

Profiles in Coping: Responses to Sexual Harassment Across Persons, Organizations, and Cultures

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This study explicates the complexity of sexual harassment coping behavior among 4 diverse samples of working women: (a) working-class Hispanic Americans, (b) working-class Anglo Americans, (c) professional Turks, and (d) professional Anglo Americans. *K*-means cluster analysis revealed 3 common harassment coping profiles: (a) detached, (b) avoidant negotiating, and (c) support seeking. The authors then tested an integrated framework of coping profile determinants, involving social power, stressor severity, social support, and culture. Analysis of variance, chi-square, and discriminant function results identified significant determinants at each of the 4 levels of this ecological model. These findings underscore the importance of focusing on whole patterns of experience—and considering influences at the level of the individual employee and multiple levels of the surrounding context—when studying how women cope with workplace sexual harassment.

Over the past 20 years, research has accumulated to demonstrate the adverse effects of sexual harassment¹ on working women (e.g., Fitzgerald, Swan, & Magley, 1997; Schneider, Swan, & Fitzgerald, 1997). These negative individual consequences have financial implications for organizations, which must absorb the costs of productivity declines; absenteeism; impaired health; turnover; and, in the worst cases, litigation (e.g., Faley, Knapp, Kustis, & DuBois, 1999). To reduce these expenses, it behooves organizations worldwide to be vigilant about sexual harassment—preventing it where possible and, when it occurs, understanding what follows so that effective interventions can be designed. This understanding must include victim coping behavior, which is theorized to moderate negative employee outcomes (Fitzgerald, Hulin, & Drasgow, 1995). Thus, the present study takes a cross-cultural look at women's strategies for coping with male-instigated sexual harassment in the workplace.

Research on coping with sexual harassment has progressed from relatively simple models (e.g., Gruber & Bjorn, 1986) to multidimensional frameworks (Gutek & Koss, 1993; Knapp, Faley, Ekeberg, & DuBois, 1997; Magley, 2002). In one comprehensive classification, Knapp et al. (1997) proposed that harassment coping responses fall into four categories: (a) *advocacy seeking*—recruiting formal support from organizational authorities; (b) *social coping*—mobilizing emotional support and advice from trusted others; (c) *avoidance/denial*—avoiding the harassing situation physically (e.g., avoiding the harasser's workstation) or

cognitively (e.g., denying the seriousness of the situation); and (d) *confrontation/negotiation*—directly requesting or insisting that the offensive behavior cease. Very recently, this typology received empirical support in a sample of military women and men (Malamut & Offerman, 2001) as well as four cross-cultural samples of women (Wasti & Cortina, 2002).

Although this past research has theorized about the complexity of harassment coping, it has not empirically investigated how a woman's coping behavior can vary, even within the same harassing situation. Such intraindividual variation in coping is likely, given that much sexual harassment represents a chronic stressor, often involving gender disparagement and crude sexual behaviors that persist over time (e.g., Gutek, 1985). The chronicity of harassing situations may activate unique response patterns, because coping does not entail a reaction to an acute, one-time event.² Rather, in response to enduring, related challenges, sexually harassed women may engage in a trial-and-error approach to coping—learning over time which strategies are most and least effective and experimenting with new strategies to manage the ongoing problem. Such a pattern would be consistent with theories of coping with chronic stress (e.g., Gottlieb, 1997), resulting in a multifaceted history of coping efforts.

A logical next step for research is thus to capture empirically these multifaceted patterns within responses to sexual harassment. In other words, rather than relying on a *nomothetic*, variable-centered approach, which treats each type of coping as a separate dependent variable, research should move toward more *idiographic*, person-centered paradigms that take into account intrain-

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¹ We use the term *sexual harassment* to refer to the *psychological experience* of unwanted, offensive, sex-related behavior in the workplace. This is in contrast to legal definitions of sexual harassment, which are related but much narrower. Much sexually harassing behavior does not violate law, but it can still be quite stressful to individuals and harmful to their organizations (e.g., Schneider et al., 1997).

² In its most extreme and rare forms, sexual harassment can involve sexual coercion or assault, which certainly qualifies as an acute stressor (Gutek, 1985; U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, 1981, 1988).

dividual variation in coping. In the latter method, the unit of analysis is the individual's experience as an organized whole (Magnusson, 1998). Purely person-centered paradigms entail individual case studies over time, with the downside being a lack of generalizability. To avoid this pitfall, yet still elucidate the complexity of women's harassment coping, in the current project we pursued a person-oriented, holistic pattern approach to coping research.

A pattern-based approach to coping research heeds a call made recently by Lazarus (2000). He recognized the benefits of breaking down coping and other phenomena into their component parts, but also emphasized the importance of synthesis: "Although an analytic, cause-and-effect epistemology aims at exploring the functional connections among the component parts, it also fractionates the phenomena with which the researchers began, thereby limiting understanding" (p. 667). For this reason, he argued, it is important "to reconstruct the whole . . . not as a substitute for the analytic approach but as a necessary complement" (p. 668). This necessary complement is missing from extant research on coping with sexual harassment.

