

Gender Harassment: Broadening Our Understanding of Sex-Based Harassment at Work

Emily A. Leskinen · Lilia M. Cortina ·
Dana B. Kabat

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Abstract This study challenges the common legal and organizational practice of privileging sexual advance forms of sex-based harassment, while neglecting gender harassment. Survey data came from women working in two male-dominated contexts: the military and the legal profession. Their responses to the Sexual Experiences Questionnaire (SEQ) revealed five typical profiles of harassment: low victimization, gender harassment, gender harassment with unwanted sexual attention, moderate victimization, and high victimization. The vast majority of harassment victims fell into one of the first two groups, which described virtually no unwanted sexual advances. When compared to non-victims, gender-harassed women showed significant decrements in professional and psychological well-being. These findings underscore the seriousness of gender harassment, which merits greater attention by both law and social science.

Keywords Gender harassment · Sexual harassment · Working women · Well-being

In 1964, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act codified the illegality of sex discrimination. However, it took another 13 years for a federal appellate court to recognize sexual harassment as a form of sex discrimination (e.g., *Barnes v.*

Costle, 1977). The prevailing view of sexual harassment, both then and now, sees unwanted sexual attention as “the quintessential harassment” (Schultz, 1998, p. 1710). Among legal scholars, a notable group has emerged who contend that this conceptualization is too narrow, arguing that “gender harassment” should be included in legal understandings of sex-based harassment (Epstein, 1998; Franke 1995, 1997, 2004; Growe, 2007; Hébert, 2005; Shultz, 1998, 2003, 2006). Gender harassment refers to “a form of hostile environment harassment that appears to be motivated by hostility toward individuals who violate gender ideals rather than by desire for those who meet them” (Berdahl, 2007a, p. 425). In this article, we lend empirical support to the assertion that gender harassment is a serious form of sex discrimination that deserves more attention. Using survey data from two samples of working women, we demonstrate that most sexual harassment in traditionally male domains entails gender harassment *in the absence of sexual advances*; we also show how these experiences are associated with negative personal and professional outcomes.

Central Constructs

In its broadest sense, sex-based harassment¹ refers to “behavior that derogates, demeans, or humiliates an individual based on that individual’s sex” (Berdahl, 2007b,

E. A. Leskinen (✉) · D. B. Kabat
Department of Psychology, University of Michigan,
530 Church Street, Ann Arbor, MI 48109, USA
e-mail: leskinen@umich.edu

L. M. Cortina
Departments of Psychology and Women’s Studies,
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI 48109, USA

¹ Psychology and the law have most commonly referred to this phenomenon as “sexual harassment.” However, Berdahl (2007b) makes a compelling case that “sex-based harassment” is a better construct label, as it emphasizes sex (in the sense of femaleness or maleness) rather than sexuality or sexual desire. We use both terms interchangeably—“sexual harassment” and “sex-based harassment”—to be consistent with the terminology of other literature but also encourage revision of that terminology.

p. 644). Subsumed under this umbrella term are (at least) three related categories of behavior (e.g., Fitzgerald, Gelfand, & Drasgow, 1995; Fitzgerald, Swan, & Magley, 1997). First, *gender harassment* refers to “a broad range of verbal and nonverbal behaviors not aimed at sexual cooperation but that convey insulting, hostile, and degrading attitudes about women” (Fitzgerald et al., 1995, p. 430). Examples of gender harassment include anti-female jokes, comments that women do not belong in management, and crude terms of address that denigrate women (e.g., referring to a coworker as a “dumb slut”). By contrast, *unwanted sexual attention* involves expressions of romantic or sexual interest that are unwelcome, unreciprocated, and offensive to the recipient (e.g., unwanted touching, pressure for dates or sexual behavior). The third category is *sexual coercion*: bribes or threats that make the conditions of the victim’s employment contingent on her sexual cooperation (e.g., offering a promotion in exchange for sexual favors, threatening termination unless sexual demands are met).

Lim and Cortina (2005) elaborated on the relationships among gender harassment, unwanted sexual attention, and sexual coercion. They explained that “unwanted sexual attention, as the name suggests, represents unwelcomed, unreciprocated behaviors aimed at establishing some form of sexual relationship. One could argue that sexual coercion is a specific, severe, rare form of unwanted sexual attention, involving similar sexual advances coupled with bribery or threats to force acquiescence” (p. 484). In stark contrast, gender harassment communicates hostility that is devoid of sexual interest. Gender harassment can include sexually crude terminology or displays (for instance, calling a colleague a “cunt” or telling a sexually graphic joke about her), but these behaviors differ from unwanted sexual attention in that they aim to insult and reject women, not pull them into a sexual relationship. In colloquial terms, the difference between unwanted sexual attention/coercion versus gender harassment is analogous to the difference between a “come on” versus a “put down” (Fitzgerald et al., 1995).

Gender harassment, unwanted sexual attention, and sexual coercion refer to behaviors rather than legal constructs. That said, sexual coercion is roughly parallel to what the law calls *quid pro quo harassment*, whereas unwanted sexual attention and gender harassment together map onto the legal category of *hostile environment harassment* (e.g., Fitzgerald et al., 1995; Fitzgerald, Drasgow, Hulin, Gelfand, & Magley, 1997). The next section elaborates on these legal understandings of sexual harassment.

Legal Perspectives on Sexual Harassment

Title VII prohibits employers from discriminating against any individual with regard to “compensation, terms,

conditions, or privileges of employment, because of such individual’s...sex”.² When the federal courts first recognized sexual harassment as a Title VII violation, they were acting on cases in which women had lost jobs for failing to comply with their employers’ sexual demands, termed “quid pro quo harassment” (beginning with *Barnes v. Costle*, 1977). It took another decade before the U.S. Supreme Court would rule that “hostile work environment harassment” could constitute unlawful sexual harassment. In *Meritor Savings Bank v. Vinson* (1986), and later reaffirmed in *Harris v. Forklift Systems, Inc.* (1993), the Court described hostile environment sexual harassment as occurring “[w]hen the workplace is permeated with ‘discriminatory intimidation, ridicule, and insult’... that is ‘sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of the victim’s employment and create an abusive working environment.’” (*Harris v. Forklift Systems, Inc.*, 1993, p. 21). Hostile environment sexual harassment is the primary focus of the current article.

According to both *Meritor* and *Harris*, to create a legally actionable hostile environment, the sexually harassing conduct must be either severe or pervasive. In *Harris*, the Court provided further guidance for determining whether a hostile work environment is present: the harassing conduct must pass both an objective test (a “reasonable” person would find it hostile or abusive) and a subjective test (the victim must have experienced it as abusive). Referring to the objective test, it added that “whether an environment is ‘hostile’ or ‘abusive’ can be determined only by looking at all the circumstances” (*Harris v. Forklift Systems, Inc.*, 1993, p. 22).

