
Graduate Students' Perceptions of Contrapower Sexual Harassment

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This study compared the perceptions of 172 graduate students to traditional versus contrapower sexual harassment. Graduate students are a unique sample due to their dual role as a student and a teacher. After controlling for attitudes toward feminism and sexual harassment, participants viewed contrapower sexual harassment as less indicative of sexual harassment than traditional sexual harassment. Those with teaching experience perceived the scenarios provided as more indicative of sexual harassment than participants without teaching experience, and this effect was magnified for males. These findings suggest that people take sexual harassment less seriously in contrapower sexual harassment than in traditional sexual harassment. Furthermore, it is possible that teaching experience makes graduate students more aware of the complicated power differentials involved in classroom settings.

Keywords: *sexual harassment; unwanted sexual experiences; social power; academia; graduate students*

Sexual harassment has been examined in a variety of populations and contexts. Some studies have focused strictly on workplace sexual harassment, whereas others have examined sexual harassment in learning environments, such as postsecondary institutions. Sexual harassment within academic settings is particularly troublesome because it is expected and intended to be an environment for safely obtaining knowledge. Although the vulnerability of

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student victims is not in question, graduate students may be uniquely vulnerable because of their commitment to and length of academic programs. Additionally, they can hold a dual role as teacher (teaching assistant and/or course instructor) and student. As such, they may experience sexual harassment from a superior (traditional sexual harassment) or a subordinate (contrapower sexual harassment). The objective of this study was to examine graduate students' attitudes and perceptions toward contrapower sexual harassment and contrast them with their perceptions of traditional sexual harassment.

Graduate Students' Experiences With Sexual Harassment

Studies examining the pervasiveness of women reporting sexual harassment have yielded rates as high as 51% (Gruber, 1997). Studies focusing exclusively on graduate students' experiences with sexual harassment, although limited, have found comparable rates (McKinney, Olson, & Satterfield, 1988; Schneider, 1987). For example, Schneider reported that 60% of her female graduate student sample had experienced "everyday harassment" (p. 51) by male faculty at least once. In addition, McKinney et al. (1988) found that in a sample of male and female graduate students, 35% of female graduate students and 9% of male graduate students reported experiencing sexist comments, undue attention, verbal and physical advances, explicit sexual propositions, and sexual bribery at the hands of those in positions of power (e.g., professors). It is not, however, only those in positions of institutional power who can harass people.

Contrapower Sexual Harassment

The majority of the empirical literature within the social sciences examines the traditional form of sexual harassment where a person in a position of power sexually harasses a subordinate, which Benson (1984) refers to as "power sexual harassment" (p. 517). Recent studies have indicated that sexual harassment of women in power positions by subordinates also occurs (Grauerholz, 1989; McKinney, 1990, 1992). Specifically, Benson (1984) refers to the sexual harassment of people with more formal organizational power by people with less as "contrapower sexual harassment" (p. 517). Rospenda, Richman, and Nawyn (1998) note that contrapower sexual harassment reinforces "gender status by negating organizational status for women targets" (p. 56).

One of the first studies to specifically examine contrapower sexual harassment found that sexist comments, primarily coming from male students, were the most common form of harassment experienced by female professors (Grauerholz, 1989). Prevalence rates for contrapower sexual harassment have been shown to be 22% when professors use their own definitions and as high as 37% when provided with a list of key behaviors (McKinney, 1990). These behaviors include sexist comments, undue attention, verbal sexual advances, body language, invitation, physical advances, explicit sexual propositions, and sexual bribery.

Examinations of contrapower sexual harassment from the perspective of the student perpetrator have yielded similar results (DeSouza & Fansler, 2003; Matchen & DeSouza, 2000; McKinney & Crittendon, 1992). Student self-reports revealed that faculty members were subject to various behaviors qualifying as sexual harassment (McKinney & Crittendon, 1992). However, none of these students labeled their behavior as "sexually harassing," even though 18% of the sample reported carrying out at least one of the aforementioned behaviors that comprise sexual harassment. Other studies (DeSouza & Fansler, 2003; Matchen & DeSouza, 2000) have found that between 32% and 63% of students reported employing a potentially sexually harassing behavior toward faculty at least once, and at least half of the faculty surveyed reported experiencing sexual harassment by students. These studies suggest that contrapower sexual harassment is a concern in academia. Although traditional sexual harassment has been studied at length, and the effects of contrapower sexual harassment have been documented with respect to faculty members, graduate students' experiences with contrapower sexual harassment have been relatively unexplored.