Because of the virtual absence of prior harassment coping research that addresses patterns within whole experiences, this piece of our study is somewhat exploratory. Thus, we begin with a research question: How do women's coping strategies vary within the same sexually harassing situations? Theory and preliminary evidence (Gutek & Koss, 1993; Knapp et al., 1997; Magley, 2002) suggest that some harassed women use only avoidance and denial responses, at least at the onset of the offensive situation. Others also solicit social support from friends and colleagues, and a small minority eventually confront their harassers and seek advocacy from organizational authorities. These possibilities should give rise to different profiles of coping with sexual harassment. Next, we turn to possible determinants of these coping profiles.

Determinants of Coping Profile

Much previous research on sexual harassment coping has been distinctly atheoretical, simply describing empirical findings without framing them in theory. We take a more rational approach to this issue by developing a conceptual model of coping profile determinants. Based on an *ecological* or *systemic* perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Mawson, 1993), this model includes variables at the level of the *individual* (harassed employee), the *microcontext* (immediate harassing situation), the *mesocontext* (organization), and the *macrocontext* (larger society). Starting at the individual level, coping involves the cognitions and behaviors of a single person. However, this person does not act in a vacuum; she responds to a harassing situation in the context of an organization. This organization in turn operates within a larger society/culture. Within each level of this structure are multiple factors that may influence coping with sexual harassment.

Individual Level: Social Power

Social power theory maintains that society confers greater power on particular individuals through social attitudes, norms, and access to resources (Carli, 1999; French & Raven, 1959; Johnson, 1976). Of the various social power markers, research has consistently shown that young age, low education, and single marital status increase women's

vulnerability to sexual harassment (e.g., Terpstra & Cook, 1985; U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, 1995). Women who are harassed because of low sociocultural power are also likely to exhibit powerlessness in their responses to the harassment (Gruber & Bjorn, 1986). Potential reasons for this are their greater retaliation risk (Cortina & Magley, 2003) and lower coping self-efficacy (Cleveland & Kerst, 1993; Knapp et al., 1997). Expecting more retaliation and less success, these employees may not engage in the more powerful or strong tactics of negotiation/confrontation and advocacy seeking. In short, because powerless standing can breed powerless behavior (Kanter, 1977; Ragins & Sundstrom, 1989), we expected that women with lower social power (i.e., younger, less educated, unmarried/unpartnered) would have coping profiles characterized by low negotiation/confrontation and advocacy seeking (Hypothesis 1).

Microcontext: Stressor Severity

According to the stress-and-coping literature, the more threatening, challenging, or severe the event, the more individuals use a range of mechanisms to cope with it (e.g., Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). In particular, they seek more support from various sources, both informal and formal (e.g., Hobfoll, 1998). When sexual harassment is the stressor, its severity often increases when the harassment becomes more frequent (e.g., Baker, Terpstra, & Larntz, 1990), escalates in type from gender harassment to unwanted sexual attention to sexual coercion (e.g., Malamut & Offerman, 2001), and comes from powerful perpetrators who have authority over the victim (e.g., Bergman, Langhout, Palmieri, Cortina, & Fitzgerald, 2002). Thus, we predicted that women facing severe sexual harassment (as indicated by harassment frequency, harassment type, and perpetrator status) would have coping profiles characterized by a range of coping efforts, particularly social coping and formal support/advocacy seeking (Hypothesis 2).

Mesocontext: Social Support

Also relevant to social support seeking is the gender composition of the work environment. When women are tokens in the workplace, they become highly salient minorities (Kanter, 1977; Ragins & Sundstrom, 1989) who encounter hostility (e.g., Gutek, 1985); the result is stress and isolation. These "gender pioneers" may be less likely to speak out against sexual harassment, fearing greater visibility, more alienation, and retaliation from male co-workers or supervisors (Knapp et al., 1997). Isolation can also reduce their ability to find trusted and sympathetic others from whom to seek support. By contrast, women working in female-integrated environments may seek more support, perceiving greater social resources in those contexts (Thoits, 1986). We therefore expected that women working in more female-integrated environments would have coping profiles characterized by high social coping and advocacy seeking (Hypothesis 3).

On a related note, women tend to recruit more formal support/advocacy from organizational authorities perceived to be intolerant of sexual harassment (Bergman et al., 2002; Offerman & Malamut, 2002). Leaders can communicate such intolerance by taking complaints seriously, correcting harassing behavior, and sanctioning harassers. Consistent, proactive leadership behavior of this kind may even be more important than antiharassment policies in the reporting and management of harassing behavior (e.g., Hulin,

Fitzgerald, & Drasgow, 1996; Williams, Fitzgerald, & Drasgow, 1999). Therefore, we proposed that women who perceived leadership intolerance of sexual harassment would have coping profiles characterized by high advocacy seeking (Hypothesis 4).

Macrocontext: Culture

Because coping is known to vary with culture (e.g., Cervantes & Castro, 1985; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), we investigated cultural influences by comparing the harassment coping profiles of Anglo American, Hispanic American, and Turkish women. The last two cultures can be characterized as patriarchal, in which gender roles and honor and shame codes reflect asymmetrical standards for women's and men's sexual behavior. For example, both cultures reward men but condemn women for early initiation into sexual life, numerous sex partners, and extramarital relationships (Baird, 1993; Cindoğlu, 1997; B. V. Marin & Gomez, 1995; Pavich, 1986). As a result, Turkish and Hispanic women may consider men's sexual aggression to be normal and thus less worthy of reporting. These women may also fear damage to personal and family reputations, as their patriarchal societies tend to blame women more than men for sexual violence (e.g., Bakırcı, 2000; Barkley & Mosher, 1995). Consequently, Turkish and Hispanic women may seek less formal advocacy, compared to Anglo Americans.