Five years later, in *Oncale v. Sundowner Offshore Services, Inc.* (1998), the Supreme Court elaborated on what should be considered when examining “all the circumstances,” explicitly mandating attention to the larger social context. The *Oncale* decision also described types of conduct that might be considered “severe.” Particularly relevant to our article, it clearly stated that a motivation of sexual desire is not a prerequisite for establishing objective severity:

...harassing conduct need not be motivated by sexual desire to support an inference of discrimination on the basis of sex. A Trier of fact might reasonably find such discrimination, for example, if a female victim is harassed in such sex-specific and derogatory terms...as to make it clear that the harasser is motivated by general hostility to the presence of women

² In addition, Title VII prohibits discrimination based on race, color, religion, or national origin. Due to space constraints, this article only details how Title VII has been interpreted to prohibit sexual harassment.

in the workplace. (*Oncale v Sundowner Offshore Services, Inc.*, 1998, p. 80).

Despite this last development in judicial interpretations of Title VII, the prevailing legal conception of sexual harassment remains a highly sexualized one, in which sexually advancing or threatening conduct is seen as “the essence of harassment” (Schultz, 1998, p. 1716). The harassing behaviors alleged in *Oncale*, although recognized as motivated by hostility rather than desire, still involved sexually predatory behavior (e.g., sodomy with a bar of soap, threatened rape). The Supreme Court has never clearly stated whether the harassing conduct itself (as opposed to the motivation for the conduct) must involve some form of sexual advance to violate Title VII. Some appellate decisions have rejected this requirement of sexualized content; for example, in *Williams v. General Motors Corp.* (1999), the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals stated that: “harassing behavior that is not sexually explicit but is directed at women and motivated by discriminatory animus against women satisfies the ‘based on sex’ requirement.” The federal bench, however, is far from unanimity on this issue. In the same *Williams v GMC* (1999) case, one judge filed a dissenting opinion, arguing vehemently that “...Title VII does not proscribe ‘anti-female animus’ at all” and “the broad new standard my colleagues have conjured here is not a correct application of Title VII sex discrimination law presently on the books.” Some courts routinely either dismiss hostile environment cases that do not involve sexual conduct, or they “disaggregate” sexual from nonsexual conduct and then deem the latter to be irrelevant to a hostile environment claim (see Franke, 2004, Growe, 2007, and Schultz, 2006 for various post-*Oncale* case examples). Thus, the privileging of the sexual advance in sexual harassment law continues.

To summarize, on many occasions the federal judiciary has indicated, implicitly and explicitly, that offensive behavior must reference sexuality to constitute unlawful sex-based harassment. As a result, gender harassment involving no sexual advances routinely gets neglected by the law. This occurs even when the behavior fits all other characteristics of a legally actionable hostile environment: occurring “because of” the victim’s sex (interpreting “sex” to mean femaleness rather than sexuality); being “severe or pervasive” enough to adversely change the conditions of her employment; and creating a work environment that a “reasonable” person would find hostile or abusive, and that the victim herself finds as such. Prominent legal scholars have critiqued the exclusively sexual view of sex-based harassment, arguing for instance that “most harassment is not designed to achieve sexual gratification. Instead, it is used to preserve the sex segregation of jobs by claiming the most highly rewarded forms of work as masculine in composition and content” (Schultz,

2006, p. 22; see also Epstein, 1998; Franke, 1995, 1997, 2004; Growe, 2007; Shultz, 1998, 2003). At the same time that these issues have been debated in law reviews, an empirical literature on sexual harassment has developed in psychology. How has psychological science made sense of harassment based on sex and gender?

Psychological Research on Sexual Harassment

In psychology, researchers have examined lay perceptions of sexual harassment more than any other aspect of sexual harassment. These perceptions have differed over time, between men and women, and across cultures (Cortina & Berdahl, 2008; Rotundo, Nguyen, & Sackett, 2001). One finding has not changed, however: when researchers have compared perceptions of gender harassment versus unwanted sexual attention/coercion, participants have consistently rated the former as less severe, less offensive, and less likely to represent what they see as “sexual harassment” (e.g., Fitzgerald & Ormerod, 1991; Loredo, Reid, & Deaux, 1995; Tang, Yik, Cheung, & Choi, 1995).

Quite separate from studies of sexual harassment perceptions within the lay public have been surveys of actual harassment experiences among working adults. As in the law, much of this work has concentrated on sexually advancing behaviors. For instance, the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board (USMSPB) surveyed federal employees in 1980, 1987, and 1994 about their encounters with “sexual harassment,” defined as “uninvited and unwelcome sexual attention and/or behavior” (USMSPB, 1994, p. vi). Employees were asked to indicate the extent that they had experienced a list of specific acts, virtually all of which contained some form of sexual advance or sexual threat (from unwanted touching to pressure for dates to sexual assault). These surveys were well-executed and have had a major impact on the field. However, they neglected gender harassment.

Unlike the USMSPB, some sexual harassment researchers routinely include questions about gender harassment in their surveys. This is true, for example, of the Sexual Experiences Questionnaire (SEQ), which has become the most widely used and validated measure of sexual harassment experiences (Fitzgerald et al., 1988; Fitzgerald, Magley, Drasgow, & Waldo, 1999; Stark, Chernyshenko, Lancaster, Drasgow, & Fitzgerald, 2002). Some versions of the SEQ even assess two subtypes of gender harassment—both “sexist” and “crude/offensive” behavior (Stark et al., 2002). When SEQ researchers have divided harassment into its various subtypes, they have found gender harassment to be the most common (e.g., Fitzgerald et al., 1988, 1999; Langhout et al., 2005; Schneider, Swan, & Fitzgerald, 1997). Little SEQ research,

however, has focused on experiences of gender harassment in isolation from other behaviors. Studies of sexual harassment prevalence and outcomes—using the SEQ and other instruments—typically collapse across the different facets of behavior for an overall measure of “offensive sex-related experiences in the workplace” (Fitzgerald, Swan et al., 1997, p. 9; for examples from other research programs, see Barling, Rogers, & Kelloway, 2001; Culbertson & Rosenfeld, 1994; Richman, Shinsako, Rospenda, Flaherty, & Freels, 2002). Although this practice permits examination of sexual harassment as a holistic phenomenon, and has yielded many important findings, it obscures the unique experience and impact of gender harassment.

In addition to survey research, some psychologists have approached the study of sexual harassment from an experimental perspective. This work has also been characterized by an emphasis on sexual attention. For instance, lab studies have operationalized men’s sexually harassing behavior only as the sexual touching of women (Perry, Kulik, & Schmidtke, 1998; Pryor, 1987) or as sexually suggestive questioning (Woodzicka & LaFrance, 2005). In these examples and others, there was virtually no attention to gender harassment.³

While gender harassment has been neglected in research, this behavior has also almost certainly gone unreported in organizations. Studies have found that victims who perceive the harassment as more severe are more likely to report their experiences to a superior (Bergman, Langhout, Palmieri, Cortina, & Fitzgerald, 2002). However, research into lay perceptions of sexual harassment (described above; e.g., Fitzgerald & Ormerod, 1991; Loredo et al., 1995; Tang et al., 1995) suggests that gender harassment is widely believed to be inconsequential, or somehow less important than unwanted sexual attention in the workplace. Victims should, therefore, be less likely to see gender harassment as worthy of reporting, which means that organizational authorities should be less likely to intervene (Langhout et al., 2005). This makes it all the more imperative that social science bring gender harassment to the fore, so that it may be recognized as a legitimate and serious form of sex-based discrimination in the workplace.

If It’s “Just” Gender Harassment, Why Should We Care?