Victims of sexual harassment across settings experience such effects as anxiety, depression, anger, uncontrolled crying, fatigue, humiliation, and alienation, as well as disruptions in their careers and relationships with coworkers (Gutek & Koss, 1993). For student victims, once they have been sexually harassed by faculty, future interactions with that person can be extremely stressful. Graduate students may have few options other than to stay in a sexually harassing scholastic environment, or they may feel that they have to rethink their career path or role in academia (Schneider, 1987). Similar effects are seen with contrapower sexual harassment victims. Researchers note that contrapower sexual harassment can change a professor's attitudes toward students, teaching, and the class overall, and instill doubts and insecurities, leading to a general distrust and lack of connection with students (Benson, 1984; Schneider, 1987).

Perceptions of Sexual Harassment

Wayne (2000) used two theoretical models of sexual harassment to explain perceptions of contrapower and traditional forms of sexual harassment. First, Wayne presented undergraduate psychology students with a hostile work environment mock court case. Participants were asked to provide their verdicts in the case, rate how unwelcome the harasser's behavior was, and how much responsibility the organization had in the case. She suggested that if people use an organizational model of sexual harassment, it would explain why perpetrators of contrapower scenarios might be rated more favorably than harassers of a traditional scenario. The organizational model (as summarized by Tangri, Burt, & Johnson, 1982) posits that sexual harassment occurs as a result of power hierarchies, where harassers are in authoritative or power positions (coincidentally are usually male) and the victims are in positions of structural vulnerability.

Rosch and colleagues' (Rosch, Mervis, Gray, Johnson, & Boyes-Braem, 1976) work on categorization also suggests that the organizational model of sexual harassment would be used by most people as it would be the "prototype" of harassing behavior. They argue that people use prototypes of objects or concepts that best represent a category's most typical features to help them categorize or think about events in a cognitively efficient manner. The organizational model of harassment may immediately come to mind when sexually inappropriate behavior is witnessed or described. A layperson using the organizational model to organize his or her beliefs might believe that a perpetrator in a contrapower situation is incapable of manipulating a "superior" because the person with organizational power should not be vulnerable and should be empowered to resist. They may assume that a person in a power position is more dominant, can exert more power, and generally has more control than their subordinate who is in a lesser power position. In addition, they may (rightly in many cases) think of people in positions of structural vulnerability as more susceptible to harassment, threats, and coercion. If this schema or prototype is activated when people are presented with the concept of sexual harassment, they may be more likely to assume that a person in a power position, regardless of whether they are a victim or perpetrator of sexual harassment, has more responsibility in a sexual harassment situation than a subordinate.

In contrast, the role-discrepant model of sexual harassment (Pryor, 1985; Wayne, 2000) explains why perpetrators of contrapower sexual harassment might be rated less favorably than traditional sexual harassment perpetrators. According to this theory, the role deviation necessary for a subordinate

to successfully harass an individual with more power is considerable and would not be viewed favorably (Pryor, 1985; Wayne, 2000). Wayne's study has been the only one to find support for this model when examining contrapower sexual harassment. She found that contrapower sexual harassers were perceived as more guilty than traditional sexual harassers. Wayne, however, used an undergraduate student sample who, when compared to graduate students, typically have less education and work experience.

Hypotheses

Based on the existing literature, it was expected that participants would be most familiar with the organizational theory of sexual harassment and would therefore view the traditional scenarios as more indicative of sexual harassment and attribute more responsibility to the harasser and less to the victim than in the contrapower sexual harassment conditions.

As Pryor (1985) suggests, perspective-taking or having empathy for someone involved may affect attributions that are made by participants in hypothetical scenarios. Pryor and Day (1988) asked participants to assume the perspective of either the perpetrator (male) or victim (female) when reading hypothetical sexual harassment scenarios. They found that the behaviors were perceived as less sexually harassing when participants took the viewpoint of the perpetrator. Because perspective appears to affect perceptions, it was expected that participants would be more likely to perceive sexual harassment in scenarios in which the graduate student is a victim. Graduate students' experience as students may make them more aware of the vulnerability of student victims in traditional sexual harassment situations. It was also anticipated that there would be an interaction between the role of the graduate student (victim vs. perpetrator) and a participant's previous teaching experience. Considering that graduate students have the unique ability to hold both roles (student and instructor) simultaneously, their perspectives on these matters could be pertinent. Teaching experience may therefore give participants a glimpse into the potential vulnerability of the teacher role.