By contrast, informal support seeking should be greater among Turks and Hispanics, who share a collectivist emphasis on affiliation and interdependence (e.g., Triandis, Leung, Villareal, & Clack, 1985). Furthermore, collectivist concerns for maintaining interpersonal harmony and avoiding conflict (e.g., Kozan, 1994; Triandis, Marin, Lisansky, & Betancourt, 1984) should foster greater avoidance/denial and less negotiation/confrontation—especially among Turkish and Hispanic women, whose cultures discourage female assertiveness (e.g., Barkley & Mosher, 1995; Levine, 1982). In sum, we expected that Turkish and Hispanic women would be more likely than Anglo women to have coping profiles characterized by low negotiation/confrontation and advocacy seeking and high social coping and avoidance/denial (Hypothesis 5).

Method

Participants and Procedure

Four separate survey studies took place, one in Turkey and the others in the United States. All participants were guaranteed complete anonymity, and their participation was entirely voluntary.

Sample 1: Working-class Anglo Americans. Sample 1 consisted of 447 women who self-identified as "White/Caucasian," and who were randomly selected from employees of a food manufacturing company in the northwestern United States. Most worked in factory jobs with low complexity (i.e., involving simple, repetitive tasks that require little skill or education). Regarding this organization's responsiveness to sexual harassment, 62% of the sample indicated that formal harassment complaints were taken seriously. Trained researchers administered questionnaires to groups of employees at their worksites. Analyses focused on 160 women who reported at least a single experience of sexually harassing behavior; only these women completed items detailing how they had coped with the harassment. The great majority had completed high school with little or no college (84%); another 9% lacked high school diplomas. Most of these women were age 35 or greater (63%) and had spouses or partners (63%).

Sample 2: Working-class Hispanic Americans. Sample 2 comprised 476 Hispanic-identified women from various urban U.S. organizations. Recruited through vocational schools that serve Hispanic communities, they worked

primarily in unskilled labor and service delivery jobs with low complexity (e.g., in housekeeping, factories, warehouses, restaurants). In describing their organizations, 57% reported that female employees would be taken seriously if they were to formally complain about sexual harassment. They completed questionnaires in groups at their respective schools. Of the 250 harassed women who provided coping data, 33% had not finished high school, and 55% had a high school (but not college) education. Most women (85%) were under age 40, and a majority (57%) were single.

*Sample 3: Professional Anglo Americans.*³ Sample 3 consisted of 240 randomly selected, female university employees who self-identified as "White." This university had a detailed sexual harassment policy, and 43% of respondents noted that harassers would receive formal warnings or serious penalties. Women answered surveys in their respective offices. Of the 88 harassed women (44% faculty, 56% staff) who completed the necessary scales, half had at least a bachelor's degree, and 39% had completed some college or a technical degree. Their modal age category was 40 through 44 (27%), and a majority was married or partnered (59%).

Sample 4: Professional Turkish women. Sample 4 consisted of 355 women employed in academic, professional, and office jobs across Turkey. Their organizations had a range of sexual harassment policies, and two thirds of the sample thought that harassment complaints would be taken seriously. After being contacted through a reference person, participants completed questionnaires while at work. Of these, 64 indicated some experience with harassing behaviors and coping. Seventy-one percent held at least a bachelor's degree; the rest had a high school education. Most of these women were single (57%) and between the ages of 20 to 34 (87%).

Measures

Each sample completed questionnaires that were nearly identical in content; fewer items and shorter response scales were used to assess some constructs in the working-class surveys, to make them more accessible to individuals with less education. We translated the questionnaire into Spanish and Turkish via a committee approach to double translation (Brislin, 1980; G. Marin & Marin, 1991).⁴ Reliability coefficients and numbers of items for each sample appear in Table 1.

Social power. We assessed participants' ages using an ordinal variable, from 1 (16–19) to 9 (55 or older). Education levels ranged from 1 to 7 in the working-class surveys and from 1 to 5 in the professional surveys (anchors of both response scales were *less than a high school diploma and graduate or professional degree*). Because hypotheses pertained to the presence versus absence of a spouse or partner, we scored marital/partner status dichotomously such that 1 = married/living together (partner present) and 0 = all other categories (e.g., divorced).

Stressor severity. To indicate sexual harassment severity, participants described the frequency and type of sexual harassment that they had recently faced at work; they also noted who perpetrated the harassment. Specifically, they completed the Sexual Experiences Questionnaire (SEQ; Fitzgerald et al., 1988; Fitzgerald, Gelfand, & Drasgow, 1995), an instrument with strong psychometric properties (Arvey & Cavanaugh, 1995) and

³ The term *professional* in this article refers to women employed in white-collar and pink-collar occupations.