Because gender harassment has no explicit, sexually predatory component to it (unlike unwanted sexual

attention or sexual coercion), it may seem less worthy of scientific or legal scrutiny. However, past research on *everyday sexism* has found that regular sexist interactions decrease psychological well-being and predict symptoms of psychological trauma (Berg, 2006; Swim, Hyers, Cohen, & Ferguson, 2001). For example, Swim and colleagues (2001) asked participants to keep track of instances of ordinary sexist behavior (e.g., anti-female jokes, comments reflecting gender stereotypes) observed or experienced in any life setting. They found that these everyday sexist encounters were associated with greater anger, anxiety, and depression. To explain these negative outcomes, Swim and colleagues (2001) argued that everyday sexism triggers feelings of stereotype threat, defined as “being at risk of confirming, as self-characteristic, a negative stereotype about one’s group” (Steele & Aronson, 1995, p. 797). Similar to everyday sexism, gender harassment may foster stereotype threat in women, especially those working in traditionally masculine domains. Gender harassment may be used to cue women that they are inadequate, out of place, and unable to perform at the level of men. The associated experience of stereotype threat could set off a cascade of negative outcomes in victims.

Research has demonstrated that sexual harassment is linked with a wide range of victim outcomes (for recent reviews, see Berdahl & Raver 2010; Cortina & Berdahl, 2008; Foote & Goodman-Delahunty, 2005). For instance, studies have found that sexual harassment is associated with decreased satisfaction with one’s job and professional relationships, loss of productivity, and increased turnover intentions and behaviors (e.g., Barling et al., 2001; Langhout et al., 2005; Sims, Drasgow, & Fitzgerald, 2005). Moreover, the consequences of sexual harassment are not constrained to the job site. Victims also report lower psychological well-being, more physical health problems, and even symptoms of traumatic stress (e.g., Culbertson & Rosenfeld, 1994; Fitzgerald, Swan et al., 1997; Richman, Shinsako, Rospenda, Flaherty, & Freels, 2002). By and large, however, this research has analyzed “sexual harassment” as a global phenomenon, failing to differentiate among the subtypes of sex-harassing behavior. It is, therefore, impossible to know from this work whether gender harassment *by itself* would have the same adverse implications for employee well-being.

Hypotheses

In sum, legal scholars have developed compelling theories about the importance of gender harassment, which we sought to test using large-scale survey research. In line with prior studies, we hypothesized that gender harassment, without unwanted sexual attention or coercion, would be

³ Notable exceptions exist, however, in the experimental literature on sexual harassment. For instance Schneider, Tomaka, and Palacios (2001) studied sexual harassment in the laboratory by exposing women to sexist comments—a clear form of gender harassment.

the most common form of sex-based harassment that women experience (*Hypothesis 1*). We also hypothesized that women would report negative professional and personal outcomes, even when they “only” experience gender harassment (*Hypothesis 2*). We tested these hypotheses with survey data from women working in two male-dominated domains: the U.S. Military (Study 1) and federal legal practice (Study 2). Performing jobs that are highly nontraditional for their gender, women in these domains blur the boundaries between stereotypically “male” and “female” behavior. This makes them particularly vulnerable to being scorned and rejected (e.g., gender harassed) by colleagues who value rigid and clear distinctions between the sexes (Berdahl, 2007a, b).

Study 1: The Military Survey

Participants and Procedure

Study 1 involved secondary analysis of survey data collected by the U.S. Military. This survey began with a non-proportional stratified, single stage random sample of active-duty members from all branches of the U.S. Military (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, and Coast Guard); women and people of color were oversampled. The initial sample contained 60,415 individuals, of whom 53,170 were deemed “eligible” (reasons for ineligibility were various, such as inability to locate the sample member). These individuals were invited to complete surveys either on paper or online, and 19,960 usable surveys were returned (38% response rate). The current study focused on the 9,725 women who responded to the survey. Just over one-half of these women identified as White (55%), one-quarter as Black or African American (24%), and 11% as Hispanic or Latina. Forty-eight percent of the respondents reported some college, and 38% reported having at least a 4-year college degree. The number of years of active service reported by members revealed a bi-modal distribution, with 43% reporting less than 6 years and 33% reporting 10–20 years of active duty. For more information on this sample and procedures, see Lipari and Lancaster (2003).

Measures

All participants completed the 2002 *Department of Defense Status of the Armed Forces Survey on Workplace and Gender Relations*.⁴ Descriptive statistics, coefficient alphas, and intercorrelations for all variables analyzed in Study 1 appear in Table 1. For multi-item scales, we

reverse-coded items as needed and then summed relevant items to create scale-scores; higher scores reflect greater levels of the underlying construct.

Sex-Based Harassment. To assess unwanted sex-based experiences in the military, surveys contained an updated version of the Sexual Experiences Questionnaire-Department of Defense (SEQ-DoD) developed by Fitzgerald and colleagues (1999; see also Stark et al., 2002). Participants described how often over the prior 12 months they had experienced various forms of unwanted, uninvited “sex/gender related talk and/or behavior” involving military personnel, civilian employees, or contractors. They responded on a 5-point scale ranging from 0 = *never* to 4 = *very often*. The measure consisted of 18 questions, in which there are four subscales: (1) gender harassment: sexist, (2) gender harassment: crude, (3) unwanted sexual attention, and (4) sexual coercion.

The *gender harassment: sexist* subscale measured treatment that conveys explicit antipathy toward members of one gender. The subscale consisted of four items, such as “made offensive sexist remarks (for example, suggesting that people of your gender are not suited for the kind of work you do)” and “referred to people of your gender in insulting or offensive terms.” Four items also assessed experiences of *gender harassment: crude* behavior; although sexual on the surface, this behavior expresses animosity rather than attraction. Examples included: “made offensive remarks about your appearance, body, or sexual activities” and “made gestures or used body language of a sexual nature that embarrassed or offended you.” The *unwanted sexual attention* subscale consisted of six items, including “made unwanted attempts to establish a romantic relationship with you despite your efforts to discourage it” and “touched you in a way that made you feel uncomfortable.” The *sexual coercion* subscale contained four items, e.g., “implied faster promotions or better treatment if you were sexually cooperative” For more detail on this measure, including evidence of its high reliability and validity (see Fitzgerald et al., 1999; Stark et al., 2002).

Psychological Well-Being. Psychological well-being was measured by the short, 5-item version of the *Mental Health Inventory* (MHI-5) (Viet & Ware, 1983). On a scale from 1 (*little or none of the time*) to 4 (*all or most of the time*), survey respondents rated how often they had experienced various psychological states over the prior 4 weeks. Examples of psychological states included in this measure are: “felt calm and peaceful” and “felt so down in the dumps that nothing could cheer you up.” Researchers have found this scale to be reliable when used in the general population (Berwick et al., 1991).

⁴ This is a recurring survey; prior surveys took place in 1995 and 1988.