Research has shown that attitudes are also related to perceptions of sexual harassment. Pryor (1985) suggests that individuals' attitudes toward feminism may affect their perceptions of sexual harassment, because feminists would be "more likely to have sexual harassment available as a cognitive label for social-sexual behaviours" (p. 278). This research has also found that men have less feminist attitudes than women. In addition, previous research has indicated that attitudes toward sexual harassment and perceptions of sexual harassment are negatively correlated (McCabe &

Hardman, 2005). Those with less tolerant attitudes toward sexual harassment generally perceive the sexual harassment in vignettes more than those with more accepting attitudes. Furthermore, men typically have more tolerant attitudes of sexual harassment compared to women (McCabe & Hardman, 2005). Given that attitudes toward feminism and sexual harassment have been found to predict judgments and perceptions of sexual harassment, attitudes toward feminism and sexual harassment were assessed and controlled in all other analyses.

Method

Participants

The sample consisted of 172 graduate students (76 males and 95 females from various faculties) at a medium-sized university in Southern Ontario. It should be noted, however, that 1 participant did not indicate his or her gender, and 3 participants did not identify their age. The total number of participants represented approximately 29% of the 595 surveys distributed to full-time graduate students. Participants' ages ranged from 22 to 50 ($M = 28.22$, $SD = 5.61$). The majority of the participants were Caucasian (62%), with a sizable minority of participants of an Asian or other visible minority ethnicity (33%). Participants received a ballot for a \$100 draw for their participation.

Materials

Experimental stimuli. Four hypothetical sexual harassment scenarios were adapted from McKinney (1992). The scenario describes a sexual harassment situation between a student and a professor. In each scenario, the portrayed victim was female and the perpetrator was male. This was done to match the most common sexual harassment situations reported and to avoid complicating the design where an overly large sample would be needed to detect effects. The independent variable, type of harassment, was manipulated by having the harassment either come from an instructor toward a student (traditional harassment situation in which an undergraduate student is sexually harassed by a graduate student/instructor or a graduate student is sexually harassed by a faculty member) or by having the harassment come from a student toward an instructor (contrapower sexual harassment, in which a graduate student/instructor is sexually harassed by

an undergraduate student or a faculty member is sexually harassed by a graduate student). The independent variable of role of graduate student was manipulated by describing the graduate student as either the perpetrator (graduate student is harassing either an undergraduate student or a faculty member) or victim (a graduate student/instructor is sexually harassed by either an undergraduate student or a faculty member). The vignette of a professor being harassed by a graduate student is provided here.

Professor Jones is an associate professor. She teaches at a medium-sized public institution in Ontario. She teaches graduate courses in a large department on campus. Last semester, Professor Jones had a male student in one of her classes. This student often came to see Professor Jones to discuss aspects related to the class. One day during office hours, this student sat in a rather seductive position close to the professor, and made comments about how attractive Professor Jones was.

Perceptions of sexual harassment and responsibility. Three questions developed by McKinney (1992) were adapted for this study. The first question assessed whether in the participant's opinion the incident constituted sexual harassment, using a 7-point response scale ranging from 1 (*definitely is*) to 7 (*definitely is not*). Lower scores demonstrate that participants believed the scenario to be more indicative of sexual harassment. Participants also assessed responsibility of both the perpetrator and victim, using a 7-point response scale ranging from 1 (*not at all responsible*) to 7 (*completely responsible*). Higher scores represent more responsibility for the perpetrator or the victim.

Attitudes toward feminism. Attitudes toward feminism were assessed by Fassinger's (1994) Attitudes toward Feminism and the Women's Movement (FWM) scale. The FWM scale is a 10-item questionnaire using a 5-point Likert response scale. Internal consistency is high with a Cronbach's alpha equal to .89 (Fassinger, 1994). Correlations between the FWM scale and other relevant instruments indicate good construct validity (Fassinger, 1994). Higher scores indicate more support for the women's movement.

Sexual Harassment Attitude Scale (SHAS). Attitudes toward sexual harassment were assessed by using Mazer and Percival's (1989) attitude index. This measure has been used extensively in previous research, and the SHAS is an extension of the 10-item Tolerance for Sexual Harassment Inventory (TSHI), comparing satisfactorily with the TSHI. Internal consistency is good with a

Cronbach's alpha of .84 (Mazer & Percival, 1989). The questionnaire has 19 items assessing beliefs and tolerance of sexual harassment in academia, and the level of agreement with feminist conceptions of harassment, using a 5-point Likert response scale. Higher scores indicate more tolerance of sexual harassment.

