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Gender Differences in Evaluating Social–Sexual Conduct in the Workplace

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Qualitative interviews exploring gender differences in perceptions of sexual harassment were conducted with 100 full-time St. Louis area employees. Women more than men reported that telling dirty/sexual jokes was a non-harassing behavior, qualified behaviors as harassing when they happened in the workplace, and considered behaviors as non-harassing when the man's intentions were not harmful. Men more than women reported that requesting a date was a non-harassing behavior, qualified behaviors as harassing when the woman did not welcome the behavior, and considered behaviors as non-harassing when they did not violate workplace norms. Logistic regression analysis predicted the respondent gender with 86% accuracy. Finally, concept mapping suggested that when women think about harassers they are concerned with power and social aptitude, while men seem to be more concerned about the responsibility and psychological adjustment of perpetrators of sexual harassment. When women think about victims of harassment they are concerned with a woman's assertiveness and work effectiveness, while men are more concerned with the psychological state of the woman and how provocative she is when they think about victims of sexual harassment.

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In 1986 the United States Supreme Court interpreted Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to prohibit by law unwelcome social–sexual misconduct which results in hostile work environments (*Meritor Savings Bank v. Vinson*, 1986). In *Meritor* the Court held that it is unlawful for an employer to subject an employee (because of her or his sex) to social–sexual misconduct that is "sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of employment and create an abusive working environment" (*Meritor*, 1986, p. 60). According to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) unwelcome social–sexual misconduct consists of "unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature" (EEOC, 1993, p. 203). In 1993 the Supreme Court stated that when Congress made gender discrimination illegal it included under its ban on discrimination the creation of intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environments that result from the gender of an employee (*Harris v. Forklift Systems, Inc.*, 1993). The present study seeks to explore the contrasts and similarities in the ways that men and women view social–sexual conduct in the workplace as a method of working toward a hostile work environment legal standard that workers of both genders can understand and one which both men and women can accept.

Although there are some exceptions, the empirical literature generally supports the view that women and men workers hold divergent perspectives concerning what constitutes sexual harassment. For example, women, compared to men, are more likely to find experiences of social–sexual behavior harassing even when both genders report experiencing an equal amount of this behavior on the job (Gutek, Cohen, & Konrad, 1990). Other research indicates that women use broader definitions of harassment and as a result are more likely to label specific incidents harassing (Fitzgerald & Ormerod, 1991; Jones & Remland, 1992; Kenig & Ryan, 1986; Mazer & Percival, 1989; McKinney, 1990; Padgitt & Padgitt, 1986; Powell, 1986). Gervasio and Ruckdeschel (1992) report that women find some verbal comments more harassing than do men, and Johnson, Stockdale, and Saal (1991) found the same gender results with more severe forms of offensive conduct such as explicit requests for continued and unwanted romantic involvement. Finally, in a recently published meta-analysis, Blumenthal (1998) found significant but small effects for gender ($r = .17$) across 68 investigations. He notes, "... these small differences appeared stable across age, culture, and professional status" (p. 46) and that "... the present findings lend quantitative support to earlier reviews of the size and presence of a gender gap in perceptions (of harassment)" (p. 51).

Despite this evidence for gender differences in perceptions of social–sexual workplace conduct, some studies do not find these effects when using some measures of harassment (Baker, Terpstra, & Cutler, 1989; Pryor, 1985; Thomann & Wiener, 1987). For example, Castellow, Wuensch, and Moore (1990) found no gender differences when they presented undergraduates a summary of a trial in which the plaintiff claimed that she was subjected to hostile work environment harassment (i.e., her male supervisor made comments about the sexiness of her clothes, repeatedly tried to kiss her, and frequently touched her breasts and fondled her buttocks). In this study, men and women were equally likely to find the perpetrator "guilty" of harassment.[1] Using the same fact pattern, Egbert, Moore,

[1] Although Title VII cases are not criminal trials, the authors of these studies measured attributed responsibility in terms of "guilt." We report these results using the authors' measures.

Wuensch, and Castellow (1992) found that while women mock jurors reached more "guilty verdicts" than men, the gender difference did not reach conventional levels of statistical significance. Sheffey and Tindale (1992) reported that women undergraduates, as compared to their male peers, rated descriptions of social–sexual conduct in traditional, nontraditional, and integrated work settings as more sexually harassing. However, this effect was accounted for by comparing women who scored masculine on the Bem Sex Role Inventory to men who scored feminine. Finally, in a qualitative interview study of waiting staff at restaurants, Guiffre and Williams (1994) found that all but one respondent described their work settings as highly sexualized (i.e., sexual joking, touching, fondling, and flirting, and prevalent heterosexual dating relationships among staff), and yet, with the exception of one respondent, all the men and women reported the absence of harassment in the restaurants.

The debate surrounding the importance of gender differences in the perception of sexual harassment has led some researchers to question whether these gender differences are consistent and large enough to be recognized as a social fact that needs to be addressed by the law (Frazier, Cochran & Olson, 1995; Gutek & O'Connor, 1995). While their concerns are valid, their conclusion fails to distinguish between *quid pro quo* and hostile work environment causes of action. The *quid pro quo* claims are more harmful psychologically and less open to interpretation than the more ambiguous hostile work environment harassment claims. Frazier et al. (1995) conclude that while there is wide agreement between and within the sexes on the harassing nature of sexual bribery and coercion, women perceive ambiguous behaviors enacted in ambiguous situations (e.g., staring, sexual remarks, unwelcome attention by a peer) as more threatening than do men. Similarly, Gutek and O'Connor (1995), who question whether there is more variance within or between genders concerning perceptions of harassment, limit their conclusions to extreme ends of the harassment continuum.

In one research program, Wiener and his colleagues (Wiener & Hurt, in press; Wiener, Hurt, Russell, Mannen, & Gasper, 1997; Wiener, Watts, Goldkamp, & Gasper, 1995) have found gender effects which justify additional investigation into the ways that women and men view social–sexual workplace conduct. In two studies (Wiener et al., 1995, 1997), college student research participants were presented the fact patterns that summarized two recent and important hostile work environment cases that helped shape the current law: *Rabidue v. Osceola Refining Co.* (1986) and *Ellison v. Brady* (1991). In *Rabidue* (1986), after the plaintiff was discharged from Osceola Refining Company she claimed that a male co-worker was extremely vulgar and had made crude comments about women including herself. In *Ellison* (1991), an Internal Revenue Service employee claimed that a male co-worker with whom she had shared a casual lunch subjected her to persistent and unwelcome requests for dates as well as notes with references to sex. In a follow-up study using full-time employees, Wiener and Hurt (in press) presented participants with video taped presentations of affirmative action officers interviewing witnesses in the *Rabidue* and *Ellison* cases. Participants in these three studies made a number of judgments that are required by law to reach a decision about hostile work environment harassment.