⁴ Two bilingual native speakers of Spanish independently translated the survey into Spanish; they then met to resolve any discrepancies. Two native speakers of English then translated this Spanish text back into English, again working independently but then meeting to resolve discrepancies. We compared this English translation with the original English text to identify any changes in meaning. Next, all four translators and one author met to review these discrepancies and further refine the Spanish translation. Finally, linguists independently reviewed the survey in both languages and made final adjustments to maximize the clarity and linguistic equivalency of the English and Spanish versions. Translation of the survey into Turkish involved comparable methods.

Table 1
Reliability Coefficients (and Number of Items) for Each Scale Across Samples

Scale	Hispanic American working class		Anglo American working class		Anglo American professional		Turkish professional	
	α	No. items	α	No. items	α	No. items	α	No. items
Gender Harassment	.86	9	.80	9	.80	5	.50	5
Unwanted Sexual Attention	.90	7	.83	7	.72	8	.84	8
Sexual Coercion ^a						6		6
OTSHI	.86	9	.95	9	.97	15	.94	15
Denial	.51	2	.68	2	.58	4	.65	4
Avoidance	.73	3	.83	3	.86	3	.86	3
Negotiation	.65	2	.71	2	.96	2	.72	2
Social Coping	.85	3	.83	3	.94	3	.81	3
Advocacy Seeking ^a		4		4		2		2

Note. OTSHI = Organizational Tolerance for Sexual Harassment Inventory. Blank cells indicate that the variable was not assessed.

^a Cronbach's alpha does not apply for items scored as dichotomous indicators.

cross-cultural validity (Cortina, 2001; Wasti, Bergman, Glomb, & Drasgow, 2000). Based on a psychological-behavioral (rather than legal) definition of sexual harassment, the SEQ assesses how often the respondent has experienced *gender harassment* (behaviors that convey sexist and degrading attitudes about women) and *unwanted sexual attention* (unwanted romantic and sexual overtures). To compute the frequencies with which women had experienced the two types of behavior, we summed relevant items into subscales. The professional surveys also measured experiences of *sexual coercion* (making job conditions contingent on sexual cooperation). The rarity of sexual coercion yields highly skewed data so, rather than computing a summary scale, we created a dichotomous variable from these items; women with any sexual coercion history received a 1. SEQ response options and sample items appear in Table 2. Respondents also indicated the harasser's status, which we scored such that 1 = superior (manager or supervisor) and 0 = nonsuperior (coworker, customer, client, supplier, or subordinate).

Social support. Regarding female integration in the work environment, participants described the genders of their coworkers (on a 5-point scale that ranged from 1 = *almost all men* to 5 = *almost all women*) and immediate supervisor. They also completed the Organizational Tolerance of Sexual Harassment Inventory (Hulin, Fitzgerald, & Drasgow, 1996), which presents vignettes of harassing situations. For each vignette, respondents report their perceptions of (a) the risk to a female victim for reporting the situation, (b) the chances that her allegations would be taken seriously, and (c) the odds that the harasser would be punished. We summed the items into a scale (higher scores indicate the perception that management tolerates harassment).

Culture. Based on participants' self-identification, we created a dichotomous indicator, such that 0 = Anglo and 1 = Turkish (or Hispanic, in the data for working-class participants).

Harassment coping. To assess coping responses, we used 14 items from the Coping With Harassment Questionnaire (CHQ; Fitzgerald, 1990). Respondents described the extent to which they had used each CHQ behavior in response to the SEQ experience that had made the greatest impression on them. In a prior analysis of these CHQ data, Wasti and Cortina (2002) found a five-type structure across all four samples, including (a) *denial*, (b) *avoidance*, (c) *negotiation*, (d) *social coping*, and (e) *advocacy-seeking behaviors*. These categories largely paralleled those proposed by Knapp et al. (1997), detailed above. Sample items and response options are provided in Table 2. We summed items within each category into a scale, with the exception of advocacy seeking. Because the latter behavior is quite rare (Fitzgerald, Swan, & Fischer, 1995), we scored advocacy-seeking items as a dichotomous indicator (1 = use of any form of advocacy-seeking).

Results

Because of disparate CHQ response scales, and a desire to test the generalizability of results across occupational class, we analyzed data separately for professional versus working-class women.

Profiles in Coping: Cluster Analysis

For both the working-class and professional women, we began by standardizing and cluster-analyzing the five coping scores, using a *k*-means approach to identify distinct profiles of coping behavior. This technique partitioned cases into $n = k$ clusters, maximizing between-cluster differences and minimizing within-cluster variance in coping scores (Hartigan, 1975). After requesting two-, three-, and four-cluster solutions, we retained the three-cluster solution to capture the widest variety of profiles but also maintain sufficiently large cell-sizes for meaningful analysis.

Figure 1A displays coping means for the working-class women's three-cluster solution. One large group ($n = 141$) relied on high levels of denial and avoidance, suggesting attempts to avoid the stressor both cognitively and behaviorally. However, this group also attempted to negotiate with the harasser to discourage his advances. We thus labeled them the *avoidant-negotiating* group. Another large group ($n = 144$) not only tried to avoid the situation and negotiate with the harasser but also mobilized both social and organizational support (the *support-seeking* group). By contrast, the smallest group ($n = 99$) showed a relative absence of coping efforts, appearing to be largely detached from the stressor and even from efforts to cope with it (the *detached* group).

