either of the last two response options. Because of this low variance of these items, they were excluded from further
TABLE 2 Maximum Likelihood Estimates of Factor Loadings for Three-Factor Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>STH</th>
<th>SLH</th>
<th>USA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Said things to insult women IN GENERAL (for example, saying that women don’t make good supervisors)?*</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Told jokes or stories that described women IN GENERAL negatively?*</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Told jokes or stories that described LATINA women negatively?*</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Said things to insult LATINA women specifically (for example, sayingLatinas are “hot-blooded” and “loose”)?*</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Said offensive things about your body or your sex life?</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Told dirty or sexually offensive stories or jokes?</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tried to get you to talk about sexual things?</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Said crude or gross sexual things, either in front of others or to you alone?</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Told you about his own sex life or sexual preferences?</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tried to have a romantic or sexual relationship even though you tried to tell him you didn’t want to?</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kept on asking you out even after you have said “no”?</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gave you a sexual “look” that made you feel uncomfortable or dirty?*</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Made you uncomfortable by staring at you (for example, looking at you too long, or looking at your breasts)?</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Touched you (for example, put an arm around your shoulders) in a way that made you feel uncomfortable?</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gave you any sexual attention that you did not want?</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Made kissing noises or whistled at you?*</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commented on your physical appearance or clothing in a way that offended or embarrassed you?</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slowly looked at your entire body (“looked you up and down”)?*</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Made you uncomfortable by standing too close?*</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Call you inappropriate “pet names” in Spanish (for example, “mamacita” or “mi hija”)?*</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cronbach’s alpha (Spanish version)</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td>.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cronbach’s alpha (English version)</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>.89</td>
<td>.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cronbach’s alpha (overall)</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td>.95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note.  STH = sexist hostility; SLH = sexual hostility; USA = unwanted sexual attention.
*Item developed for the present study.

analysis. Two additional items were dropped because conversations with participants suggested that multiple interpretations (some of which did not qualify as sexually harassing behavior) were possible from these items. Table 1 summarizes all reasons for discarding items. Note that, because of such variance or interpretation problems, all but two sexual-racism items were dropped. Thus, not enough items remained to consider a separate sexual-racism factor in the structure of the SEQ–L. The final SEQ–L item, which directly asked how frequently the participant had been “sexually harassed,” is generally considered a labeling item (see Magley, Hulin, Fitzgerald, & DeNardo, 1999) and thus was not included in any analysis in this article.

CLUSTER ANALYSIS. As a first step in assessing the structure of the SEQ–L, a random half-sample of women (n = 228) was drawn from the larger sample, and Pearson product-moment correlations of the remaining 24 SEQ–L items were examined. Two very similar items displayed inordinately high correlations with each other: “called you inappropriate ‘pet names’ in English (for example,
'honey' or 'baby')" and "called you inappropriate 'pet names' in Spanish (for example, 'mamacita' or 'mi hija')." To reduce problems of multicollinearity, the former item was thus dropped from cluster and factor analyses. Correlations among the remaining 23 items were then submitted to Johnson's (1967) complete-link hierarchical cluster analysis—a multivariate method of identifying natural groupings in data. Figure 1 presents the initial cluster solution. Note that Item SEQ10, "made crude or obscene gestures (for example, grabbing his crotch)," did not join with other items until all others had formed clusters. In addition, Item SEQ15, "made dirty remarks about women in general (for example, saying all women are whores)," and Item SEQ29, "displayed pictures or cartoons that showed women IN GENERAL negatively," joined with each other relatively late and were very late to join with any other cluster. These larger joining distances suggest that these 3 items were relatively dissimilar from others. For this reason, they were dropped, and a second complete-link cluster analysis was conducted on the remaining 20 items.

Figure 2 displays the second cluster solution. Note that all items joined together tightly, and three theoretically meaningful clusters emerged. The first in the cluster tree, sexual hostility, included behaviors involving sexually offensive remarks and comments. The second cluster, unwanted sexual attention (USA), consisted of items measuring unwanted "come-ons": ogling, touching,
Figure 2. Final 20-item cluster solution. USA = unwanted sexual attention.
requests for dates, and so on. The final cluster tapped into sexist hostility, that is, comments that were misogynistic but contained no sexual content. Looking at higher order categories, one could also consider this cluster tree to reflect a two-cluster solution, measuring sexual (i.e., sexual hostility, unwanted sexual attention) and sexist behavior. Finally, one could also view this solution as a one-cluster model measuring sexual harassment, based on its root cluster.

CONFIRMATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS. The different structures suggested by the cluster analysis were tested and validated in the second half-sample (N = 266, following listwise deletion). More specifically, Pearson product-moment correlations were computed from the Likert-type SEQ-L data and submitted to maximum likelihood confirmatory factor analysis, using LISREL VIII (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1994). Because the final cluster solution suggested the possibility of one-, two-, and three-factor models (corresponding to the hierarchy of clusters), a total of three competing factor models were tested and their fit statistics compared. Because of the unique limitations of each fit index, a number of indices were examined to assess model fit: $\chi^2/df$ ratio, root mean square residual (RMSR), goodness-of-fit index (GFI), and adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI) and nonnormed fit index (NNFI; for more detailed descriptions of these fit indices, see Bollen, 1989; Mueller, 1996).

Fit indices for the one-, two-, and three-factor models were all satisfactory. Follow-up chi-square analyses revealed that the two-factor model represented a significant improvement over the one-factor model, $\chi^2(1, N=266) = 211.12, p < .01$. Further, the three-factor structure fit the data significantly better than that containing two factors, $\chi^2(2, N = 266) = 77.38, p < .01$. Thus, of these models, the three-factor solution apparently provided the best fit for these data. As Table 2 illustrates, all of the items loaded cleanly and highly onto the three-factor model, with standard errors less than .06. Its RMSR of .05 indicated minimal differences between the fitted and observed correlation matrices. Moreover, less than 15% of the standardized residuals exceeded 3 in absolute value; these residuals did not appear to be systematic in any way, again indicating that the three-factor model adequately accounted for the data.

Other fit indices ($\chi^2/df = 4.06$, GFI = .77, AGFI = .71, NNF = .86) were not as close to 1 as desirable. One possible explanation for this lies in the distributions of the original items. No items were heavily endorsed at the high ends of their 5-point response scales, which is consistent with previous SEQ research using this response scale (e.g., Fitzgerald, Gelfand, & Drasgow, 1995; Fitzgerald et al., 1999). Thus, item distributions deviated considerably from normality. The LISREL fit indices assume multivariate normality and are sensitive to extreme violations of this assumption, possibly explaining their suboptimal values.

One remedy for the problem of nonnormal Likert-type data is to dichotomize the data and analyze it as a tetrachoric correlation matrix. The typical maximum likelihood estimation method would then be inappropriate, as it would not only assume multivariate normality among the observed variables (which would not hold for dichotomous data) but also expect Pearson product-moment correlations as input. However, diagonally weighted least squares (DWLS) estimation, with weights provided by asymptotic variances, would make less restrictive assumptions about the distribution of the observed variables and would be appropriate for tetrachoric correlations. This analysis was not performed on the half-sample, because the small sample size would likely result in unstable DWLS estimates. However, the size of the entire sample was sufficient for DWLS analysis.

Thus, to test whether this method would improve the LISREL fit indices, SEQ-L data from the entire sample (N = 444, after listwise deletion) were dichotomized,4

4To dichotomize SEQ-L items, responses of “never” were coded 0, and all other responses (i.e., “once or twice,” “sometimes,” “often,” and “most of the time”) were coded 1.
verted into tetrachoric correlations, and submitted to a test of the three-factor model using DWLS estimation. Fit statistics for this solution were excellent ($\chi^2/df = 1.09$, RMSR = .05, GFI = .99, AGFI = .99, NNFI = .99). Thus, this last test suggests that, once dichotomization reduces item deviation from normality, the three-factor model accounted for the SEQ-L data quite well.

In terms of reliability, items representing each of the three factors were highly internally consistent, with Cronbach’s alphas of .88 or higher (see Table 2). These reliability coefficients were nearly identical between translations. Correlations between factors ranged from .67 (sexist hostility and sexual hostility) to .76 (sexist hostility and unwanted sexual attention) to .89 (sexual hostility and unwanted sexual attention). These high interfactor correlations suggest that the factors, although conceptually meaningful, are also related enough to justify summing across them for purposes of data reduction. Both the English and Spanish versions of the full 20-item SEQ-L produced coefficient alphas of .96. Table 2 indicates which items constituted this 20-item SEQ-L, and the Appendix presents the same items in Spanish (in the same order as in Table 2).