To determine the effect sizes of gender differences in the evaluation of social–sexual conduct at work for these studies (Wiener et al., 1995, 1997; Wiener & Hurt,

Table 1. Gender effects in judgments of sexual harassment

	η^2	Means	Sample size	Cohen's *d*
Wiener et al., 1995	.10	Males 5.44	Males 87	.67
	$N = 181$	Females 6.81	Females 93	
Wiener et al., 1997	.05	Males 5.66	Males 160	.44
	$N = 320$	Females 6.72	Females 160	
Wiener & Hurt, in press	.11	Males 4.95	Males 221	.72
	$N = 441$	Females 6.27	Females 220	

in press), η^2 statistics and Cohen's *d* for the gender differences in participants' answer to the question "How likely was it that Ms (Rabidue/Ellison) was the victim of hostile work environment sexual harassment?" (1, very unlikely; 9, very likely) were calculated. The likelihood of harassment means for males and females are presented for each of these studies along with the Cohen's *d* statistic in Table 1. Across the three studies gender of the participant explained between 3 and 13% of the variance in harassment judgments. In all three studies the difference was significant at or beyond the .001 level of significance.[2] The average effect size for the three samples equals .61, a medium effect. Cohen (1992, p. 156) suggests that a medium effect size is about .5 standard deviations from the mean and that it should be "visible to the naked eye of a careful observer, and it approximates the average size of observed effects in various fields."

We felt the gender effect size found in the Wiener studies was large enough to justify further investigation into men's and women's views regarding sexual harassment. However, the purpose of our current research was not to demonstrate that gender differences in the perception of sexual harassment exist, but rather to learn more about the content of cognitions that might be responsible for those differences and to investigate the similarities and differences in the ways that men and women view social–sexual conduct in the workplace. We used a qualitative methodology to assist us in developing descriptions of the way men and women think about social–sexual conduct in the workplace. We were interested in developing a rich description of the dimensions that men and women select from memory to use in describing sexual harassment. The goal of our semi-structured interview format was to answer two questions: (a) What are the differences in behaviors and circumstances that men and women workers find harassing and not harassing?, and (b) what is the content of the cognitive structures (schemata) that men and women activate when they encounter alleged harassers and victims?

METHOD

Research Participants

This study consisted of two data collection waves. In the first wave, we conducted in-depth interviews with a sample of 25 male and 25 female full-time employees

[2] Combining the *Z* values for the three sets of data results in an overall average *Z* value of 8.69 which is significant beyond the .001 level of significance. Thus, the gender effects across all three sets taken together are significant.

residing in the St. Louis metropolitan area. In the second wave, we administered a card sorting and attribute rating task to a new sample of 25 male and 25 female full-time St. Louis employees. Participants for both waves were recruited through advertisements placed in local newspapers and were scheduled for 90 minute interviews at our laboratory. Each was reimbursed $25 for their time. Participants were treated in accordance with the "Ethical principles of psychologists and code of conduct" of the American Psychological Association (American Psychological Association, 1992).

In an attempt to gather information from a representative sample of the area workforce, our participants were recruited as a volunteer sample of the St. Louis area using age and race of potential participants as the selection criteria. We based our selection criteria on the 1995 St. Louis Regional Commerce and Growth Association's Demographics of the St. Louis Metro Area. Rather than focusing on a sample of convenience (i.e., college students), our sample included full-time workers from a variety of job categories (e.g., engineers, factory workers, accountants, teachers, police, grocery cashiers, computer programmers, sales managers, waiting staff). The average age of the 50 participants in wave 1 was 39 years and six months. Eighty percent of this sample was Caucasian, 16% were African–American, 2% were Asian, and 2% were Hispanic. Twenty-eight percent of the women in this sample claimed they had been victims of sexual harassment in the workplace, and 6% of the men admitted they had been accused of sexual harassment. The average age of the 50 participants in wave 2 was 37 years and one month. Seventy-eight percent were Caucasian, 16% were African–American, 4% were Asian, and 2% were Hispanic. Thirty-four percent of these women claimed they had been victims of sexual harassment, and none of the men admitted to having been accused of sexual harassment.

Interview Materials and Procedure

Twenty-five men and 25 women participated in open-ended interviews in which they answered each of the following questions: (a) Describe those work place actions that men direct toward women which are sexual in nature and which *you firmly believe are* examples of sexual harassment. (b) Describe those work place behaviors that men direct toward women which are sexual in nature but which *you firmly believe are not* serious enough to reach the level of sexual harassment. (c) Describe those work place behaviors that men direct toward women which are sexual in nature but which *you believe are ambiguous* with regard to whether or not they reach the level of sexual harassment. Respondents were told to use their own definitions of sexual harassment. The interviewers probed the initial answers and asked the participants to clarify their answers and support their responses with reasons why they considered each of the behaviors to be harassing, non-harassing, or ambiguous. The answers to these questions were recorded as narratives for qualitative analysis. Female (male) interviewers interviewed female (male) respondents.

The fourth interview item instructed the participant to think about one or more women whom the respondent had observed at work, seen on television, or read about in the press who had been the victim(s) of sexual harassment at work. The

respondents then listed up to ten physical, psychological, social, or behavioral attributes of harassed women. The attributes were recorded as separate statements, individually for each respondent. The fifth and last interview question was identical to the fourth, except that the participants were asked to think about men who had sexually harassed women at work. Once again, respondents listed up to ten attributes of perpetrators of harassment.

Card-Sorting Materials and Procedure

The list of attributes of harassed women (victims) and of men who harass women at work (harassers) were reduced to two samples of 99 unique responses for female respondents (a victim and a harasser list) and two samples of 99 for male respondents (a victim and a harasser list).[3] The research team eliminated redundant statements and combined statements that shared the same primary gist. The descriptors were printed on decks of note cards and prepared for distribution to our second sample of workers.