Among the professionals (see Figure 1B), we noted considerable similarity to the working-class coping profiles. Again, one group ($n = 55$) attempted to deny the severity of the situation and physically avoid it; however, their most prominent strategy involved negotiation with the harasser (avoidant negotiating). A second group ($n = 20$) included the only women who relied heavily on both informal support from friends as well as formal support from management (support seeking). Similar to the working-class results, one group ($n = 69$) distinguished itself by

denying the severity of the situation and doing little to cope with it (detached).⁵

Predictors of Coping Profiles: Univariate and Multivariate Analyses

Profile-group characteristics appear in Tables 3 (working-class women) and 4 (professional women). To determine whether profile groups differed as a function of these characteristics, we conducted univariate analyses of variance and chi-square tests of independence separately within occupational class; the findings are summarized in Table 5.

Individual level: Social power (Hypothesis 1). For the working-class women, only age related significantly to coping profile, $F(2, 379) = 5.01, p < .01, \eta^2 = .03$. According to post hoc pairwise comparisons, this effect was driven by the older age of the detached group relative to others. Coping did not vary according to education, $F(2, 379) = 0.76, ns$, or marital/partner status, $\chi^2(2,$

Table 2
Sample Sexual Harassment and Harassment Coping Items

Category and Subscale	Item
Sexual harassment ^a	
Gender harassment	Habitually told suggestive stories or offensive jokes. Made dirty remarks about women in general (for example, saying all women are whores).
Unwanted sexual attention	Touched you (for example, put an arm around your shoulders) in a way that made you feel uncomfortable. Attempted to establish a romantic or sexual relationship despite your efforts to discourage him.
Sexual coercion	Made you feel subtly threatened with some sort of retaliation for not being sexually cooperative (for example, the mention of an upcoming evaluation, review, etc.). Hinted at a raise or better job if you were sexual with him.
Harassment coping ^b	
Denial	Tried to forget it. Told myself it was not really important.
Avoidance	Tried to stay away from him. Stayed out of his way.
Negotiation	Tried to let him know I didn't like what he was doing.
Social coping	Made clear to him that he was wrong. Talked about it with someone I trusted. Talked to my friends for understanding and support.
Advocacy seeking	Made a formal complaint. Talked with a supervisor, manager, or union representative.

^a For all Sexual Experiences Questionnaire (SEQ) items, participants reported the frequency with which they had experienced the specific behavior from male coworkers or supervisors in the previous 2 years, using a 5-point scale (1 = never, 5 = most of the time). ^b For all Coping With Harassment (CHQ) items, the professional women described how frequently (1 = never, 5 = most of the time) they had used each behavior to cope with harassing experiences. Working-class samples used a briefer CHQ response scale, simply describing whether they had engaged each strategy in response to harassing behavior (yes, no, or “?” if they could not decide).

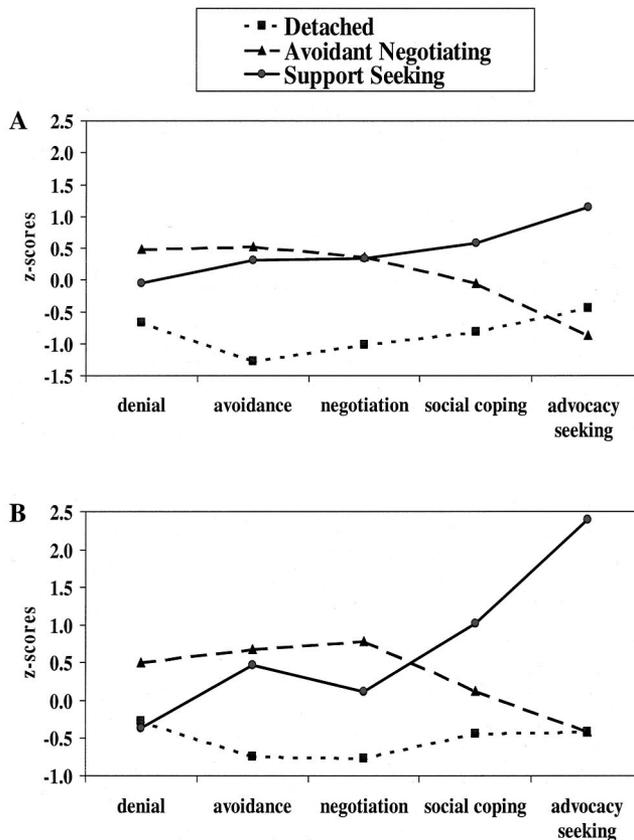


Figure 1. Working-class and professional coping means for the three-profile k-means solution. A: Working-class coping means. B: Professional coping means.

$N = 384) = 0.79, ns$. Parallel analyses of the professionals' data also showed age to be the only significant predictor, $F(2, 141) = 7.84, p < .001, \eta^2 = .10$, with detachers and support seekers being older than avoidant negotiators. Again, no effects emerged for education, $F(2, 141) = 2.21, ns$, or marital/partner status, $\chi^2(2, N = 144) = 0.16, ns$.