Incidence Rates of Three Types of Harassment. Harassment incidence rates based on the full 20-item SEQ-L revealed that, overall, approximately 60% of participants had experienced at least one of these behaviors at least once or twice in the previous 2 years. Breaking down types of harassment by the three categories of sexist hostility, sexual hostility, and unwanted sexual attention demonstrated that the most prevalent pattern, by far, was for participants to experience all three types of harassment—30% of participants reported this. An additional 9% of participants had experienced either sexist hostility or sexual hostility, without unwanted sexual attention. Further, 12% described unwanted sexual attention with either type of hostility. Another 7% of participants reported unwanted sexual attention in isolation. Very few participants (3%) experienced both sexist hostility and sexual hostility without some concomitant form of sexual attention.

Discussion

In the United States, at least half of all non-Latina White working women experience sexual harassment on the job, and the present study demonstrated that such prevalence estimates extend to Latinas as well. Focus groups, cluster analyses, and factor analyses offered the first systematic evidence to date on how to measure sexual harassment among Latinas. This work culminated in a psychometrically rigorous SEQ-Latina that is grounded both in sexual harassment theory (Fitzgerald et al., 1988; Till, 1980) and in Latina narratives of the sexual harassment experience. Following Triandis’s (1992, 1994; Triandis & Marín, 1983) “etic plus emic” approach to measuring etic constructs, the SEQ-L contains etic (universal), emic (Latino-specific), and partially emic (collectivist-specific) components. This study lays the groundwork necessary for future cultural and cross-cultural research with the SEQ.

Three-Factor Structure

Analyses of the internal structure of the SEQ-L revealed three distinct underlying factors: sexist hostility, sexual hostility, and unwanted sexual attention. Previous research (Fitzgerald et al., 1999) with majority White samples had uncovered similar phenomena, at least at the larger conceptual level. High interfactor correlations in both the SEQ-L and SEQ (Fitzgerald et al., 1995; Fitzgerald et al., 1999) suggest that these factors, despite meaningful distinctions, are highly related to each other. Women who experience one type of sexual harassment are also likely to experience other types in the same workplace. The high rates (almost 30%) of Latinas encountering all three types of behaviors support this argument.
Different levels of analysis are possible with the SEQ–L, depending on the assessment question. Items can be separated into their respective factors, illuminating patterns, specific types, and combinations of types of sexual harassment. Clinical and organizational researchers and practitioners can therefore better understand the extent and nature of workplace victimization experienced by Latina employees. Alternatively, all 20 SEQ–L items can be summed into a data-reducing scale score, facilitating analysis of relationships between sexual harassment and other important variables in Latina workplace experiences (see Cortina et al., 2001, for an illustration of this). For example, researchers and practitioners can identify antecedents of this victimization by relating the SEQ–L scale score to workplace policies, gender and ethnic ratios, and climates. Improved understanding of harassment antecedents can then inform the development of more effective harassment prevention, training, and education efforts in the workplace. Similar analyses, based on SEQ–L scales scores, can reveal effects of harassment on Latina psychosomatic, occupational, social, and family functioning.

Sexist Hostility Versus Sexual Hostility

Interestingly, focus group participants discussed a number of nonverbal behaviors with no explicitly sexual content. However, it appeared that these participants inferred sexual advances in these ambiguous behaviors. Cluster and factor analyses confirmed this, as these and other nonverbal, implicitly sexualized behaviors all clustered and loaded with items communicating explicit sexual attention.

These results differed from the only previous study that distinguished between sexist hostility and sexual hostility (Fitzgerald et al., 1999), in which implicit sexualized behaviors loaded onto the sexual hostility factor as opposed to the unwanted sexual attention factor. Specific behaviors that switched factors between studies included the most ambiguous of Fitzgerald et al.’s (1999) sexual hostility items, for example, staring/ogling, comments on body or appearance, and whistling. These behaviors could be interpreted as representing either sexual advances (unwanted sexual attention) or merely crude, sexualized behavior carrying no intent of “coming on” to the target (sexual hostility). Apparently, the present Latina sample was more inclined than the Fitzgerald et al. (1999) majority White military sample to read sexual intentions in such ambiguous behaviors. Workplace environment differences (i.e., military vs. civilian, skilled vs. unskilled labor) could explain this variation between samples. Another potential explanation is that Latinas experienced these behaviors as more clearly sexually harassing than non-Latinas. The following three quotes from focus group participants support this latter possibility:

What I’ve noticed, a lot of Latin ladies will be like, they will say something like “Excuse me!” and the White lady doesn’t say nothing . . . That’s flirting with them. It’s not flirting, it’s something different to us. It would be sexual harassment to me.