Each of the participants in the second sample engaged in two separate card sorts and rating tasks. The men sorted the males' responses and the women, the females' responses. The sorters were told that the items were attributes of women who were described by members of their same gender as victims of sexual harassment or attributes of men who harassed women. We instructed the sorters to place the items into piles of similar statements organizing the descriptors into meaningful groups such that each card could be placed in only one group, that there must be more than one group in the sort, and that there must be fewer groups than cards. After completing the sort, the respondent rated on a nine point scale how likely it was that each of the attributes described a sexually harassed woman or a harasser (4, extremely likely; −4, extremely unlikely). After completion of all tasks, each respondent in both waves completed a demographic information sheet, was thoroughly debriefed, and reimbursed for his or her time.

RESULTS

Analysis of Interview Questions

The answers to the open-ended questions ((a)–(c)) from the interviews were analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively. The research team began by analyzing the 50 interview narratives and listing the three sets of behaviors: (a) those that were considered to be definitely harassing (harassing), (b) those that did not reach the level of sexual harassment (non-harassing), and (c) ambiguous behaviors (ambiguous). This analysis resulted in a list of 17 separate harassing behaviors (e.g., inappropriate touching, telling dirty/sexual jokes, making sexual advances, etc.), 18 non-harassing behaviors (e.g., appropriate touching, telling dirty/sexual jokes, requests for a date, etc.), and 23 ambiguous behaviors (e.g., touching,

[3] We reduced the number of statements to 99 unique items because the concept mapping software (Trochim, 1989) limits the sorting task to 99 statements.

making sexual advances, complementing a woman, etc.).[4] We also coded circumstances that qualified these three types of behaviors. A qualifier was defined as any reason provided for why a behavior was harassing, non-harassing or ambiguous. Examples of qualifiers that made behaviors harassing include (a) it makes the woman feel uncomfortable, (b) it happens in the work setting, and (c) the woman does not welcome the behavior. Examples of qualifiers that made behaviors non-harassing include (a) the man and woman are friends, (b) it does not violate workplace norms, and (c) the man did not intend to harm the woman. Examples of qualifiers that made behaviors ambiguous include (a) the woman does not know the man's intentions, (b) the behavior starts out reasonable but the man takes it too far, and (c) it is not directed toward a particular woman. In summary we constructed a list of 25 qualifiers for harassing behaviors, 32 qualifiers for non-harassing behaviors, and 14 qualifiers for ambiguous behaviors.

Coding the Behaviors and Qualifiers

Three independent raters coded the narratives for harassing, non-harassing, and ambiguous behaviors as well as for harassing, non-harassing, and ambiguous qualifiers. They attached one code to each of the behavior and qualifier responses that they found in the narrative. Multiple responses were coded for each narrative. Each respondent could mention multiple behaviors and qualifiers for each category of response (harassing, non-harassing, ambiguous). Therefore, each narrative could have many behaviors and qualifiers to code. As an example, one respondent mentioned two behaviors and two qualifiers for harassing conduct, three behaviors and two qualifiers for non-harassing conduct, and one behavior and two qualifiers for ambiguous conduct. Thus, this respondent had a total of six behaviors and six qualifiers to be coded in his or her interview narrative. All mentioned behaviors and qualifiers were coded for each interview narrative. In coding the responses, we found that respondents gave as few as one behavior and one qualifier for a category and as many as five behaviors and four qualifiers for a category in their interview narrative. After two training sessions in which four interview narratives were coded and then discussed along with rules for resolving disagreements, the three raters independently coded all 50 interview narratives. A random sample of 18 interview narratives (36% of the total) was used to calculate the percentage of agreement across the 18 narratives between each pair of coders. Agreement between rater 1 and rater 2 was 85%, between rater 1 and rater 3 it was 84%, and between rater 2 and rater 3 it was 80%. Therefore, the overall percentage of agreement among the three coders was 83%. All disagreements in coding were reconciled through consensus before the resulting behavior and qualifier codes were entered into the final database.

[4] The full list of behavior codes is available from the first author. It is interesting to note that many of the harassing, non-harassing, and ambiguous behaviors are identical or very similar. In fact, we found that respondents viewed the same behaviors as harassing and non-harassing depending upon the circumstances and contexts in which the actions occurred.

Table 2. Harassing, not harassing, and ambiguous behaviors: number of people and percentage reporting

Behavior	People reporting	Percentage reporting
Behaviors which are definitely harassing		
Inappropriate touching	40	80
Comments on a woman's appearance	14	28
Making sexual advances	13	26
Requesting sexual favors for job benefits	13	26
Sexual talk	12	24
Telling dirty/sexual jokes	12	24
Behaviors which are not harassing		
Appropriate touching	22	44
Overly personal talk	19	38
Complimenting a woman	15	30
Telling dirty/sexual jokes	13*	26
Requests for a date	11**	22
Behaviors which are ambiguous regarding harassment		
Touching	16	32
Making sexual advances	13	26
Overly personal talk	12	24
Violations of personal space	11	22
Telling dirty/sexual jokes	10	20

Note. *Reported significantly more often by women, $p = .024$.
**Reported significantly more often by men, $p = .002$.

Analysis of Harassing, Non-Harassing, and Ambiguous Behaviors

Participants showed a great deal of variation in the types of behavior that they reported as evidenced by the large number of unique category codes that were needed to classify their responses. In order to summarize the findings for harassing, non-harassing, and ambiguous behaviors, we treated categories mentioned by 10 or more participants as stand alone variables and grouped others to construct variables with an overall frequency of 10 or more responses. Table 2 displays all three types of conduct that 10 or more respondents reported.[5] The most frequently reported harassing behaviors were inappropriate touching, comments on a woman's appearance, and making sexual advances. The three most reported non-harassing behaviors were appropriate touching, overly personal talk, and complimenting a woman. Finally, the three most reported ambiguous behaviors were touching, making sexual advances, and overly personal talk. The similarities in these responses point out that our respondents determined whether social–sexual conduct was harassing not by the actions alone, but rather by the context and circumstances that surrounded the actions. For example, depending upon the

[5] Composite variables in Table 2 include overly personal talk that is not harassing (made up of asking personal questions, calling a woman by a nickname, making derogatory remarks, sexual talk, talking about one's relationships, talking about sex, teasing, and other overly personal verbal behavior), overly personal talk that is ambiguous (made up of calling a woman by a nickname, degrading one's own wife, gossiping about women, sexual talk, talking about one's relationships, talking about sex, and teasing), violation of personal space that is ambiguous (made up of invading a woman's personal space, staring at women, and winking).