Microcontext: Stressor severity (Hypothesis 2). Unwanted sexual attention frequency, $F(2, 376) = 6.20, p < .01, \eta^2 = .03$, and harasser status, $\chi^2(2, N = 373) = 8.41, p < .05$, related significantly to working-class coping profiles. Specifically, the detached group had encountered less frequent sexual attention than either of the other two groups. Furthermore, according to standardized residuals, fewer support seekers had been harassed by superiors. Coping profiles did not vary by gender harassment frequency, $F(2, 370) = 2.30, ns$. For professional women, the frequency of unwanted sexual attention, $F(2, 138) = 8.67, p < .001, \eta^2 = .11$, and sexual coercion, $\chi^2(2, N = 143) = 8.55, p < .001$, varied by coping profile. Detached employees had experienced a significantly lower frequency of sexual attention compared to avoidant negotiating employees. Detachers were also underrepresented among sexually coerced employees, whereas support

⁵ Although the use of labels is a convenient way of discussing results, readers should keep in mind the full spectrum of coping strategies used by each profile group.

Table 3
Working-Class Sample and Profile Group Characteristics

Characteristic	All participants (<i>N</i> = 384)	Detached (<i>n</i> = 99)	Avoidant negotiating (<i>n</i> = 141)	Support seeking (<i>n</i> = 144)
Social power				
Age ^a				
<i>M</i>	4.03	4.65	3.93	3.72
<i>SD</i>	2.34	2.18	2.24	2.48
95% CI				
Lower bound	3.80	4.22	3.55	3.31
Upper bound	4.27	5.09	4.30	4.12
Education				
<i>M</i>	2.75	2.84	2.82	2.63
<i>SD</i>	1.50	1.32	1.52	1.59
95% CI				
Lower bound	2.60	2.57	2.56	2.37
Upper bound	2.90	3.10	3.07	2.89
Marital/partner status				
Not partnered	55.5%	53.5%	54.6%	57.6%
Partnered	44.5%	46.5%	45.4%	42.4%
Stressor severity				
Gender harassment				
<i>M</i>	14.59	14.05	14.19	15.34
<i>SD</i>	5.32	4.86	4.71	6.08
95% CI				
Lower bound	14.05	13.06	13.40	14.33
Upper bound	15.13	15.04	14.98	16.36
Unwanted sexual attention ^{a,b}				
<i>M</i>	10.76	9.27	11.36	11.18
<i>SD</i>	4.91	3.32	4.83	5.67
95% CI				
Lower bound	10.26	8.60	10.55	10.24
Upper bound	11.25	9.94	12.16	12.12
Harasser status ^{a,b}				
Superior	21.2%	23.9%	27.1%	13.5%
Other	78.8%	76.1%	72.9%	86.5%
Social support				
Coworker gender				
<i>M</i>	3.15	3.11	3.29	3.05
<i>SD</i>	1.12	1.17	1.14	1.04
95% CI				
Lower bound	3.04	2.88	3.10	2.88
Upper bound	3.27	3.35	3.48	3.22
Supervisor gender				
Female	51.6%	51.0%	49.6%	53.9%
Male	48.4%	49.0%	50.4%	46.1%
Organizational tolerance for sexual harassment ^a				
<i>M</i>	22.44	21.18	23.80	21.96
<i>SD</i>	8.51	8.13	8.16	8.93
95% CI				
Lower bound	21.58	19.52	22.43	20.45
Upper bound	23.36	22.96	25.26	23.48
Culture: Ethnic identification ^{a,b}				
Anglo American	40.4%	57.6%	28.4%	40.3%
Hispanic American	59.6%	42.4%	71.6%	59.7%

Note. CI = confidence interval.

^a Significant association with coping profile, according to univariate analysis. ^b Significant association with coping profile, according to multivariate analysis.

seekers were overrepresented. No professional effects emerged for gender harassment, $F(2, 141) = 0.96$, *ns*, or harasser status, $\chi^2(2, N = 136) = 0.96$, *ns*.

Mesocontext: Social support (Hypotheses 3 and 4). For the working-class women, organizational tolerance for sexual harass-

ment was the only support-related factor to differ significantly across groups, $F(2, 350) = 3.21$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .02$. This effect was carried by the avoidant negotiators, who perceived their organizations as more tolerant (permissive) of sexual harassment, compared to the detached group. Coping profiles did not relate to