Table 1 Descriptive statistics, alpha coefficients, and correlations—Sample 1 (Military)

Variables	M	SD	α	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Gender harassment: Sexist	2.17	3.24	.71	—										
2. Gender harassment: Crude	1.61	2.84	.67	.71	—									
3. Unwanted sexual attention	0.84	2.17	.75	.47	.66	—								
4. Sexual coercion	0.23	1.20	.79	.37	.47	.68	—							
5. Psychological well-being	15.98	3.22	.84	-.28	-.27	-.21	-.16	—						
6. Performance decline due to poor emotional health	3.93	1.76	.91	.22	.22	.21	.16	-.59	—					
7. General health	13.37	2.29	.77	-.12	-.13	-.11	-.09	.33	-.25	—				
8. Performance decline due to poor physical health	5.19	2.29	.89	.16	.16	.15	.14	-.25	.31	-.40	—			
9. Coworker satisfaction	21.49	5.05	.92	-.31	-.29	-.19	-.15	.32	-.20	.11	-.11	—		
10. Work Satisfaction	21.37	5.94	.91	-.23	-.20	-.15	-.11	.36	-.25	.16	-.15	.36	—	
11. Organizational commitment	16.10	2.92	.82	-.13	-.16	-.13	-.10	.29	-.20	.18	-.15	.27	.41	—
12. Turnover intentions	2.91	1.74	.80	.17	.15	.09	.08	-.23	.17	-.15	.15	-.15	-.26	-.27

Note. Scale-scores were derived by summing responses across all items in each scale for all women in the sample; higher scores reflected greater levels of the underlying construct. All correlations are significant, $p < .001$

Performance Decline Due to Poor Emotional Health. In order to determine whether participants experienced any difficulties during daily activities or work as a result of mental health problems, surveys included three questions adapted from the short-form health survey (SF-36) used in the *Medical Outcomes Study* (Ware & Sherbourne, 1992). Respondents rated how often over the past 4 weeks had they experienced a problem (such as “didn’t do work or other activities as carefully as usual”) with their work or other activities “as a result of emotional problems (such as feeling depressed or anxious).” Response options ranged from 1 (*little or none of the time*) to 4 (*all or most of the time*).

Performance Decline Due to Poor Physical Health. Surveys assessed health effects on work via four items adapted from the SF-36 (Ware & Sherbourne, 1992). On a scale from 1 (*little or none of the time*) to 4 (all or most of the time), respondents rated how often over the past 4 weeks they had had problems with their work or other daily activities “as a result of their physical health.” Examples of problems included: “were limited in the kind of work or other activities you do” and “had difficulty performing the work or other activities you do (for example, it took extra effort).”

General Health. Surveys asked respondents about their general health by having them respond to four statements on a scale of 1 (*definitely false*) to 4 (*definitely true*). Examples of statements included “I seem to get sick a little easier than other people” (reverse coded), and “my health is excellent.” These questions were adapted from the SF-36 (Ware & Sherbourne, 1992).

Work Attitudes. Three measures tapped work attitudes. On a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*), six items assessed *coworker satisfaction*; examples included: “you are satisfied with the relationships you have with your coworkers” and “there is very little conflict among your coworkers.” This scale was adapted from multiple sources, two items being taken from the Job Satisfaction Survey (Spector, 1997), three items adapted from the *1995 Armed Forces Sexual Harassment Survey* (Edwards, Elig, Edwards, & Riemer, 1997), and one item created for this survey.

Six items adapted from the *1995 Armed Forces Sexual Harassment Survey* (Edwards et al., 1997) measured *work satisfaction*. These items included statements such as “you like the kind of work you do” and “your work makes good use of your skills.” *Organizational commitment* was assessed using a modified version of Mowday, Steers, and Porter’s (1979) Organizational Commitment Questionnaire. This scale contained four items, including “you are

willing to make sacrifices to help your Service” and “you are glad that you are a part of your Service.”

Turnover Intentions. In order to measure respondents’ thoughts and intentions of leaving military employment, five items were adapted from the 1999 Survey of Active Duty Personnel Form A (1999 ADS). Using a dichotomous yes/no scale, respondents indicated whether over the prior 6 months they had, for example, “Thought seriously about leaving the military” or “Discussed leaving and/or civilian opportunities with family or friends.”

Control Variables. We controlled for race, rank, and service branch in all outcome analyses. Respondents self-reported their race (coded 0 = minority and 1 = white). They also provided their rank (i.e., paygrade) at the time of the survey. Response options ranged from E-1 to E-9 for enlisted personnel; from W-1 to W-5 for warrant officers; and from O-1/O1E to O-6 or above for commissioned officers. When releasing these data to the public, the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC) collapsed these choices into five ordered categories: 1 = E1–E4; 2 = E5–E9; 3 = W1–W5; 4 = O1–O3; and 5 = O4–O6. Participants self-reported their service branch as either Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, or Coast Guard.

Results

Profiles of Sex-Based Harassment

In order to test our first hypothesis, we used *k*-means cluster analysis. *k*-means cluster analysis groups persons who are similar on specified variables (see Hartigan, 1975, for more information on this analytic approach). In the present study,

the *k*-means analysis classified women by the type and amount of sex-based harassment they had experienced, as indicated on the SEQ-DoD. Included in this analysis were all women who reported experiencing at least one behavior on the SEQ-DoD at least one time over the previous 12 months (*n* = 5,698). After standardizing these women’s scores on the four subscales of the SEQ-DoD, we requested two-, three-, four-, five-, and six-cluster solutions, and chose the five-cluster solution for further analysis. We based this decision on theoretical interest; we wanted to isolate women who had experienced primarily gender harassment without unwanted sexual attention or coercion. Profiles of means on the *z*-scored SEQ-DoD scales appear in Fig. 1.

The largest group consisted of women who reported the lowest levels of harassment (Group 1; *n* = 3,933). As seen in Fig. 1, the experiences they described almost exclusively consisted of sexist behavior. The second-largest group (*n* = 1,161) contained women who had encountered both subtypes of gender harassment—sexist and crude—but very little unwanted sexual attention or sexual coercion (henceforth, this group will be referred to as Group 2, the “Gender Harassment” group). Group 3 (*n* = 429) disclosed episodes of unwanted sexual attention, in addition to moderate levels of sexist and crude behavior. Group 4 (*n* = 138) had encountered moderate levels of all types of harassment measured by the SEQ-DoD. Group 5 (*n* = 37), the smallest profile group, reported the most frequent harassment on all four subscales. In sum, 89.4% of harassment victims fell into Group 1 or 2, which described experiences of gender harassment but virtually no unwanted sexual attention or coercion. This pattern of victimization provides strong support for Hypothesis 1, which had predicted gender harassment (in the absence of sexual attention or coercion) to be the most common manifestation of sex-based harassment.