Table 3. Qualifiers which make behaviors harassing, not harassing, and ambiguous: number of people and percentage reporting

Qualifiers	People reporting	Percentage reporting
Qualifiers which make reported behaviors harassing		
It happens in the work setting	16*	32
The woman does not welcome the behavior	16**	32
The man intends to psychologically harm the woman	11	22
It makes the woman feel uncomfortable	10	20
Qualifiers which make the reported behaviors not harassing		
The man's intentions are not harmful	21***	24
The man does not intend to psychologically harm the woman	18	36
The man and woman are friends	15	30
It does not violate workplace norms	12****	24
Qualifiers which make reported behaviors ambiguous regarding harassment		
The woman does not know the man's intentions	31	62

Note. *Reported significantly more often by women, $p = .002$.
**Reported significantly more often by men, $p = .002$.
***Reported significantly more often by women, $p = .010$.
****Reported significantly more often by men, $p = .008$.

circumstances touching was inappropriate and harassing, appropriate and non-harassing, or ambiguous.

Analysis of Harassing, Non-Harassing, and Ambiguous Qualifiers

The participants also displayed great variability in the types of contexts and circumstances that they used to qualify their behaviors. In order to summarize the findings for harassing, non-harassing, and ambiguous qualifiers, we once again treated categories mentioned by 10 or more participants as stand alone variables and grouped others to construct variables with an overall frequency of 10 or more responses. Table 3 displays all three types of qualifier that 10 or more respondents reported.[6] The most frequently reported qualifiers that made social–sexual behaviors harassing were the behavior happens in the work setting, the woman does not welcome the behavior, and the man intends to psychologically harm the woman. The three most reported qualifiers that made social–sexual behaviors not harassing were the man's intentions were not harmful, the man did not intend to psychologically harm the woman, and the man and woman are friends. Finally, there was more agreement regarding the qualifiers that constituted ambiguous

[6] Composite variables in Table 3 include the qualifier which makes the behavior harassing: the man intends to psychologically harm the woman (made up of degrades a woman's dignity, creates psychological harm, the man intends to be degrading, the man intends to harm the woman, the man intends to have sex with the woman, and the woman is treated like an object), and the qualifier which makes the behavior not harassing: the man does not intend to psychologically harm the woman (which is made up of the behavior is not directed toward a particular woman, the man does not intend to degrade the woman, the intention of the man was friendly, the behavior was unintentional, the man intended the behavior to be respectful, the woman knows the man's intentions, and the man does not intend to harm the woman).

conduct. Sixty-two percent of our respondents ($n = 31$) agreed that behavior is ambiguous if the woman does not know the man's intentions. No other qualifiers were mentioned by 10 or more respondents and no meaningful composite categories could be constructed. It is important to note that our respondents relied heavily on their perceptions of the man's intentions when determining whether the social–sexual conduct was harassing.

Gender Effects in Reporting Behaviors and Qualifiers

In order to evaluate gender differences in reporting behaviors and their qualifiers, χ^2 analyses were performed on the data. All reported gender analyses involved variables that produced expected cell frequencies of five or above. Cells consisted of men (women) mentioning the behavior (qualifier) versus not mentioning the behavior (qualifier). Six behaviors which were reported as harassing (i.e., inappropriate touching, comments on a woman's appearance, making sexual advances, requesting sexual favors for job benefits, sexual talk, and telling dirty/sexual jokes) met these criteria and were used in our analyses. There were no gender differences in reporting any of these harassing behaviors. In other words men and women mentioned these behaviors as being harassing equally often.

Five behaviors which were reported as non-harassing (i.e., appropriate touching, overly personal talk, complimenting a woman, requests for a date, and telling dirty/sexual jokes) met our entry criteria. χ^2 analyses indicated that women ($n = 10$, 40% of women) were more likely to mention telling dirty/sexual jokes as a non-harassing behavior than were men ($n = 3$, 12% of men), $\chi^2(1, N = 50) = 5.09$, $p = .024$ and men ($n = 10$, 40% of men) reported making requests for a date as a non-harassing behavior more often than women ($n = 1$, 4% of women), $\chi^2(1, N = 50) = 9.44$, $p = .002$.

Five behaviors which were reported as ambiguous (i.e., touching, making sexual advances, overly personal talk, violations of personal space, and telling dirty/sexual jokes) met our entry criteria. χ^2 analyses indicated there were no gender differences in reporting ambiguous behaviors.

Four qualifiers that made reported behaviors harassing (i.e., because it happens in the work setting, because the woman does not welcome the behavior, because the man intends to do psychological harm, and because it makes the woman feel uncomfortable) met our entry criteria for χ^2 analyses. Women ($n = 13$, 52% of women) reported that behaviors were harassing because they happened in the work setting more often than men did ($n = 3$, 12% of men), $\chi^2(1, N = 50) = 9.19$, $p = .002$, and men ($n = 13$, 52% of men) reported that behaviors were harassing because the women did not welcome the behavior more often than women did ($n = 3$, 12% of women), $\chi^2(1, N = 50) = 9.19$, $p = .002$.

Four qualifiers which made reported behaviors non-harassing (i.e., the man's intentions are not harmful, the man does not intend to psychologically harm the woman, the man and woman are friends, and the behavior does not violate workplace norms) met our entry criteria for χ^2 analyses. Men ($n = 10$, 40% of men) reported that behaviors were not harassing because they did not violate workplace norms more often than did women ($n = 2$, 8% of women), $\chi^2(1, N = 50) = 7.02$, $p = .008$, and women ($n = 15$, 60% of women) reported that

behaviors were not harassing because the man's intentions were not harmful more often than did men ($n = 6$, 24% of men), $\chi^2(1, N = 50) = 6.65$, $p = .01$.

Only one qualifier which made reported behaviors ambiguous (i.e., because the woman does not know the man's intentions) met our entry criteria for χ^2 analysis. There were no gender differences in reporting this qualifier.

Logistic Regression Analysis: Predicting the Odds that a Respondent is a Woman

In order to determine which behaviors and qualifiers of behaviors best discriminate between men and women, we performed a logistic regression analysis. Predictors used were those behaviors and qualifiers which were reported significantly more often by either men or women in the χ^2 analyses. These were: non-harassing behaviors (i.e., requests for a date and telling dirty/sexual jokes), qualifiers which made reported behaviors harassing (i.e., social–sexual behaviors occurring in the work setting and the woman does not welcome the behavior), and qualifiers which made reported behaviors not harassing (i.e., the man's intentions are not harmful and the behavior does not violate workplace norms). The criterion was the gender of the participant.