Demographic questions. Participants were asked several demographic and background questions, including whether the participant had any teaching experience. Teaching experience was defined as whether they had any contact with students by lecturing or teaching a tutorial. Positions restricted to marking were not considered teaching experience in this context. Along with the scales mentioned above, additional measures (e.g., sexual harassment experience) were included in the questionnaire package, but are not discussed in this article.

Procedure

Questionnaire packages were randomly distributed to 595 graduate student mailboxes. A reminder e-mail was sent 2 weeks later. Each package contained the letter of information describing the study, identifying the researchers involved, and explaining that returning the completed survey constituted consent. There were two envelopes in the questionnaire package: one large return envelope for returning the completed questionnaire, and the other a small envelope with a ballot inside for participants to fill out with their name and contact information and return to be entered into the \$100 draw.

Results

Effect of Type of Harassment, Role, Gender, and Teaching Experience Beyond the Effects of Attitudes

Three analyses of covariance (ANCOVAs) were conducted to determine if gender, teaching experience (yes/no), type of harassment in scenario (traditional/contrapower), and role of graduate student in scenario (victim/perpetrator) had an impact on the dependent variables of perpetrator responsibility ratings, victim responsibility ratings, and the degree to which the incident constituted sexual harassment. Because attitudes (FWM and SHAS) have previously been found to affect perceptions of sexual harassment, we were interested in examining the effects of the manipulated aforementioned

independent variables beyond the effects we know exist due to attitudes. FWM and SHAS scores were found to be significantly correlated with the dependent variables; therefore, these measures were used as covariates in all ANCOVAs. Assumptions of normality of sampling distributions, linearity, and reliability of covariates were satisfactory.

Perceptions of sexual harassment. The first 2 (gender) \times 2 (teaching experience) \times 2 (type of harassment) \times 2 (role of graduate student) ANCOVA with the degree to which the incident constituted sexual harassment revealed a main effect of type of harassment (see Table 1). Participants rated traditional sexual harassment (SH) scenarios ($M = 2.55$, $SD = 1.67$) as more indicative of SH than contrapower SH scenarios ($M = 3.40$, $SD = 1.60$). There was also a main effect of teaching experience, such that participants without teaching experience ($M = 3.13$, $SD = 1.62$) rated scenarios as less indicative of sexual harassment than participants with teaching experience ($M = 2.87$, $SD = 1.72$). Although a two-way interaction of role and teaching experience was found, a closer look reveals that a three-way interaction of role, teaching experience, and gender exists (see Figure 1). Five pairwise comparisons with an adjusted alpha coefficient of .01 revealed one simple effect. There was a significant difference between male participants with and without teaching experience in the condition where the graduate student was the victim. In the graduate student victim condition, male participants without teaching experience rated the scenario as less indicative of SH ($M = 4.26$, $SD = 1.65$) than male participants with teaching experience ($M = 2.34$, $SD = 1.63$). Predictably, the SHAS covariate was significantly related to the dependent variable, $F(1, 169) = 15.22$, $p < .001$, $r = .29$, indicating that a higher tolerance of sexual harassment is related to participants rating the scenario as less indicative of sexual harassment. However, the FWM covariate was not significantly related to the dependent variable, $F(1, 169) = .13$, $p > .05$, $r = .03$ (see Table 1).

Perpetrator and victim responsibility. Although one would think that responsibility of the perpetrator ratings and responsibility of the victim ratings should be perfectly inversely related, participants' responses revealed that this was not always the case. Therefore, even though the dependent variables of perpetrator responsibility ratings and victim responsibility ratings were correlated, two separate ANCOVAs were performed. A number of the results from the two analyses are similar and so will be presented first, followed by unique effects.

Table 1
Analysis of Covariance for the Degree to Which the
Incident Constitutes Sexual Harassment (SH)