What I’ve seen is that [White women] are more open . . . if it’s something sexual they’ll laugh and giggle about it, and I would take that offensively. And they wouldn’t, because they’re like more open to sexual stuff than Mexican or Hispanic ladies are.

I mean we are very special women. We don’t picture ourselves at a beach half nude. . . . We wear shorts or something, we don’t show our whole bodies. We don’t bathe with our children nude. . . . You know if our slip is showing, boy we feel embarrassed. We’re very special women, and we demand respect.

This possible ethnic difference highlights behaviors that may carry different meanings across cultures, which points to a number of practical implications. Both clinical and organizational researchers and practitioners who are assessing and intervening with Latina harassment victims might consider that, although these women may have encountered similar workplace events as non-Latina harassment victims, the Latinas
may experience, appraise, or interpret these events differently. Thus, the adverse impact of the events likely differs as a result. Further, judges and juries attempting to take the perspective of a Latina sexual harassment victim may want to adopt a heightened sensitivity when deciding what crosses the line from merely “crude” into “sexually harassing.” Despite these possible differences in specific behavioral manifestations, it is also notable that very similar meta-constructs of unwanted sexual attention and sexist and sexual hostility emerged across studies of working women from different cultures. This supports the contention that although specific behavioral expressions may vary by culture, the larger phenomenon of sexual harassment is etic or universal (Barak, 1997).

A caveat is in order: No study to date has directly compared the SEQ factor structure— including ambiguous, sexualized behaviors and distinctions between sexist and sexual hostility—between Latina and non-Latina women. Future studies could attempt this by means of multiple-group factor analyses, to determine empirically whether ambiguous, sexualized behaviors function differently for Latina and non-Latina populations.

Sexual Racism

It also interesting to consider why low base rates forced the removal of certain items from the final harassment measure. These included three of the five sexual-racism items. This could be interpreted as an indication that this concept does not map onto reality (i.e., Latinas experience harassment as either racial or sexual, but not both). However, this conclusion appears premature. Theoretical support for the existence of sexual racism abounds (e.g., Collins, 1990; Davis, 1978; Essed, 1992; Murrell, 1996). For example, Murrell (1996) claimed that sexism and racism are historically and experientially tied together for women of color. Davis (1978) argued that sexual violence has served as a basis for racial discrimina-
mogeneous countries may not recognize race-based discrimination as readily as later-generation Latinas.

This initial examination of sexual racism raises numerous questions, speaking to the need for greater exploration of the concept. This appears to be a complex phenomenon, with manifestations that can vary along a number of dimensions (e.g., White vs. Latino vs. other minority harasser, native language vs. foreign language, verbal vs. pictorial vs. physical). The present study achieved limited success in measuring sexual-racial harassment, but it does lay important groundwork for considering the psychometric and structural intricacies of the phenomenon.

Reliability and Validity

The SEQ–L subscales, as well as the larger instrument as a whole, proved to be highly reliable. The near invariance of reliability coefficients between English and Spanish also supports the adequacy of its translation. Cortina et al. (2001) provided strong evidence for the SEQ–L’s construct validity, using path analysis to demonstrate relationships between it and other theoretically relevant variables. They found significant associations between the SEQ–L and an important organizational climate variable that facilitates sexual harassment: organizational tolerance of harassment. The SEQ–L also relates significantly to a number of outcome variables (i.e., job satisfaction, psychosomatic functioning, subjective well-being, and organizational withdrawal) in the expected direction.

Limitations

As with any research, these results are not without their limitations. First, certain biases come with a convenience sample largely comprised of adult education students. For example, some schools require proof of legal immigration status, so this research likely fails to capture experiences of undocumented immigrants. Further, with the exception of very few Spanish literacy classes, these students must be literate in their native languages. Although low-income students can and do attend these public schools, extremely poor individuals have more difficulty attending because of childcare or transportation limitations or the need to work multiple jobs. Conversely, this sample contained very few college-educated or professional Latinas. Thus, results of this study are most applicable to literate, working-class Latinas at low to moderate acculturation levels, who live and work in Latino-dominant environments. Because Latinas in the United States primarily work in low-status, blue-collar, or service-delivery jobs (García & Marotta, 1997; Herrera & DeCampa, 1995; Rojas & Metoyer, 1995), this sample should represent an appropriate starting point for addressing the sexual harassment of Latinas in the United States.