The purpose of logistic regression is to estimate the probability of an event occurring relative to the event not occurring. In this case we were interested in estimating the probability of the respondent being female relative to being male, based upon the behaviors and/or qualifiers mentioned in their interview narratives. We used forward entry with the likelihood ratio statistic (LR test) to select among our predictor variables. The regression analysis resulted in four of the variables being significant predictors of gender after controlling for all other variables in the equation. These predictors were: this is harassment because it happens in the work setting, $R = .21$, $p = .03$, this is harassment because the woman does not welcome the behavior, $R = -.24$, $p = .01$, the non-harassing behavior—requests for a date, $R = -.23$, $p = .02$, and this is not harassment because it does not violate workplace norms, $R = -.23$, $p = .02$.[7] The model $\chi^2(1, N = 50) = 36.21$, $p < .001$, indicates that our final model fits the data very well. Overall, these four predictors were able to predict the gender of the respondent accurately 86% of the time. Using these four indicator variables our model accurately predicted 21 out of 25 males (84% accuracy) and 22 out of 25 females (88% accuracy).

In this logistic regression analysis, the exponent beta weights measure the changes in odds of the respondent being a female relative to a male when a predictor is mentioned by the respondent. All other things being equal, when a respondent mentioned that the behavior is harassment if it happens in the work setting, as compared to when a respondent did not mention this qualifier, the odds of the respondent being a woman increased by a factor of 33.62. Mentioning any of the other predictors decreased the odds of the respondent being a woman (and therefore increased the odds that the respondent was a man) by the reciprocal of the

[7] The R statistic is used to measure the partial correlation between gender and each of the predictors in our model.

Table 4. Results of logistic regression analysis: predicting the odds that a respondent is a female

Predictor variable	β	Significance	R	exp(B)	1/ exp(B)
This is harassment because it happens in the work setting*	3.52	.03	.21	33.62	.03
This is harassment because the woman does not welcome the behavior**	4.15	.01	−.24	.02	63.51
A non-harassing behavior: requests for a date**	3.10	.02	−.23	.05	22.15
This is not harassment because it does not violate workplace norms**	2.50	.02	−.23	.08	12.16

Note. *Mentioning this factor increases the probability that the respondent is a female (male = 0, female = 1).
**Mentioning this factor increases the probability that the respondent is *not* a female (male = 1, female = 0).

reported exponent beta weight. Table 4 displays the results of the logistic regression analysis.

To summarize these findings, our logistic regression analysis of the open-ended interviews indicated a distinction between men and women based upon their responses to our questions. The women qualified social–sexual behavior as harassing whenever the behavior occurred in the work setting. Men identified requests for dates as non-harassing behavior and qualified social–sexual behavior as harassing only when the woman did not welcome the behavior. Further, men qualified behavior as non-harassing if it did not violate workplace norms.

Concept Mapping Results

During the first wave of the interviews we collected several hundred statements from men and women workers in which they described the physical, psychological, social, and behavioral attributes of harassers and victims. We reduced the lists of attributes to 99 for each gender–actor combination (i.e., one set of 99 for men describing harassers, 99 for men describing victims, 99 for women describing harassers, and 99 for women describing victims). The final statements were presented using the original language of the first wave of interviewees whenever possible. In order of gender, two examples of statements that men and then women used to describe harassers were (a) sexual harassers are funny, (b) sexual harassers are exploitative, (c) sexual harassers have big egos that hide inferiority complexes, and (d) sexual harassers were raised in traditional families in which women obeyed the men. Two examples of statements that men and then women used to describe victims of harassment were (a) victims of sexual harassment are belittled so that they feel like objects, (b) victims of sexual harassment are persons who see the opportunity to ''cash in,'' (c) victims of sexual harassment use abusive language, and (d) victims of sexual harassment are willing to take the blame.

Using the concept mapping methodology (Trochim, 1989) as modified for data collected with qualitative interviews by Wiener, Wiley, Hueslman, and Hilgemann (1994), the research team submitted the male (female) respondents' card sorts (a separate analysis for harassers and for victims) to multidimensional scaling, restricting the outcome to a two-dimensional solution. We preserved the

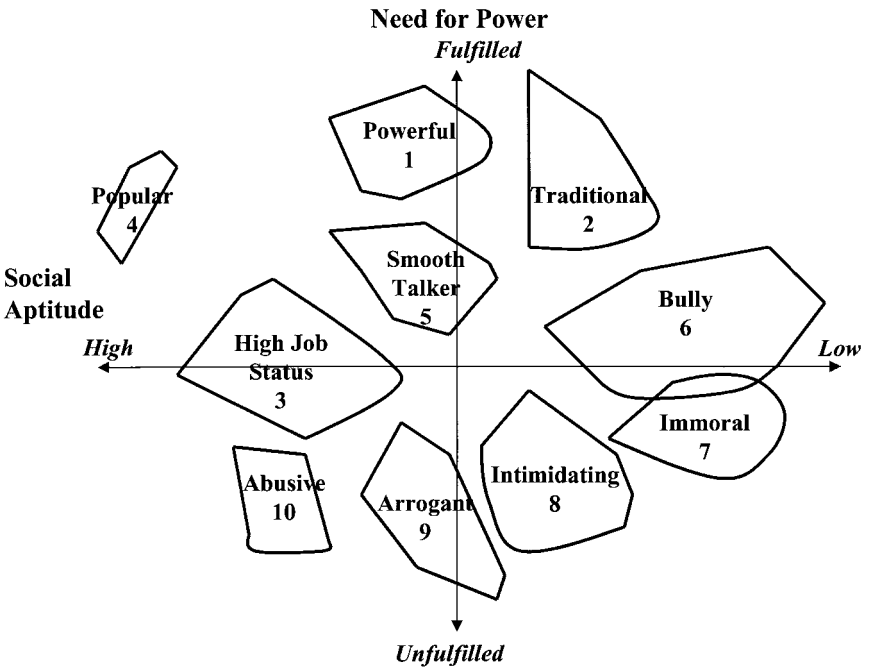

Figure 1. Female respondents: clusters of harasser attributes

coordinate values from the multidimensional scaling map associated with each of the attribute statements and performed a cluster analysis on those values using the attributes as items to be clustered. From these analyses we grouped clusters of attributes organized in two-dimensional space along orthogonal continua. One concept map was produced for female sorts of harassers, one for male sorts of harassers, one for female sorts of victims, and one for male sorts of victims.