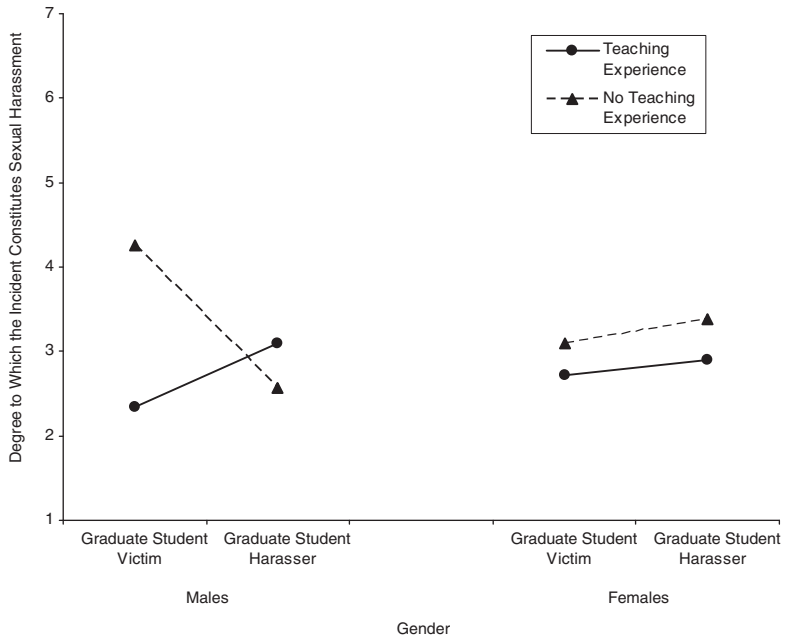
Source	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	ω^2	<i>p</i>
Type of SH	1	11.55***	.06	.001
Teaching experience	1	4.32*	.02	.039
Gender	1	.02	.00	.904
Role	1	.20	.00	.652
Gender \times Type of SH	1	2.75	.01	.099
Gender \times Teaching Experience	1	.24	.00	.628
Gender \times Role	1	1.65	.00	.201
Type of SH \times Teaching Experience	1	.39	.00	.536
Type of SH \times Role	1	.02	.00	.876
Teaching Experience \times Role	1	4.62*	.02	.033
Gender \times Type of SH \times Teaching Experience	1	.50	.00	.482
Gender \times Type of SH \times Role	1	.48	.00	.490
Type of SH \times Teaching Experience \times Role	1	.20	.00	.655
Gender \times Teaching Experience \times Role	1	5.66*	.03	.019
Gender \times Type of SH \times Teaching Experience \times Role	1	1.53	.00	.218
SHAS	1	15.22***	.08	.000
FWM	1	.13	.00	.719
Subjects within group error	150	(2.25)		

Note: SHAS = Sexual Harassment Attitude Scale; FWM = Feminism and the Women's Movement. Values enclosed in parentheses represent mean square error.

* $p < .05$. *** $p < .001$.

The second and third ANCOVAs using the same independent variables (gender, teaching experience, type of harassment, and role of graduate student) and covariates (SHAS and FWM) were conducted with the dependent variables of ratings of perpetrator responsibility and ratings of victim responsibility, respectively. For both analyses (see Tables 2 and 3 respectively), there was a main effect of type of harassment. Analyses indicated that participants assigned more blame to the perpetrator in traditional SH scenarios ($M = 6.34$, $SD = 4.02$) than in contrapower SH scenarios ($M = 5.96$, $SD = .96$). Conversely, less responsibility was apportioned to the victim in traditional SH scenarios ($M = 1.79$, $SD = 1.26$) as compared to contrapower SH scenarios ($M = 2.27$, $SD = 1.26$). Both analyses also revealed a significant three-way interaction of role, teaching experience, and gender. When examining the ANCOVA using perpetrator responsibility as the dependent variable, four pairwise comparisons using a corrected critical value of

Figure 1
The Interactive Effect of Gender, Role of Graduate Student, and Teaching Experience on Perceptions of Sexual Harassment



Note: Lower scores indicate higher perception that the situation constitutes sexual harassment.

.0125 revealed three simple effects. Male participants (who had no teaching experience) who read the graduate student victim scenario exhibited different responses than three other groups of participants. For scenarios in which the victim was a graduate student (with either a harassing professor or undergraduate student), male participants without teaching experience ($M = 4.92$, $SD = 1.85$) designated less responsibility to the perpetrator as compared to those males with prior teaching experience ($M = 6.40$, $SD = 1.06$) and females without teaching experience ($M = 6.49$, $SD = .60$). In addition, males reporting no teaching experience who were assigned to the graduate student victim condition ($M = 4.92$, $SD = 1.85$) found the perpetrator to be less accountable than males assigned to the graduate student harasser condition ($M = 6.28$, $SD = .97$). Similarly, in the analysis of responsibility ratings assigned to the victim, there was (via simple