Table 4
Professional Sample and Profile Group Characteristics

Characteristic	All participants (<i>N</i> = 144)	Detached (<i>n</i> = 69)	Avoidant negotiating (<i>n</i> = 55)	Support seeking (<i>n</i> = 20)
Social power				
Age ^a				
<i>M</i>	5.10	5.67	4.29	5.40
<i>SD</i>	2.05	1.98	1.99	1.79
95% CI				
Lower bound	4.77	5.19	3.75	4.56
Upper bound	5.44	6.14	4.83	6.24
Education				
<i>M</i>	3.76	3.74	3.64	4.20
<i>SD</i>	1.04	1.08	1.01	0.95
95% CI				
Lower bound	3.59	3.48	3.36	3.75
Upper bound	3.94	4.00	3.91	4.64
Marital/partner status				
Not partnered	81.9%	81.2%	81.8%	85.0%
Partnered	18.1%	18.8%	18.2%	15.0%
Stressor severity				
Gender harassment				
<i>M</i>	7.76	7.49	7.87	8.40
<i>SD</i>	2.69	2.54	3.01	2.23
95% CI				
Lower bound	7.32	6.88	7.06	7.35
Upper bound	8.21	8.10	8.69	9.45
Unwanted sexual attention ^a				
<i>M</i>	10.30	9.17	11.67	10.60
<i>SD</i>	3.46	1.91	4.59	2.96
95% CI				
Lower bound	9.72	8.72	10.39	9.21
Upper bound	10.87	9.63	12.95	11.99
Sexual coercion ^{a,b}				
Not coerced	88.1%	98.6%	83.3%	65.0%
Coerced	11.9%	1.4%	16.7%	35.0%
Harasser status				
Superior	27.9%	26.6%	32.1%	21.1%
Other	72.1%	73.4%	67.9%	78.9%
Social support				
Coworker gender				
<i>M</i>	2.60	2.64	2.58	2.55
<i>SD</i>	1.18	1.16	1.21	1.23
95% CI				
Lower bound	2.41	2.36	2.25	1.97
Upper bound	2.80	2.92	2.91	3.13
Supervisor gender				
Female	27.8%	24.6%	27.8%	25.0%
Male	72.2%	75.4%	67.3%	75.0%
Organizational tolerance for sexual harassment ^a				
<i>M</i>	39.57	36.97	39.98	46.95
<i>SD</i>	14.06	11.69	15.02	16.33
95% CI				
Lower bound	37.21	34.07	35.84	39.31
Upper bound	41.94	39.86	44.12	54.59
Culture: Ethnic identification ^{a,b}				
Anglo American	61.1%	84.1%	27.3%	75.0%
Turkish	38.9%	15.9%	72.7%	25.0%

Note. CI = confidence interval.

^a Significant association with coping profile, according to univariate analysis. ^b Significant association with coping profile, according to multivariate analysis.

Table 5
Summary of Hypotheses and Findings

Hypothesis (H) and variables	Working-class findings	Professional findings
Social power		
H1: Little support		
Age	Detached > avoidant negotiating Detached > support seeking	Detached > avoidant negotiating Support seeking > avoidant negotiating
Education	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>
Marital/partner status	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>
Stressor severity		
H2: Strong support		
Gender harassment	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>
Unwanted sexual attention	Avoidant negotiating > detached	Avoidant negotiating > detached
Sexual coercion	Support seeking > detached	Support seeking: More coerced Detached: Less coerced
Harasser status	Support seeking: Less harassed by superiors	<i>ns</i>
Social support		
H3: No support		
Coworker gender	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>
Supervisor gender	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>
H4: Support		
Organizational tolerance for sexual harassment	Avoidant negotiating > detached	Support seeking > avoidant negotiating Support seeking > detached
Culture		
H5: Strong support		
Ethnicity	Avoidant negotiating: More Hispanic Detached: More Anglo	Avoidant negotiating: More Turkish Detached: More Anglo

coworker gender composition, $F(2, 377) = 1.70$, *ns*, or supervisor gender, $\chi^2(2, N = 378) = 0.80$, *ns*. Similarly, professionals' perceptions of organizational tolerance varied significantly by coping profile, $F(2, 135) = 4.06$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .06$, with support seekers perceiving more tolerance than avoidant negotiators or detachers. Neither coworker gender composition, $F(2, 141) = 0.06$, *ns*, nor supervisor gender, $\chi^2(2, N = 144) = 1.09$, *ns*, related to their coping profiles.

Macrocontext: Culture (Hypothesis 5). Culture significantly influenced working-class coping profiles, $\chi^2(2, N = 384) = 20.61$, $p < .001$. Specifically, Anglo American women were disproportionately represented among the detached group (57.6% Anglo); by contrast, Hispanic American women dominated the avoidant-negotiating group (71.6% Hispanic). Professional women's coping also differed as a function of culture, $\chi^2(2, N = 144) = 43.41$, $p < .001$. Again, Anglo American women disproportionately comprised the detachers (84.1% Anglo), whereas the Turkish women predominated among avoidant negotiators (72.7% Turkish).

Finally, we conducted stepwise discriminant function analyses, to identify the most parsimonious combination of predictor variables that best distinguishes among the three profile groups. For the working-class women, one discriminant function explained

85% of the between-group variance (Wilks's $\Lambda = .89$), $\chi^2(6, N = 338) = 37.27$, $p < .001$. Predictors retained in this analysis were cultural affiliation, unwanted sexual attention frequency, and harasser status. In other words, when considering all variables simultaneously, these three were the simplest and most effective discriminators among the three coping profiles. For the professionals, one function explained 80% of the variance between profile groups (Wilks's $\Lambda = .60$), $\chi^2(4, N = 129) = 64.89$, $p < .001$. Variables retained in this last analysis were culture and sexual coercion.

Discussion

This study contributes to the sexual harassment literature by taking a person-oriented, cross-cultural approach to understanding coping patterns within whole experiences. Prior harassment research has focused heavily on categorizing women's coping behavior (e.g., Knapp et al., 1997; Wasti & Cortina, 2002), and we advance this work further by documenting how these categories of behavior combine and covary, yielding remarkably similar coping profiles across three distinct cultures and two occupational classes. These profiles elucidate how the same harassing episode can

trigger a complex array of responses, highlighting intraindividual coping variation that prior nomothetic studies may have missed.