Fig. 1 Profiles of harassment among military women (*n* = 5,698)

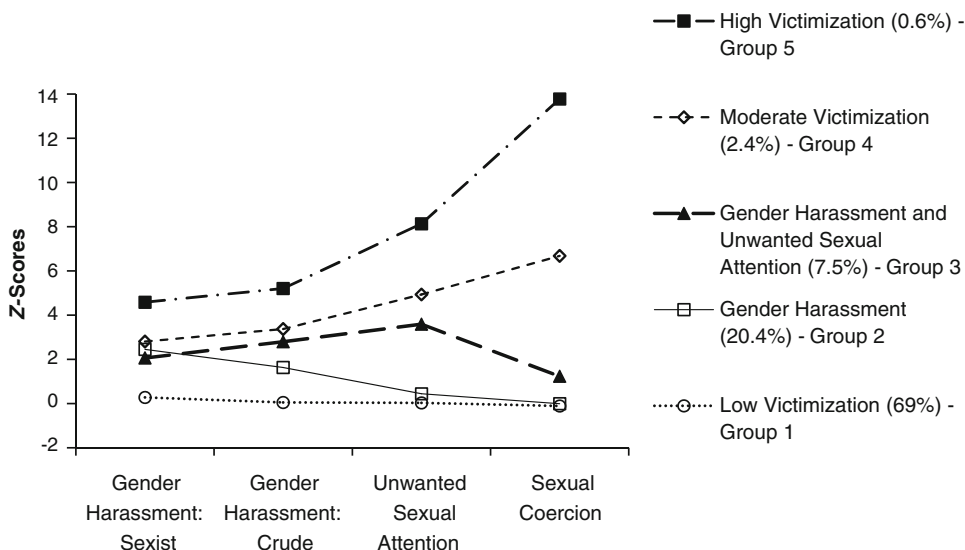


Table 2 Descriptive statistics for profile groups—Sample 1 (Military)

Profile group	Non-White percent	Rank percent			Years served		Education		Branch of service (%)				
		Enlisted	Warrant officer	Commissioned officer	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Army	Navy	Marine corps	Air Force	Coast guard
Nonvictims (<i>n</i> = 4,014)	47.0	69.8	3.6	26.5	2.28	1.07	2.21	0.70	26.6	21.1	11.0	34.4	6.9
Group 1: Low Victimization (<i>n</i> = 3,933)	42.1	68.2	3.3	28.4	2.07	1.06	2.21	0.70	28.9	21.4	13.8	26.8	9.1
Group 2: Gender Harassment (<i>n</i> = 1,161)	39.8	75.3	3.6	20.9	1.82	1.02	2.11	0.69	27.6	24.4	17.5	19.8	10.7
Group 3: Gender Harassment & Unwanted Sexual Attention (<i>n</i> = 429)	51.3	91.6	0.9	7.5	1.47	0.81	1.87	0.63	34.5	24.7	14.7	15.4	10.7
Group 4: Moderate Victimization (<i>n</i> = 138)	55.8	92.0	0.0	8.0	1.50	0.83	1.83	0.70	39.1	22.5	21.7	9.4	7.2
Group 5: High Victimization (all types) (<i>n</i> = 37)	70.3	91.9	0.0	8.1	1.65	0.95	1.83	0.57	56.8	2.7	29.7	5.4	5.4

In addition to the five groups revealed through cluster analysis, we identified a sixth “Nonvictims” group, which contained all women who had responded “never” to all items of the SEQ-DoD. This group (*n* = 4,014) served as a comparison group in subsequent analyses.

Table 2 reports demographic information for each of the profile groups. Using chi-square and ANOVA analyses, we found significant relationships between profile membership and race, $\chi^2(5, N = 9711) = 55.34, p < .001$; rank, $\chi^2(10, N = 9704) = 159.00, p < .001$; years served, $F(5, 9664) = 81.90, p < .001$; education level, $F(5, 9621) = 32.14, p < .001$; and service branch, $\chi^2(20, N = 9712) = 246.04, p < .001$. As seen in Table 2, the racial make-up of each profile group generally mirrored the overall sample. However, white respondents were slightly more likely to be in the Nonvictims Group, Group 1 (Low Victimization), or Group 2 (Gender Harassment). Ethnic minority respondents were more likely to appear in Group 5 (High Victimization). Regarding military rank and group membership, commissioned officers were disproportionately likely to appear in Group 1 (Low Victimization), whereas enlisted personnel were disproportionately represented in Group 3 (Gender Harassment with Unwanted Sexual Attention). In terms of tenure (i.e., years served) in the military, Nonvictims differed from all other groups by having served the greatest average number of years. Educational differences were most pronounced for the Nonvictims and Group 1 (Low Victimization), who had significantly higher educational levels than other groups.

Outcomes of Sex-Based Harassment

For theoretical reasons, we were most interested in outcomes for the group that had experienced primarily gender

harassment (Group 2: the Gender Harassment group⁵), which we compared to outcomes for women in the Nonvictims group. A comparison of these two groups addresses the question of whether experiences of “just” gender harassment are associated with adverse consequences.

In order to equalize cell sizes for this analysis, we randomly selected 1,000 women from the Gender Harassment group and 1,000 women from the Nonvictims group. Using multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA), we then compared these two groups on the mental health, physical health, and organizational outcome variables. Covariates in this analysis were racial minority status, military rank, and service branch (to account for factors that could potentially affect harassment risk). We found a significant multivariate main effect of gender harassment on the collection of outcomes, Wilks’ Lambda = .81, $F(8, 1822) = 52.06, p < .001$.

As Table 3 shows, women in the Gender Harassment group scored significantly lower than the Nonvictimized women on all work attitudes (work satisfaction, coworker satisfaction, and organizational commitment). They also reported greater performance decline due to both physical and emotional health, and they described less overall psychological well-being and health satisfaction. Furthermore, women in the Gender Harassment group disclosed greater thoughts and intentions of leaving their jobs. Cohen’s effect sizes (*d*) ranged from .22 to .79, averaging

⁵ We did not include Group 1 (the “low victimization” group) in outcome analyses, even though their experiences largely consisted of gender harassment, for two primary reasons. First, it is unlikely that the extremely low rates of harassing behavior described by this group would be seen as “sufficiently severe or pervasive” to be actionable under Title VII. In addition, we hope to avoid the criticism that we are “making mountains out of molehills” by foregrounding conduct that, while offensive, is transient and rare.

Table 3 ANCOVAs for physical health, mental health, and work outcomes—Sample 1 (Military)

Outcome measured	Nonvictims		Gender Harassment Victims		Sexual Advance Harassment Victims		df	F	p
	Mean (SD)	95% CI	Mean (SD)	95% CI	Mean (SD)	95% CI			
1. Psychological well-being	16.76 (2.92)	16.58, 16.94	14.65 (3.43)	14.43, 14.86	13.62 (3.93)	13.31, 13.94	2, 2550	122.07	<.001
2. Performance decline due to poor emotional health	3.63 (1.49)	3.54, 3.73	4.47 (2.07)	4.34, 4.60	5.14 (2.51)	4.94, 5.34	2, 2562	75.91	<.001
3. Health satisfaction	13.60 (2.10)	13.47, 13.73	13.04 (2.49)	12.89, 13.20	12.53 (2.62)	12.31, 12.74	2, 2550	24.06	<.001
4. Performance decline due to poor physical health	4.91 (2.09)	4.78, 5.04	5.62 (2.56)	5.46, 5.78	6.40 (3.16)	6.15, 6.66	2, 2555	37.90	<.001
5. Coworker satisfaction	22.96 (4.50)	22.68, 23.24	18.89 (5.43)	18.55, 19.23	18.08 (5.73)	17.61, 18.54	2, 2532	169.93	<.001
6. Work satisfaction	22.73 (5.44)	22.39, 23.07	18.96 (6.33)	18.56, 19.35	18.54 (6.62)	18.01, 19.07	2, 2554	89.16	<.001
7. Organizational commitment	16.53 (2.66)	16.36, 16.70	15.49 (3.28)	15.28, 15.69	14.78 (3.35)	14.51, 15.05	2, 2555	29.15	<.001
8. Turnover intentions	2.69 (1.80)	2.57, 2.80	3.44 (1.54)	3.35, 3.54	3.46 (1.58)	3.33, 3.58	2, 2558	53.49	<.001

.48; the largest differences emerged for coworker satisfaction (.79), psychological well-being (.67), and work satisfaction (.58). These findings provided strong support for Hypothesis 2, which had predicted that experiences of gender harassment (alone) would be associated with negative outcomes.