Table 2
Analysis of Covariance for Responsibility of Perpetrator Ratings

Source	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	ω^2	<i>p</i>
Type of SH	1	5.27*	.02	.023
Teaching experience	1	6.20*	.03	.014
Gender	1	2.39	.01	.124
Role	1	2.83	.01	.094
Gender \times Teaching Experience	1	5.64*	.03	.019
Gender \times Role	1	6.24*	.03	.014
Teaching Experience \times Role	1	1.60	.00	.207
Gender \times Type of SH	1	2.61	.01	.108
Teaching Experience \times Type of SH	1	1.47	.00	.223
Role \times Type of SH	1	.00	.01	.989
Role \times Gender \times Teaching Experience	1	8.01**	.04	.005
Gender \times Teaching Experience \times Type of SH	1	3.41	.01	.067
Gender \times Role \times Type of SH	1	.14	.01	.710
Teaching Experience \times Role \times Type of SH	1	.20	.00	.654
Gender \times Teaching Experience \times Role \times Type of SH	1	.35	.00	.554
SHAS	1	3.52	.01	.063
FWM	1	2.43	.01	.121
Subjects within group error	149	(.83)		

Note: SH = sexual harassment; SHAS = Sexual Harassment Attitude Scale; FWM = Feminism and the Women's Movement. Values enclosed in parentheses represent mean square error.

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

effects) a significant difference between male participants with teaching experience and those without teaching experience. Specifically, when scenarios portrayed the graduate student as the victim, males without teaching experience ($M = 2.98$, $SD = 1.85$) found the victim to be more accountable than males who had teaching experience ($M = 1.39$, $SD = 1.85$).

Perpetrator responsibility. The analysis with perpetrator responsibility ratings as the dependent variable also demonstrated a main effect of teaching experience (see Table 2). Participants without teaching experience assigned less responsibility to the perpetrator ($M = 5.94$, $SD = 1.19$) than participants with prior teaching backgrounds ($M = 6.36$, $SD = .89$). Although a two-way interaction of teaching experience and gender was discovered, it will not be discussed extensively because the three-way interaction of role, teaching experience, and gender subsumes it and has already been discussed. In short, male participants without teaching experience ($M = 5.60$, $SD = 1.63$) assigned less responsibility to the perpetrator than male

Table 3
Analysis of Covariance for Responsibility of Victim Ratings

Source	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	ω^2	<i>p</i>
Type of SH	1	5.83*	.03	.017
Teaching experience	1	2.60	.01	.109
Gender	1	.29	.00	.589
Role	1	.88	.00	.349
Gender \times Teaching Experience	1	2.39	.01	.124
Gender \times Role	1	1.54	.00	.217
Teaching Experience \times Role	1	2.46	.01	.119
Gender \times Type of SH	1	2.23	.01	.138
Teaching Experience \times Type of SH	1	1.48	.00	.226
Role \times Type of SH	1	.00	.01	.994
Type of SH \times Gender \times Teaching Experience	1	5.41*	.03	.021
Role \times Gender \times Teaching Experience	1	10.25**	.05	.002
Gender \times Role \times Type of SH	1	.56	.00	.458
Teaching Experience \times Role \times Type of SH	1	.27	.00	.604
Gender \times Teaching Experience \times Role \times Type of SH	1	3.36	.02	.069
SHAS	1	8.34**	.04	.004
FWM	1	8.35**	.04	.004
Subjects within group error	149	(1.25)		

Note: SH = sexual harassment; SHAS = Sexual Harassment Attitude Scale; FWM = Feminism and the Women's Movement. Values enclosed in parentheses represent mean square error.

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

participants with teaching experience ($M = 6.40$, $SD = .94$) and female participants with teaching experience ($M = 6.31$, $SD = .85$). In addition, a two-way interaction involving gender and role of the graduate student was also found, revealing that male participants who read the graduate student victim scenario assigned less responsibility to the perpetrator ($M = 5.66$, $SD = 1.45$) compared to males presented with the graduate student harasser scenario ($M = 6.35$, $SD = .87$) and females presented with the graduate student victim scenario ($M = 6.37$, $SD = .81$). Both the FWM and SHAS covariates were not significantly related to the dependent variable, $F(1, 149) = 3.52$, $p > .05$, $r = .12$, and $F(1, 149) = 2.43$, $p > .05$, $r = .14$, respectively (see Table 2).