Ideally, analyses would have been conducted separately for Mexican Americans, Central Americans, Cuban Americans, and so on to ensure that the measure functions equally well for each Latino subgroup. However, the sample sizes were too small for such analyses in most groups. Mexican Americans represented the only exception, as they constituted most of the sample; nevertheless, because confirmatory factor analysis (particularly based on tetrachoric correlations) of large scales requires large samples, it was statistically prudent to retain as many participants as possible in the analysis. Future research should validate this scale within different Latino subgroups, as well as develop items that are specific to those particular groups.

Although the present study followed rigorous procedures in translating the SEQ–L, sample-size issues also interfered with a more thorough comparison of the English and Spanish versions of the scale. In particular, neither differential item functioning nor factor analyses could be conducted separately for the 158 participants who completed the scale in English. Future research
should gather additional SEQ-L data in both English and Spanish to assess linguistic equivalence more fully.

The need for a large-enough sample to compute stable DWLS estimates forced the merger of the two half-samples when conducting final factor analyses. This strategy was not optimal, because the sample from which the factor structure was derived became part of the confirmation sample. Future research using the SEQ-L should seek additional verification of the three-factor structure in large samples.

Conclusion

Sexual harassment is a universal phenomenon that plagues industrialized societies worldwide. However, specific manifestations vary, as do targets' experiences and perceptions of what "feels" harassing. Thus, today's increasingly diverse and global workforce needs culturally sensitive instruments such as the SEQ-L to assess sexual harassment in all its various guises. Such instruments help identify the nature and extent of the problem, which is a necessary first step toward its prevention.

References


U.S. Bureau of the Census. (1996). *Population pro-
This Appendix presents the same items in Spanish, and in the same order, as in Table 2.

**DURANTE LOS 2 ÚLTIMOS AÑOS en su empleo, alguno de sus supervisores hombres, compañeros de trabajo, u otros hombres en su empleo:**

- ¿Ha dicho cosas para insultar a las mujeres EN GENERAL (por ejemplo, diciendo que las mujeres no llegan a ser buenas supervisoras)?
- ¿Ha dicho chistes o cuentos que describen a las mujeres EN GENERAL negativamente?
- ¿Ha dicho chistes o cuentos que describen a la mujer LATINA negativamente?
- ¿Ha dicho palabras para insultar a las mujeres LATINAS específicamente (por ejemplo, diciendo que las latinas son “calientes” o “facilitas”)?
- ¿Ha dicho cosas ofensivas acerca de su cuerpo o su vida sexual?
- ¿Le ha dicho cuentos o chistes sucios o sexualmente ofensivos?
- ¿Ha tratado de hacerla hablar acerca de cosas sexuales?
- ¿Ha dicho cosas sexuales groseras, ya sea en frente de otros o a usted a solas?
- ¿Le ha comentado de su vida sexual o preferencias sexuales de él?
- ¿Ha tratado de tener una relación sexual o romántica a pesar de que usted trató de decirle que no quería?
- ¿Ha continuado pidiéndole salir con usted a pesar de que usted dijo “no”?
- ¿Le ha dado una MIRADA sexual que la hizo sentir incómoda o sucia?
- ¿Le ha hecho sentir incómoda mirándola (por ejemplo, la mira demasiado o mira su pecho)?
- ¿Le ha tocado (por ejemplo, puso sus brazos alrededor de sus hombros) de una manera que la hizo sentir incómoda?
- ¿Le ha hecho avances sexuales que usted no quería?
- ¿Le ha hecho ruidos semejantes a besos o le ha silbado?
- ¿Ha comentado sobre su apariencia física o a ropa de una manera que la hizo sentir incómoda?
- ¿Ha mirado lentamente todo su cuerpo (“mirándole de arriba abajo”)?
- ¿Le ha hecho sentir incómoda acercándose mucho a usted?
- ¿Le ha llamado nombres inapropiados en español (por ejemplo, “mamá” o “mi hija”)?

*Note. Responses options: 1 = nunca, 2 = una o dos veces, 3 = a veces, 4 = a menudo, 5 = muchas veces.*