Figure 1 presents the concept map of female respondents' sorts of harasser attributes organized along two dimensions: *need for power* (fulfilled versus unfulfilled) and *social aptitude* (high versus low). The map represents the implicit dimensions that women used to think about perpetrators of harassment. Each cluster of attributes on the map represents a shared concept that women in our sample used to describe some set of men who harass women at work. Distance between the clusters signifies the similarity between the concepts on the orthogonal dimensions. In other words, bully and immoral are similar concepts but abusive and traditional contain attributes that were rarely sorted into the same piles. Extrapolating from the concept map we find that women view harassers whose need for power is fulfilled and who are high in social aptitude as popular and powerful, while they view men with unfulfilled need for power and low in social aptitude as intimidating and immoral.

We named the orthogonal dimensions that came out of the concept maps by first labeling each of the concepts and then placing them in two-dimensional space. We named the two dimensions according to the commonalties at each end of the concept maps. We named each of the concepts or clusters by examining the constituent attributes that made up that cluster and the centrality ratings supplied

Table 5. Shared harasser attributes with centrality ratings (−4.00 to 4.00) for female respondents

	Attribute	Centrality rating
1.	Powerful	.99
2.	Traditional	.59
3.	High job status	2.32
4.	Popular	.82
5.	Smooth talker	1.02
6.	Bully	1.31
7.	Immoral	1.71
8.	Intimidating	2.28
9.	Arrogant	2.57
10.	Abusive	2.45

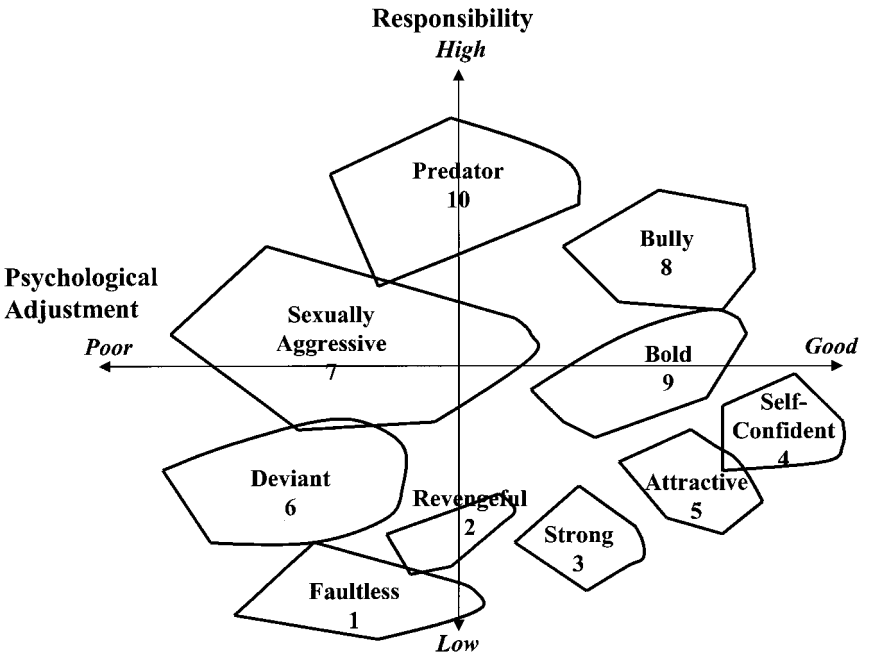

Figure 2. Male respondents: clusters of harasser attributes

by the respondents. For example, in the "arrogant" cluster harassers were described as men who abuse power, are critical of women, are aggressive, are repeat offenders because they can get away with it, and so on. Table 5 lists each of the 10 clusters and the centrality ratings that resulted from the multidimensional scaling and cluster analysis procedure for the female respondents' concept map of harassers. From the centrality ratings, one can see that the concepts (schemas) most strongly associated with harassers for women were arrogant, abusive, high job status, and intimidating.

Figure 2 displays the concept map of male respondents' sorts of harasser attributes organized along two orthogonal dimensions: *responsibility* (high versus low) and *psychological adjustment* (good versus poor). Men sorted attributes that describe predators and sexually aggressive individuals together. These concepts

Table 6. Shared harasser attributes with centrality ratings (−4.00 to 4.00) for male respondents

	Attribute	Centrality rating
1.	Faultless	−.04
2.	Revengeful	.31
3.	Strong	.31
4.	Self-confident	.95
5.	Attractive	.58
6.	Deviant	.72
7.	Sexually aggressive	1.56
8.	Bully	1.94
9.	Bold	1.21
10.	Predator	2.21

reflect men who are responsible for the misconduct and who show signs of poor psychological adjustment. On the other hand, bullies were also thought to be high in responsibility but enjoyed better psychological adjustment than predators and sexually aggressive individuals. Some of the shared concepts that the men in our sample used to describe harassers were very positive. Those who were low in responsibility for the misconduct and who enjoyed greater psychological adjustment were strong, attractive, self-confident, and bold. Women produced no similarly positive harasser concepts. Table 6 lists the centrality ratings of the 10 clusters that resulted from the multidimensional scaling and cluster analysis procedure for male respondents' clusters of harassers attributes. The concepts (schemas) most strongly associated with harassers were predator, bully, and sexually aggressive; however men also used the concepts bold, self-confident, attractive, and strong to represent some aspects of harassers. It should be noted that overall the men's centrality ratings were much lower than the women's ratings, suggesting that women had better developed mental models of harassers than did the men.

Figure 3 displays the female respondents' concept map of victim attributes organized along the dimensions of *assertiveness* (unassertive versus assertive) and *work effectiveness* (high versus low). It shows that the women viewed victims of harassment who were assertive and low in work effectiveness as irresponsible and flirtatious. They appeared to embrace a victim-blaming framework to account for these women. Similarly, sorts of attributes of unassertive women and women low in work effectiveness produced shared concepts of submissive, gullible, and insecure. Although these concepts blame the victims of harassment less than concepts such as irresponsible and flirtatious, they still explain harassment as a result of weaknesses in women workers.