To provide an additional point of comparison, we also combined Groups 3, 4, and 5 into a “Sexual Advance Harassment” group ($n = 604$). All of these women, unlike those in Groups 1 or 2, reported significant experiences of unwanted sexual advances at work, in the form of sexual attention and/or sexual coercion. We then conducted a second MANCOVA, comparing the outcomes of this Sexual Advance Harassment group to those of the Gender Harassment group and the Nonvictims group. There was a significant multivariate main effect of harassment-group-membership on the collection of outcomes, Wilks’ Lambda = .77, $F(16, 4748) = 40.82$, $p < .001$. As Table 3 shows, outcome means for the Gender Harassment Victims fell in between those for the Nonvictims and Sexual Advance Victims (although closer to the means of the latter group). According to follow-up Tukey tests, all outcomes for the gender-harassed women were significantly worse than those of the nonvictimized women. Moreover, Sexual Advance Victims showed significantly worse outcomes than Gender Harassment Victims, with two exceptions: there were no significant differences between the two groups on work satisfaction and turnover intentions.

Study 2: The Attorney Survey

Participants and Procedure

We sought to cross-validate the results from Study 1 with secondary analysis of data collected from women working in a very different context: the legal profession. Participants

were drawn from a stratified random sample of attorneys from a large federal judicial circuit. Surveys were sent to 9,223 individuals, yielding a 53% response rate. The current study focused on the 1,425 women who responded to the survey. Most of these women were white (93%). They ranged in age from 24 to 79 years ($M = 39.09$, $SD = 7.81$). Sixty-eight percent of the women were married or partnered, while 18% had never been married. These women were highly educated, all holding at least a Juris Doctor, and some holding additional graduate degrees. Similar to the military sample, they worked in a traditionally masculine occupation where women remain a minority. They completed a paper-and-pencil self-report survey. More information about these participants and procedures appears in Cortina et al. (2002) and Lim and Cortina (2005).⁶

Measures

Table 4 displays the descriptive statistics, coefficient alphas, and intercorrelations for all variables from Study 2. Similar to Study 1, for multi-item scales, we reverse-coded items as needed and then summed relevant items to create scale-scores; higher scores reflect greater levels of the underlying construct.

Sex-Based Harassment. Similar to Study 1, we used items from the SEQ developed by Fitzgerald et al. (1995, 1988) to assess sex-based harassment. Participants described how often they had experienced a list of unwanted sexual or sexist behaviors over the past 5 years

⁶ Although drawing on the same larger dataset, these two past studies have different foci from each other and from the current article. Cortina et al. (2002) focused on gender differences in experiences of incivility and harassment in the legal profession. Lim and Cortina (2005) detailed how uncivil and harassing behaviors tend to co-occur and jointly affect personal and professional outcomes.

Table 4 Descriptive statistics, alpha coefficients, and correlations—Sample 2 (Attorneys)

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	α	1	2	3	4	5
1. Gender harassment	1.74	2.14	.69	–				
2. Unwanted sexual attention	0.19	0.79	.74	.42**	–			
3. Sexual coercion	0.01	0.12	.84	.14**	.41**	–		
4. Intention to change careers	6.00	2.93	.74	.02	.03	.00	–	
5. Professional relationship satisfaction	12.04	2.24	.76	–.06*	–.04	–.02	–.36**	–
6. Job stress	9.17	2.74	.75	.15**	.04	.06*	.32**	–.34**

Note. Scale-scores were derived by summing responses across all items in each scale for all women in the sample; higher scores reflected greater levels of the underlying construct

** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

from judges, attorneys, trustees, marshals, court security officers, and court personnel. They responded on a 5-point scale ranging from 0 = *never* to 4 = *many times*. The measure consisted of nine questions, from which there are three subscales: gender harassment, unwanted sexual attention, and sexual coercion.

The *gender harassment* subscale consisted of two items: “made offensive remarks or jokes about women in your presence?” and “publicly addressed you in unprofessional terms (e.g., ‘honey,’ ‘dear’)?”⁷ The *unwanted sexual attention* subscale contained four items, including: “attempted to establish a romantic or sexual relationship despite your efforts to discourage it?” Two items comprised the *sexual coercion* subscale, such as, “implied more favorable treatment of you or your client if you were sexually cooperative?”

Job-Related Outcomes. We used a three-item scale ($\alpha = .74$), developed for the purposes of this survey, to measure attorneys’ *intentions to change careers* (e.g., “I often think about leaving federal litigation”). We measured *job stress* with three items ($\alpha = .75$), such as “my experiences working in the federal court are more stressful than I’d like.” Finally, in order to assess *professional relationship satisfaction*, we used a three-item scale ($\alpha = .76$) that consisted of items such as “in general, I am satisfied with my professional relationships with other attorneys in federal court.” For all three scales, response options ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

Control Variables. We controlled for race and job tenure in outcome analyses. Respondents self-reported their *race* (coded 0 = minority and 1 = white). They also reported the number of years they had actively practiced law, including clerkships. Response options were 1

(0–5 years of practice), 2 (6–10 years of practice), 3 (11–20 years of practice), 4 (21–30 years of practice), and 5 (31 + years of practice); we collapsed response options 4 and 5 due to the small number of women who chose the latter option.

Results

Profiles of Sex-Based Harassment

Similar to Study 1, we standardized the attorney women’s scores on the subscales of the SEQ, including all women who had reported at least one experience of an SEQ behavior ($n = 491$). We again performed a *k*-means cluster analysis of these subscales, and again chose a 5-cluster solution. Profiles of attorney women’s means on the *z*-scored SEQ appear in Fig. 2.

Mirroring the profiles from the military sample, the largest group consisted of women who reported minimal experiences of harassment (Group 1; $n = 320$). Those who disclosed high levels of gender harassment, with almost no unwanted sexual attention or sexual coercion, made up the second-largest group (Group 2; $n = 134$). Group 3 ($n = 30$) described episodes of unwanted sexual attention, in addition to moderate levels gender harassment. Group 4 ($n = 3$) and Group 5 ($n = 4$) were quite small, and disclosed moderate and high levels of all types of harassment measured by the SEQ, respectively. To summarize, over 90% of harassed women fell into one of the two groups reporting little or no sexually advancing harassment experiences (Group 1 or 2), further supporting Hypothesis 1. We also identified a group of Nonvictims ($n = 338$), who had responded “never” to all items of the SEQ.

Demographic information for each of the profile groups appears in Table 5. Using chi-square and *F* tests, we found no significant relationships between profile membership and race, $\chi^2(5, N = 1317) = 4.24, p = .52$; age, $F(37, 1286) = 0.79, p = .81$; or years practicing law $F(5, 1333) = 0.98, p = .43$.