Victim responsibility. For the analysis of victim responsibility ratings, two 3-way interactions were found (see Table 3). The interaction of role, gender, and teaching experience was previously discussed. The interaction between the type of SH, gender, and role was also significant. Simple effects using a corrected alpha of .0125 revealed that when the data for

males without teaching experience were examined, those in the contrapower SH condition ($M = 3.03$, $SD = 1.90$) assigned more responsibility to the victim than individuals placed in the traditional SH condition ($M = 1.55$, $SD = 1.33$). In addition, when males were presented with the contrapower SH scenarios, those without teaching experience typically viewed the victim as more responsible ($M = 3.03$, $SD = 1.90$) compared to males with teaching experience ($M = 1.68$, $SD = 1.32$). The FWM and SHAS covariates were significantly related to the dependent variable, $F(1, 149) = 8.34$, $p < .01$, $r = .22$, and $F(1, 149) = 8.35$, $p < .01$, $r = .22$, respectively (see Table 3). This suggests that less supportive attitudes toward feminism along with a higher tolerance of sexual harassment were related to participants assigning more responsibility to the victim.

Post Hoc Analysis of Gender Differences

No gender differences were found for ratings of the scenarios. However, post hoc analyses of attitudes revealed that gender differences were present for attitudes toward both feminism and sexual harassment and therefore are masked when these attitudes are controlled. Using a Bonferroni correction ($p = .0125$) for multiple tests, males had more tolerant attitudes toward sexual harassment ($M = 55.00$, $SD = 10.01$) than females ($M = 43.34$, $SD = 10.19$) for the SHAS scores, $t(170) = 7.47$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.15$. Similar gender differences were found for Attitudes Toward Feminism and the Women's Movement scale scores with women ($M = 36.61$, $SD = 5.79$) having more supportive attitudes toward feminism than men ($M = 31.67$, $SD = 5.63$), $t(169) = -5.61$, $p < .001$.

Discussion

The primary purpose of this study was to examine graduate students' perceptions of sexual harassment based on the type of sexual harassment depicted in the hypothetical scenarios. Our results indicated that contrapower sexual harassment was perceived less as sexual harassment than traditional sexual harassment. We expected that participants would use the organizational model as a prototype to make their decisions about whether a situation was sexual harassment and this hypothesis was upheld by our findings. The organizational model posits that sexual harassment is a result of those in positions of power harassing those in positions of vulnerability. This is certainly the most common form of sexual harassment. However, perhaps due to the strength of this prototype in framing views of sexual harassment, it appears that

individuals are less able to recognize sexual harassment in contrapower scenarios that contradict their own schemas of sexual harassment. Even when presented with clear-cut contrapower harassment scenarios, participants operating from the organizational model may believe these events to be less serious due to their belief that the victim is or should be empowered to confront harassment. Our findings contradict the conclusions of Wayne (2000), whose results supported the use of the role-discrepant model. A possible explanation for this contradiction may be that Wayne's sample (undergraduate students) did not hold dual roles and had less education and work experience, and thus had a less concrete understanding of power dynamics than the current sample of graduate students. Furthermore, she used both male and female perpetrators (with an opposite-sex harassment vignette), whereas the current study only focused on the sexual harassment of female victims by male perpetrators. It may be that individuals would be more prone to use a version of the role-discrepant model in these gender-role discrepant situations.

We had also anticipated that participants' perceptions would be significantly affected by the role given to the graduate student in the scenario and his or her teaching experience or lack thereof. This hypothesis only received partial support. Whether the graduate student in the scenario was a victim or perpetrator did not have an overall (main) effect on ratings of the situation. However, the role of the graduate student did interact with gender and teaching experience. In particular, males presented with the graduate student victim (their female peer as victim) and who did not have prior teaching experience stood out the most from all other groups across all analyses. Men without teaching experience not only rated these situations as less indicative of sexual harassment than all other groups of participants, but were the only group who did not recognize the behaviors as sexual harassment at all (crossing the midpoint of the scale, 3.5). They also assigned less responsibility to the perpetrators and held victims more responsible than other participants.

We speculate that men lacking teaching experience are somehow less cognizant of the complex power dynamics involved with sexual harassment situations. They appear to be sensitive to the vulnerability of a female undergraduate being harassed by a male graduate student or a female professor being harassed by a male graduate student. However, they are particularly blind to the precarious position of their female graduate student colleagues who are at risk from harassment from their male professors and their male undergraduate students. An acknowledgement of sociocultural realities suggests that because men are accustomed to living in a society with a gender hierarchy that benefits them, they are, not surprisingly, less aware of existing power differentials related to gender. In contrast, women, regardless of their teaching experience, are more vulnerable and find themselves in

subordinate positions because of the gender hierarchy, making them understandably more sensitive to power differentials. Men with teaching experience appear to become more aware of power perhaps from their dual role of being in a power position (teacher) and a subordinate position (student). In support of this speculation, several studies (e.g., Kelchtermans, 1996) have used a biographical perspective for teachers and found that when they reflected on their own personal experiences within the school setting, internal vulnerabilities (e.g., doubting the quality of their work) were often identified. This lends support to the idea that men may be reflecting on different experiences of power. It may be possible to draw parallels to graduate assistants to explain the lack of empathy with female graduate student victims exhibited by male graduate students without teaching experience.