Figure 4 shows the male respondents' concept of map of victim attributes organized along the dimensions of *psychological state* (active versus inactive) and *provocation* (provoking versus non-provoking). It suggests that the men in our sample sorted some attributes together in the quadrant of provoking and active, which exonerated them from the misconduct. Some women were simply seen as the type who failed to set boundaries or who actually bartered sex for job benefits. Women respondents produced no similar sorts. Men also shared concepts of women who were unassuming victims of harassment, those in the inactive,

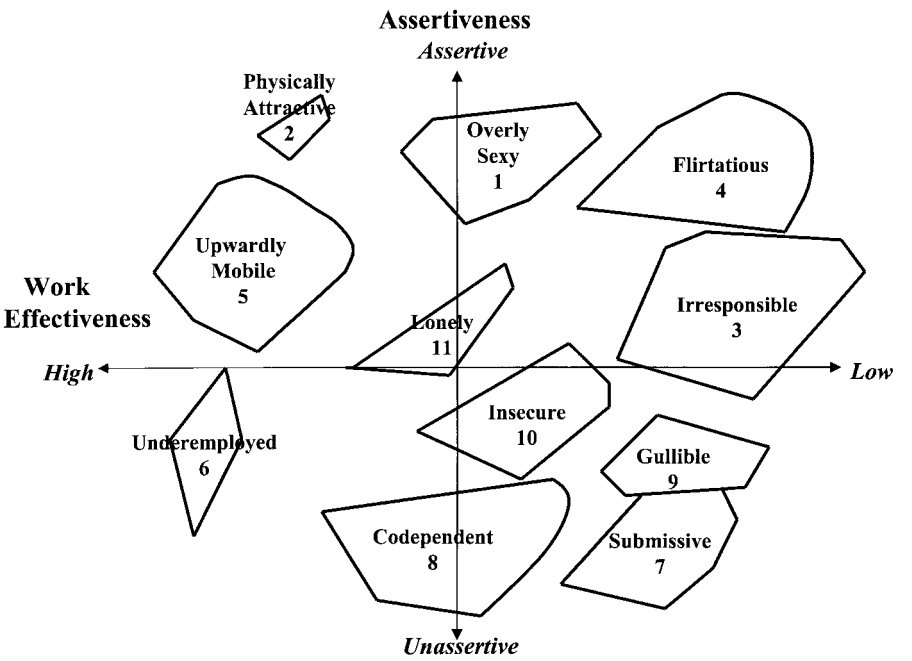

Figure 3. Female respondents: clusters of victim attributes

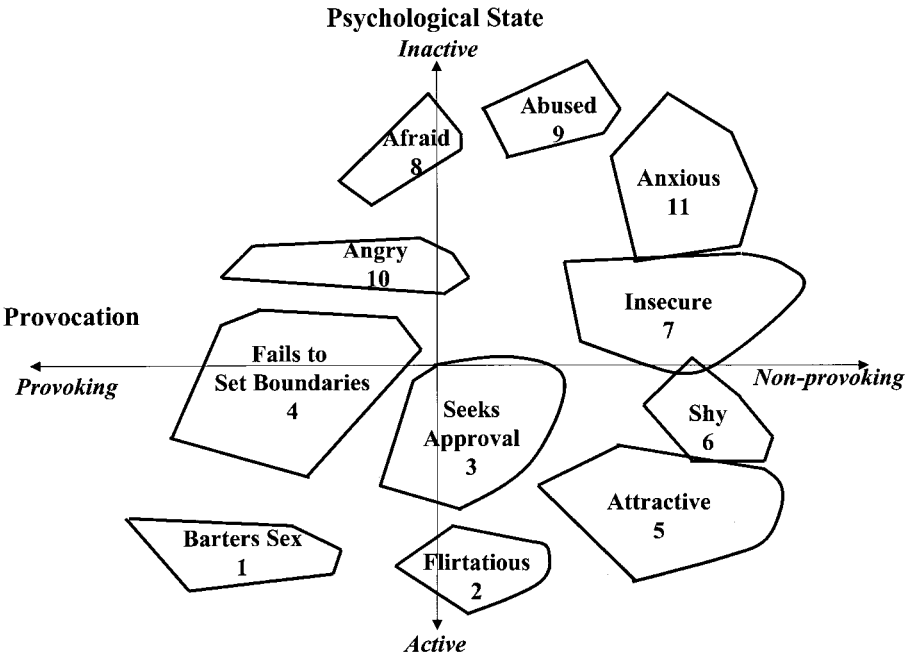

Figure 4. Male respondents: clusters of victim attributes

Table 7. Shared victim attributes with centrality ratings (−4.00 to 4.00) for female respondents

	Attribute	Centrality rating
1.	Overly sexy	.51
2.	Physically attractive	1.05
3.	Irresponsible	−.36
4.	Flirtatious	−.47
5.	Upwardly mobile	.23
6.	Underemployed	1.11
7.	Submissive	1.30
8.	Codependent	1.85
9.	Gullible	1.11
10.	Insecure	.99
11.	Lonely	.63

Table 8. Shared victim attributes with centrality ratings (−4.00 to 4.00) for male respondents

	Attribute	Centrality rating
1.	Barters sex	−.68
2.	Flirtatious	−1.12
3.	Seeks approval	.25
4.	Fails to set boundaries	.76
5.	Attractive	.15
6.	Shy	.76
7.	Insecure	.60
8.	Afraid	1.15
9.	Abused	2.23
10.	Angry	1.57
11.	Anxious	1.52

non-provoking quadrant, whom they described as abused, anxious, and insecure. Tables 7 and 8 display the centrality ratings for the 11 concepts that resulted from our female and male concept maps, respectively, of victims of sexual harassment.