⁷ Unlike the military survey in Study 1, the brevity of this subscale precluded distinctions between “sexist” and “crude” gender harassment. Together, the two items assessed “gender harassment” as a global phenomenon.

Fig. 2 Profiles of harassment among women attorneys (*n* = 491)

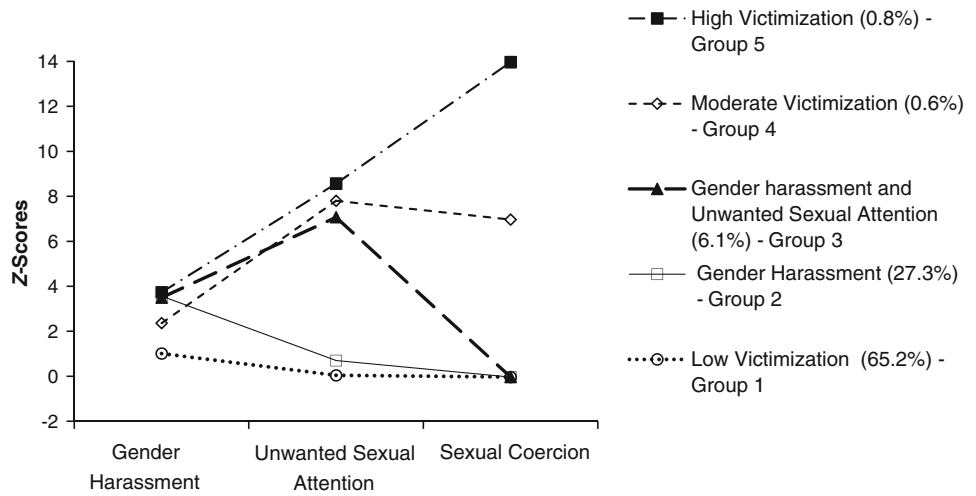


Table 5 Descriptive statistics for profile groups—Sample 2 (Attorneys)

Profile group	Non-White Percent	Age		Years practicing law	
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Nonvictims (<i>n</i> = 851)	5.2	39.37	8.09	2.23	0.91
Group 1: Low Victimization (<i>n</i> = 320)	6.7	38.32	7.31	2.21	0.90
Group 2: Gender Harassment (<i>n</i> = 134)	4.5	39.45	7.36	2.37	0.87
Group 3: Gender Harassment & Unwanted Sexual Attention (<i>n</i> = 30)	6.7	37.63	6.13	2.23	0.77
Group 4: Moderate Victimization (<i>n</i> = 3)	0.0	42.50	0.71	2.67	0.58
Group 5: High Victimization (all types) (<i>n</i> = 4)	25.0	35.00	2.31	1.75	0.50

Outcomes of Sex-Based Harassment

Again, for theoretical reasons, the group that experienced high gender harassment (without sexual attention or coercion; Group 2, *n* = 134) was the focus of our primary outcome analysis. To serve as a comparison group of similar size, we randomly selected 150 women from the Nonvictims group. We then compared these 150 Nonvictims to the 134 Gender Harassment victims on the three job-related outcomes, using MANCOVA. Racial minority status and years practicing law served as covariates. Again, results suggested that there was a significant multivariate main effect of gender harassment on the collection of outcomes, Wilks' Lambda = .96, *F* (3, 238) = 3.00, *p* < .05.

Follow-up univariate analyses (ANCOVAs), reported in Table 6, revealed significant effects on job stress and satisfaction with professional relationships. Compared to their non-harassed counterparts, gender-harassed women reported significantly higher levels of job stress (*d* = .34). They also described less satisfaction with their relationships with federal judges, other attorneys in the federal court, and court personnel (*d* = .32). However, we did not find a significant group difference in intention to change careers (the means for both groups were similarly low: close to six, on a scale that can range from 3 to 15). With the exception

of this last result, Hypothesis 2 was supported among women attorneys.

To provide additional insight into group differences, we again combined Groups 3, 4, and 5 into a Sexual Advance Harassment group (*n* = 37); their outcome means appear in Table 6. We compared the outcomes of this group with those of the Nonvictims and Gender Harassment Victims (using MANCOVA), finding a significant multivariate main effect of harassment on outcomes, Wilks' Lambda = .95, *F* (6, 546) = 2.29, *p* < .05. Follow-up Tukey tests indicated that the Sexual Advance group differed significantly from the Nonvictims group in terms of professional relationship satisfaction. The Gender Harassment Victims also reported less professional relationship satisfaction, and more job stress, than Nonvictims. Gender Harassment Victims did not differ significantly from Sexual Advance Victims, however, on any outcome. Put differently, we found that gender-harassed women attorneys fared just as poorly as those who had experienced sexual advance harassment.

General Discussion

This article draws attention to the incidence and correlates of gender harassment in the workplace. Social science

Table 6 ANCOVAs for job-related outcomes—Sample 2 (Attorneys)

Outcome measured	Nonvictims		Gender Harassment Victims		Sexual Advance Harassment Victims		df	F	p
	Mean (SD)	95% CI	Mean (SD)	95% CI	Mean (SD)	95% CI			
1. Intention to change careers	5.81 (3.01)	5.32, 6.31	5.95 (2.93)	5.45, 6.46	6.51 (3.25)	5.43, 7.60	2, 307	0.98	.452
2. Professional relationship satisfaction	12.51 (2.14)	12.15, 12.86	11.81 (2.21)	11.43, 12.18	11.38 (2.97)	10.39, 12.37	2, 308	5.25	.006
3. Job stress	9.04 (2.84)	8.53, 9.55	10.01 (2.82)	9.51, 10.50	9.76 (3.67)	8.48, 11.04	2, 277	3.61	.032

research has often analyzed sex-based harassment as a global phenomenon, failing to distinguish among the different facets of behavior; this practice may have obscured the experiences of many harassed women, especially those working in male-dominated fields. At the same time, many federal judges have evaluated potentially harassing conduct through a (hetero)sexualized lens, in which they privilege a “top-down, male-female sexual come-on image of harassment” (Schultz, 2006, p. 26). This “sexual model of sexual harassment” does not provide an explanation for gender harassment that is devoid of sexual interest, which we found to be the norm in women’s experiences of harassment in traditionally masculine domains.

Key Findings

The first goal of this article was to investigate the prevalence of different dimensions of sexually harassing conduct. Consistent with our hypothesis, gender harassment *in the absence of* unwanted sexual attention or sexual coercion was the most common manifestation of harassment faced by women in the military and the law (employment contexts which, importantly, were once the exclusive province of men). In fact, in both settings, 9 out of every 10 victims had experienced primarily gender harassment, with virtually no unwanted sexual overtures. Taken together, our empirical results support the legal theory that “much of the time, harassment assumes a form that has little or nothing to do with sexuality but everything to do with gender” (Schultz, 1998, p. 1687). This conduct is not about misguided attempts to draw women into sexual relationships; quite the contrary, it *rejects* women and attempts to drive them out of jobs where they are seen to have no place. One could argue that, in these instances, “sexual harassment is used both to police and discipline the gender outlaw: the woman who dares to do a man’s job is made to pay” (Franke, 1997, p. 764). Had we collapsed across the subtypes of harassing behavior, as many psychologists do, this striking pattern of results would not have surfaced.