Given that men and women vary in their perspectives in large part due to their differential experiences with power in society, it was surprising that there was no main effect of gender in the ratings of the scenarios. These results also contradict previous research reporting gender differences in perceptions of sexual harassment (Rotundo, Nyugen, & Sackett, 2001). However, if the attitudinal variables which had been controlled for in the main analyses are removed and the analyses rerun, gender differences were present in these post hoc analyses. Therefore the absence of a gender effect in the main analyses is the result of the scenarios being examined above and beyond attitudes. An examination of attitudes shows that women had less tolerant views of sexual harassment and more supportive views of feminism than men. Gender differences in attitudes are meaningful because they support the view that men and women have contrasting experiences in our society, which make women more aware of and more sensitive to situations that are unequal.

Limitations

Some limitations of the study must be considered. In scenario studies, the manipulation of variables and descriptions in scenarios inevitably flatten out complexities and differences that exist in the real situations. For example, and perhaps most notably, in the contrapower and traditional sexual harassment situations, we manipulated the role of the perpetrator by substituting a tenured professor or a graduate student instructor. Although both are in a power position relative to their students, we recognize that these roles are not symmetrical. A graduate student has only time-limited power over an undergraduate student who is unlikely to take a second course from them or to need a letter of reference, and so forth. This is very different from the power

that most professors have over graduate students in their programs where the relationship is by necessity much longer term and requires ongoing contact once the course is over, and a higher need for reference letters for scholarships and jobs, and so forth. As such, the results of this study may alternatively under- or overestimate the power dynamics of most contrapower sexual harassment and should be considered in this context. It may be helpful in future studies to examine how students think differently of the general roles of undergraduate students, graduate students, and faculty members and to perhaps weight their judgments of sexual harassment based on the level of power perceived to be held by the person in the situation.

Another limitation of the study is that all participants were from one particular academic setting. Contrapower sexual harassment has not been widely studied; consequently, it is not known whether our findings would apply across various work settings. Future research should attempt to answer this question by replicating this research in nonacademic settings.

Our response rate of 29% is not atypical for mail-out surveys (McKinney, 1990); however, a lower response rate can result in a more biased sample. The direction of the bias is hard to assess. We conducted a post hoc comparison of the representativeness of our sample in terms of departments/faculties represented and gender, and did find statistical differences suggesting that nonresponse was perhaps not completely randomly distributed across disciplines or gender. For the most part, our sample was representative of most faculties/departments. However, it should be noted that the psychology department was overrepresented, whereas there was a noticeable underrepresentation from the Faculty of Business and Department of Computer Science. In addition, females more than males responded to the survey. Previous research suggests that there may typically be a lower response rate from male participants compared to female participants when a mail-out survey is used (Bradburn, 1992) or, more generally, when participant volunteering is required (Senn, Desmarais, Verberg, & Wood, 2000). Research on more sensitive topics would also suggest that subject selection biases might be in the direction of greater sexual harassment experience among responders than nonresponders (Saunders, Fisher, Hewitt, & Clayton, 1985). With the data we obtained on sexual harassment experiences of our participants (but that is not reported here), we are confident that our sample is not divergent from other samples reported in the literature. However, a higher response rate would have increased statistical power and generalizability. Future research should focus on improving the generalizability of these results by including larger and more diverse samples.

Conclusions

The finding that contrapower sexual harassment was seen as less characteristic of sexual harassment than traditional sexual harassment has several important implications. Contrapower sexual harassment of women by men has a strong negative impact on women's mental and physical health, similar to the effects of other types of sexual harassment but with additional consequences (Benson, 1984; Schneider, 1987). More research and education is needed to educate people with regard to the recognition, prevention, and possible elimination of contrapower sexual harassment. Although participants identified contrapower situations as less fitting of the label of sexual harassment than traditional situations, it is important to note that both scenarios were identified as sexual harassment. This finding is significant considering that 20 or 30 years ago this may have not been the case. With further study, it may be possible to similarly expand awareness of contrapower sexual harassment and increase attempts to prevent it.

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