In addition to documenting sexual harassment coping profiles, we developed an ecological model within which to predict women's coping behavior. This model provides a framework to integrate the growing, yet somewhat disconnected, literature on coping with sexual harassment. Variables at each level of the framework had some explanatory power in accounting for complex responses to sexual harassment, but indicators of stressor severity and cultural affiliation proved to be the strongest determinants. These results support our theory that, to best understand strategies employees use to cope with sexual harassment, one must look beyond the individual person and attend to multiple levels of her ecological context. Note that this includes the cultural context—a topic that is ripe for investigation in sexual harassment research.

When we summarize our findings within each level of the ecological model, many interesting observations emerge. In terms of social power characteristics at the individual level, older women tended to detach or disengage from harassing situations. Although contrary to predictions, this result supports Barak, Fisher, and Houston's (1992) argument that older, more experienced women avoid confrontation or reporting when harassed, expecting more retaliation. Older women may also have more at stake, being more likely to have a family to support and career to maintain and less able to change jobs easily. Thus, their typical coping profile excludes strategies that could put their jobs at risk in any way.

At the level of the microcontext we found strong, consistent support for our stressor-severity hypothesis when focusing on harassment type and frequency. In both occupational classes, women who faced higher levels of unwanted sexual attention fell into the two profiles exhibiting broad coping attempts, including negotiation, social coping, and advocacy seeking. This finding is in line with the coping and social support literatures, which report more diverse coping and support-mobilization efforts as stressors become more threatening, disturbing, and severe (e.g., Dunkel-Schetter, Folkman, & Lazarus, 1987; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

In terms of the mesocontext, social support in the broader work environment significantly influenced harassment coping profiles; however, this was true only for support originating from organizational leaders. Specifically, detached employees perceived their leaders as tolerating less sexual harassment. Although unexpected, this finding can explain why these employees endured infrequent sexual attention and coercion; perhaps intolerant climates kept harassment of these women to a minimum, reducing their need for engagement with harassment coping.

Regarding the macrocontext, in both occupational classes more than two thirds of avoidant negotiators were members of collectivist, patriarchal cultures. These Hispanic and Turkish women—compared to Anglo Americans—reported more avoidance, denial, and social coping, without seeking advocacy. They also negotiated with the harasser at high rates, which might seem at odds with the harmony-seeking, conflict-avoiding attributes of collectivism. However, closer examination of the specific negotiation items used in the current study (e.g., “tried to let him know I didn't like what he was doing”) revealed that they could encompass many actions, including subtle and nonverbal means of communicating displeasure (e.g., frowning, failing to reciprocate interest). Such discreet behaviors could represent a nonconfrontational variety of negotiation, perhaps reflecting collectivist concerns about protecting the

ongoing relationship and allowing the perpetrator to save face (Chow, Bond, Quigley, Ohbuchi, & Tedeschi, 2002).

Applications to Organizational Practice

Knowledge on reactions to sexual harassment sheds further light on a process that can trigger job dissatisfaction, performance declines, turnover, and health impairment among employees. With a better grasp of this process, organizations may be in better positions to intervene. Our results suggest that such interventions should not be limited to formal grievances: Harassed women, regardless of culture or class, tend to use a variety of coping responses other than formal advocacy seeking. The few women who do formally complain do so only after encountering frequent, severe sexual harassment; at that point, considerable damage may have already occurred. Women from collectivist and patriarchal cultures are even less likely to engage in this most assertive, vocal, and public means of coping with harassment.

If organizations seek to employ global and diverse workforces, and intervene in cases of harassment prior to escalation, we recommend that they explore novel management strategies that are accessible across cultural groups (e.g., informal third-party intervention; Rowe, 1996). More generally, managers who supervise employees from different backgrounds may benefit from culturally sensitive training related to sexual harassment. Finally, counselors who understand the social, emotional, and occupational sequelae of harassment experiences and grievances should be available (e.g., via employee assistance programs) to help employees cope. With effective, culturally responsive mechanisms in place to manage sexual harassment, employees may be more likely to seek assistance before the situation spirals into one that causes serious harm.

Limitations and Conclusions

As with any research, this study has its limitations. The cross-cultural measures we used to assess sexual harassment coping would benefit from further development—for example, additional items could differentiate between confrontational and nonconfrontational negotiation behavior. Our harassment summary scales also have drawbacks in that they fail to distinguish between multiple behaviors occurring on the same occasion versus one behavior repeated across occasions. Furthermore, our profile methodology does not document the temporal sequence of harassment coping. Coping experts recommend day-by-day assessment methods (e.g., diary recording) for this purpose, but these methods are highly time consuming and can yield unwieldy data (Lazarus, 2000). Cluster analysis may be an alternative method of capturing within-person variation in coping, offering a middle ground between purely nomothetic and purely idiographic research (Ryff, Kwan, & Singer, 2001). Finally, obvious limitations come with our smaller samples, self-report data, and cross-sectional design. In addition to remedying these shortcomings, future research should look toward longitudinal and multilevel analyses of coping profiles, to further elucidate the complexity of sexual harassment coping behavior.

Twenty years of research now speak to the ways in which women cope with sexual harassment at work. Over time, this line of inquiry has become increasingly sophisticated and motivated by theory. The current study adds to this literature by capturing intraindividual and cross-cultural variability in sexual harassment

coping, focusing on whole patterns of experience, and proposing an integrative framework that takes into account the individual employee and multiple levels of her ecological context.

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