The second goal of this article was to understand the correlates of gender harassment for working women. When

comparing victims of gender harassment to women who reported no harassment experiences, we found that “just” gender harassment was associated with multiple negative outcomes. Specifically, in the military context, gender-harassed women reported lower psychological well-being, job performance, job commitment, and satisfaction with their employment and health; they also described more thoughts and intentions of leaving their jobs. These results remained significant even after controlling for the women’s race, rank, and service branch. Among attorneys, gender-harassed women (compared to nonharassed women) reported lower satisfaction with professional relationships and higher job stress, above and beyond the effects of race and job tenure. Thus, experiences of gender harassment *alone* were associated with negative personal and professional outcomes in two very different contexts of work.

Implications for Sexual Harassment Jurisprudence

This research has important legal implications. Although popular wisdom might suggest that the legal definition of sexual harassment is fixed, in actuality the legal understanding changes as courts interpret and refine precedent. Our research underscores the need to broaden legal and scientific conceptualizations of sexual harassment, so that gender harassment can be recognized as a harmful and objectionable condition of employment, even when not paired with unwanted sexual attention. Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 says nothing about sexual behavior. Definitions that limit sex-based harassment to unwanted advances emerged over time as the courts revised their interpretations of Title VII. Our results suggest that further revision is in order, to prohibit not just sexually predatory conduct, but also behavior that creates a hostile work environment for members of one sex but contains no sexual advance—that is, gender harassment. As we have shown, gender harassment does not simply provide a backdrop for other kinds of harassment; it is the *modal form* of sex-based harassment faced by women at work (at least in male-dominated domains). Moreover, it alters the terms of employment for targeted women, being associated with a variety of negative professional outcomes.

Our outcome results suggest that harassment exclusively consisting of gender-related hostility has adverse work-related correlates. That is, the more that women experienced gender harassment, the less satisfied they were with their jobs and colleagues, the more they experienced stress on the job, and the more they suffered health problems that detracted from their job performance. Moreover, these results were not trivial in magnitude, being associated with large effect sizes in some cases (particularly for coworker satisfaction and psychological well-being). Findings such as these could be relevant to legal claims of hostile environment sexual harassment.

As noted at the outset of this article, in *Harris v Forklift Systems, Inc.* (1993) the Supreme Court stated that “all the circumstances” must be considered when determining whether an environment is “hostile” or “abusive,” in violation of Title VII. The Court went on to say that these circumstances may include a number of factors, including whether the discriminatory conduct “unreasonably interferes with an employee’s work performance” *Harris v Forklift Systems, Inc.* (1993, p. 23). In the current study, we documented that gender harassment on its own is linked with a variety of adverse work outcomes, including but not limited to performance decline. These outcomes do not necessarily reflect traumatization or incapacitation of the victim, but this is not a requirement of Title VII: “...Title VII comes into play before the harassing conduct leads to a nervous breakdown. A discriminatorily abusive work environment, even one that does not seriously affect employees’ psychological well-being, can and often will detract from employees’ job performance, discourage employees from remaining on the job, or keep them from advancing in their careers” (*Harris v Forklift Systems, Inc.*, 1993, p. 21). Although we cannot draw definitive causal conclusions from our correlational findings, our results are consistent with these sorts of effects. They support the possibility that “just” gender harassment can create a hostile environment that disadvantages women.

Limitations

As with any research, our studies have their limitations. All results were based on cross-sectional, correlational data, precluding strong temporal or causal inferences. That said, longitudinal studies of sexual harassment (e.g., Glomb, Munson, Hulin, Berman, & Drasgow, 1999; Sims et al., 2005) provide compelling evidence that our personal and professional outcomes follow, rather than precede, harassment experiences. These data were self-reported; because of this, common method variance or response set could potentially explain some of the significant findings. Surveys were designed to minimize some of these problems: questions about mental health, physical health, and

job attitudes were asked prior to and independently of the SEQ, so that responses about harassment did not bias reports of health and attitudes. Also, we were only able to use proxies for job and career turnover, with measures of turnover *intentions* rather than actual turnover rates. However, past research tells us that one of the best predictors of actual turnover is thoughts of turnover (e.g., Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000). Finally, while we did cross-validate results across two large samples that differed by ethnicity and socio-economic status, both samples came from male-dominated organizations. Gender parity has increased in both industries, but as of 2008, only 34% of lawyers were women (U.S. Department of Labor, 2009), and as of September 2009, only 14% of active-duty military personnel were women (Department of Defense, 2009).

We should also emphasize that our data combine the experiences of hundreds of women, and just because gender harassment correlates with negative outcomes in these aggregate data does not mean that this behavior has negative outcomes for every individual victim. We found that this is true *on average*. Whether it is true for any *individual* woman is a determination that must be made on a case-by-case basis. Our point is simply that courts and social scientists should not automatically assume that “just gender harassment” is, by definition, too trivial to create an abusive work environment.

Future Directions

Social scientists continue to focus on sexual “come-on” forms of sexual harassment (e.g., de Haas, Timmerman, & Höing, 2009; Woodzicka & LaFrance, 2005). When surveys do include questions about gender harassment, during the analysis of data these questions are often combined with questions about unwanted sexual advances (e.g., Fitzgerald, Drasgow et al., 1997; Sims et al., 2005). This happens even though there are major qualitative differences across the experiences; for example, being sexually propositioned on one occasion is not the same as being targeted with demeaning anti-female remarks on a daily basis. Based on the current study, we recommend that more research parse out experiences of gender harassment from unwanted sexual attention/coercion, which will give rise to new avenues of inquiry. For example, proponents of theories as to why people harass others have generally looked for one unifying explanation (e.g., Bargh, Raymond, Pryor, & Strack, 1995; Berdahl, 2007b). It remains entirely possible that different goals motivate the different subtypes of sex-based harassment.

Regarding construct labels, we second Berdahl’s (2007b) recommendation that the term “sex-based harassment” be used in lieu of “sexual harassment.” Research on

lay perceptions suggests that the latter term conjures up narrow notions of unwanted sexual advances; it fails to include gender harassment in the minds of many (e.g., Fitzgerald & Ormerod, 1991; Loredo et al., 1995; Tang et al., 1995). The term “sex-based harassment” is broader, calling attention to both categories of behavior. It is also closer to the original language of Title VII, which prohibited harassment “based on sex.”

The current study focused on two male-dominated professions. Researchers have not yet determined how “just gender harassment” operates in gender-balanced and female-dominated industries. We would speculate that the behavior might be less common in more female-integrated contexts, where women are not perceived as “encroaching” on “men’s territory.” In those settings, anti-female hostility might also be less tolerated and more penalized, and thus experienced by victims as less threatening. These and other possibilities await future research.

In closing, we emphasize the need for scholars of sex-based harassment, both in psychology and law, to continue the interdisciplinary exchange of ideas. Social scientists and legal theorists often struggle to converse, but considerable efforts have been made to bridge the disciplinary gap when it comes to this topic (for examples, see the special issue on “sexual harassment” in *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law*, 1999, and the special issue on “psychology, law, and the workplace” in *Law and Human Behavior*, 2004). The arguments of prominent legal scholars inspired the current psychological research. We hope that, in turn, our results can inform further evolution in legal thinking about harassment based on sex and gender.

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