In summary, our concept maps suggest that when women think about harassers they are concerned with power and social aptitude. Men seem to be concerned about the responsibility and psychological adjustment of perpetrators. When thinking about victims of harassment, women seem concerned with assertiveness and work effectiveness, while men focus on psychological state and provocation.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this field project was to learn more about the content of cognitions that might be responsible for gender differences in the evaluation of social–sexual conduct in the workplace rather than to demonstrate that those differences exist. We conducted semi-structured interviews and card sorting and rating tasks with 50 male and 50 female workers in order to answer two basic questions: (a) what are the differences in behaviors and circumstances that men and women find harassing and not harassing?, and (b) what are the cognitive structures (schemata) that men and women activate when they encounter alleged harassers and victims? We analyzed

the data with combined qualitative and quantitative technologies and found that our respondents determined whether social–sexual conduct was harassing not by the actions alone, but rather by the context and circumstances that surrounded the actions. For example, depending upon the circumstances, touching was inappropriate and harassing, appropriate and non-harassing, or ambiguous. Further, regardless of gender, our respondents relied heavily on their perceptions of a man's intentions when determining whether the social–sexual conduct was harassing. With regard to gender differences, a logistic regression analysis of the open-ended interviews indicated that we could discriminate between men and women based upon some behaviors that were not harassing and some qualifiers of harassment but not using behaviors that were mentioned as harassing. It may be that men and women can more easily agree on social–sexual conduct that is harassing than on that which is not harassing or on the conditions that push the latter into the former category. As a result, part of the reason why some scholars (Blumenthal, 1998; Frazier et al., 1995; Gutek & O'Connor, 1995) opine small or weak gender differences in the literature may be due to the fact that researchers do not regularly ask the question from both points of view. However, determining whether conduct crosses the line of abuse and hostility requires one to evaluate when social conduct falls below the cutoff as well as when it falls above the bright line.

In any case, we found that women qualified social–sexual behavior as harassing whenever the behavior occurred in the work setting. On the other hand, men mentioned requests for dates as non-harassing behavior and they qualified social–sexual behavior as harassing only when the woman did not welcome the behavior. Finally, men qualified behavior to be non-harassing if it did not violate workplace norms. In short, it was the context and intentionality of conduct that carried the biggest weight in our gender discrimination results. It may be that research findings like those reported by Castellow et al. (1990) and Egbert et al. (1992) present conduct to participants that is so egregious it is beyond the impact of the qualifying influences of context and intention. As a result these scenarios dampen gender differences because they leave no room for the qualification process to have any impact. In other words, conduct that is so outrageous as groping personal body parts in a sexual manner at work leaves little room for context or intention to alter the perceptions of workers of either gender.

Wiener and Hurt (in press; Wiener et al., 1997) postulate a model that attempts to enumerate the conditions that give rise to gender differences in perceptions of sexual harassment. The psycholegal model takes into account the nature of the legal decision that the law demands and the psychological process by which workers make those types of decisions. According to *Meritor* (1986) the evaluator ought to adopt the perspective of a worker "in a similar environment under essentially like or similar circumstances" as the complainant to determine whether unwanted sexual conduct was "sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of employment and create an abusive working environment" (*Meritor*, 1986, p. 60). Some courts apply the reasonable person standard and evaluate the conduct from the perspective of a gender neutral, reasonable person and others apply the reasonable woman standard and take the point of view of a reasonable employee of the same gender as the plaintiff (most often, a woman).

The model of Wiener and Hurt hypothesizes that individuals evaluating ambiguous conduct use themselves as reference points to determine whether

offensive behavior crosses the line and becomes sexual harassment. However, under extreme fact patterns, the question of whether or not the conduct creates a hostile environment bypasses the severity or pervasiveness test. For extremely benign actions (i.e., single instances of staring or some off-color jokes) and outrageous actions (i.e., *quid pro quo* situations and/or incidents of sexual assault) participants can not easily use themselves as reference points, that is place themselves in the role of the complainant. At the benign end of the continuum a respondent may find it difficult to imagine him or herself being offended enough to make a formal complaint, and at the severe end the respondent may find it hard to imagine such hostile action directed towards her or himself at work. The research participant who is unable to activate the self-referencing point of view may directly apply the rule that benign conduct does not reach the level of harassment and severe conduct automatically reaches the level of harassment. These evaluators are unlikely to show gender or other individual difference biases. It is in the large number of ambiguous cases that people deliberately apply a self-referencing rule to determine whether conduct is harassing. Under these conditions the types of cognitive map or schema that we describe in this paper are likely to give rise to gender differences. Further, in ambiguous cases context and intentionality factors come into play to shape final judgments of harassment.

We used multidimensional scaling and cluster analysis of card sorts to draw concept maps of the shared cognitive structures that men and women invoke to think about men who harass women and women who are victims of harassment. Our results suggest that when women think about harassers they are concerned with factors that would help them predict which men might be potential perpetrators, i.e., power and social aptitude. Men, understandably, seem to be more concerned about liability and excuses for harassment, i.e., the responsibility and psychological adjustment of perpetrators. When thinking about victims of harassment women divide them into those who should be blamed for their own dilemmas and those who are assertive and effective enough to escape unwanted attention. Men share concepts that recognize the victimization of women and see them as helpless or assign blame for the misconduct to sexually aggressive women or to women who are physically alluring.

Our current work suggests that there are basic differences in how men and women workers think about social–sexual conduct in the workplace. It also suggests that there may be differences in the concepts or schemata men and women hold regarding perpetrators and victims of harassment. If the gender differences found in our qualitative interviews are replicated in other studies using other methods and new samples, then it is doubtful whether either legal standard (reasonable person or reasonable woman) can be based simply on asking observers to take on a particular perspective. Instead evaluators will need to take into consideration the way in which men and women actually think about acceptable conduct and social–sexual misconduct at work. The resulting standard will not be based on behavior codes, but rather on the motivations, intentions, and cognitive structures that men and women use to interact in their social milieus.

Our recommendation that the legal standard of harassment be modified to take into consideration psychological factors is further complicated by the recent Supreme Court ruling in *Oncale v. Sundowner Offshore Services, Inc.* (1998) in which the justices held that ''same sex discrimination consisting of same-sex sexual

harassment is actionable under Title VII.'' This new holding announces that men and women who enact unwelcome social–sexual conduct (motivated by sexual interest or otherwise) against same sex subordinates, coworkers, or superiors may be held liable under a hostile work environment theory. Our current work suggests that an understanding of the role of gender differences in intra-gender harassment will require in depth analyses of the cognitive and affective structures that men use to evaluate the social–sexual behavior of other men and that women use to evaluate the social–sexual conduct of other women.

The results of the present study imply that a successful definition of reasonableness in both intra- and inter-gender cases should begin with an empirical investigation of the motivations, intentions, and cognitions that give rise to these judgments in people's everyday lives. The most important goal of any hostile work environment standard should be to promote a subjective consensus that workers of both genders understand and one with which both men and women feel comfortable. In order for the law to effectively fashion such a standard, it is first necessary to learn about the underlying psychological dimensions that give rise to judgments of social–sexual misconduct at work.

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