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# When Men Are Sexually Harassed: A Foundation for Studying Men's Experiences as Targets of Sexual Harassment

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## **When Men Are Sexually Harassed: A Foundation for Studying Men's Experiences as Targets of Sexual Harassment**

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### **Abstract**

While much scholarly attention has been given to sexual harassment, scholarship about men's experiences as targets of sexual harassment has been limited. This essay is a review of the literature about men's experiences of sexual harassment; it explores the operational definitions and sources of sexual harassment, the inadequacy of the instruments used to study sexual harassment, and the implications of this research for organizations and the field of communication studies. It also examines sexual harassment at the intersections of gender and sexual orientation, finding that there are apparent differences in incidences that feature diversity in these areas. This review concludes that while psychologists are conducting the majority of sexual harassment research, organizational communication scholars need to do more research about sexual harassment, especially men's experiences as targets of sexual harassment.

*Keywords: organizational communication, sexual harassment, men, gender, workplace, research methods*

### **Introduction**

In 1994, a television commercial<sup>1</sup> aired in the United States that encouraged people to go to their local libraries to read about sexual harassment. The commercial featured a man in an ostensibly supervisory role condescendingly encouraging a woman in his department to dress more provocatively if she hoped to advance in her job. She responds by declaring his behavior is sexual harassment, and then she says, "And I don't have to take it." While this commercial represents only one attempt to explain sexual harassment to an American audience, it depicted sexual harassment as people usually imagine it and as it most often occurs. Put another way, the commercial portrayed sexual harassment through a narrow lens that positioned higher-status men (e.g., supervisors, managers, bosses) as aggressors and lower-status women (e.g., employees, subordinates) as targets<sup>2</sup> of their physical or verbal abuse (Fitzgerald et al., 1988; Gutek, 1985; Martindale, 1990).

The development of sexual harassment as a recognized legal and psychological phenomenon, along with its social construction that typically features a male-to-female power structure (Foss, Foss, & Griffin, 2006), offers an important lens to understanding the research about men's experiences as targets of sexual harassment. Legal recognition of sexual harassment as a destructive phenomenon arose in the United States with the Civil Rights Act of 1964, signaling the onset of more comprehensive understandings of what had, arguably, always been taking place. Although women's studies scholarship is often credited with

coining *sexual harassment* as a term to describe what women in the workplace had been facing for decades, it was the Clarence Thomas-Anita Hill controversy<sup>3</sup> of the early 1990s that launched sexual harassment into national awareness (Baker, 2004; Black & Allen, 2001; Lawrence, 1996; Violanti, 1996).

Fitzgerald, Collinsworth, and Harned (2001) noted sexual harassment is legally defined as “uninvited sex-related behavior [...] that is unwanted by and offensive to its target” (p. 991). Yet, defining what constitutes sexual harassment (especially vis-à-vis gendered individuals) is a matter of debate in academic research, a point we address later in this essay. *Sexual harassment* herein refers both to quid-pro-quo sexual harassment, meaning “explicit demands of sexual favors in exchange for work/academic advancement,” and hostile workplace sexual harassment, which describes behaviors that contribute to a work environment that is unsafe and unproductive both for the explicit target of harassment and for others in the workplace (Pina, Gannon, & Saunders, 2009, p. 127; see also Appen & Kleiner, 2001; Roiphe, 1993; Sandler & Shoop, 1997; Wise & Stanley, 1987). Scholars generally agree that those two definitions fairly represent the types of sexual harassment, and that quid-pro-quo harassment is easily detectable. Which behaviors contribute to a hostile work environment and which are benign is a matter of perspective and has received much attention in the literature reviewed in this essay (Berdahl, Magley, & Waldo, 1996; Donovan & Drasgow, 1999).

Scholars have researched the issue of men’s experiences as targets of sexual harassment for the last two decades, but extended research needs to be conducted to further this area of scholarship, especially within the communication discipline (Vaux, 1993). Taking into consideration the wealth of literature relative to men’s experiences as targets of sexual harassment, in this essay we illustrate that: (1) sexual harassment is a way of asserting traditional, patriarchal conceptions of masculinity, even when the harassment is male-to-male; (2) white men are the least likely demographic to be accused of sexual harassment; (3) what women label as sexual harassment may not necessarily be experienced as sexually harassing by men; (4) many of the current methods for studying men’s experiences of sexual harassment are inadequate; and (5) organizations need to consider the implications of sexual harassment research in their creation and implementation of workplace policies. Taken together, these findings elucidate the variance among men’s and women’s experiences of sexual harassment and suggest that more research needs to be conducted. Specifically, scholarship with respect to the relationship between power<sup>4</sup> and sexual harassment is important because sexual harassment is necessarily a communicative phenomenon with important impacts on organizations and the people therein (see Cleveland & Kerst, 1993; Dougherty, 2006, 1999; Taylor & Conrad, 1992).

Understanding the less-common manifestations of sexual harassment, such as female-to-male and male-to-male harassment, has serious implications for the academy, in fields ranging from sociology, psychology, and communication to the fields of business and law. Moreover, the legal ramifications of better understanding the sexual harassment of men are far ranging—illegal behavior targeted at men can be processed and assessed more fairly if we understand it. Specific-

ly, we contend that organizational communication researchers should conduct scholarship that offers clear, prescriptive advice to organizational decision makers concerning workplace policies affecting male sexual harassment targets. Ideally, this research will come from scholars with a variety of theoretical positions and methodological approaches. The review that follows considers mostly post-positivistic scholarship because psychologists with a post-positivistic approach have conducted most of the research about men's experiences of sexual harassment. Citing much scholarly work that advances these ideas, we suggest communication researchers from an array of perspectives need to do more work to understand men's experiences of sexual harassment with a variety of methodologies.

### **Patriarchy, Power, and Privilege**

As Johnson (2005) argued, "patriarchy puts issues of power, dominance, and control at the center of human existence, not only in relationships between men and women, but among men as they compete and struggle to gain status, maintain control, and protect themselves from what other men might do to them" (p. 42). Foss, Foss, and Griffin (2006) noted patriarchy is, at its simplest, the social construction of phenomena that emphasize the power and domination of men over women. Sexual harassment in the workplace draws on both well-defined and nuanced power dynamics that place women and less masculine men in almost powerless positions. Sexual harassment is dangerous no matter its target because it upholds traditional, exploitative, patriarchal notions of masculinity (Lee, 2000; Townsley & Geist, 2000). Ironically, it seems these traditional notions of the appropriate power dynamic within the workplace are so accepted within society that even the oppressed groups contribute to its perpetuation. For example, Townsley and Geist (2000) suggested targets of sexual harassment who treat their experience as a joke or as a natural part of the workplace are participating in their own subjugation. Whether women or men, people who treat sexual harassment as an innate part of the status quo are granting assent to it and reifying patriarchal oppression (Clair, 1993; Townsley & Geist, 2000). Townsley and Geist explained:

Both men and women participate actively in hegemonic relations at the micro-level. Victims of sexual harassment participate in their own subordination and contribute to the production and reproduction of the dominant ideology by drawing upon particular framing devices in their narratives of harassment. (p. 197)

To combat this self-subordination, Stockdale, Visio, and Batra (1999) suggested organizations should work to mitigate all forms of sexual harassment because even sexual harassment against men contributes to the establishment of a hostile work environment. Even in cases where a woman is the aggressor, the incidence of sexual harassment in the workplace makes the workplace less safe because a patriarchal exercise of power over another has been at least tacitly tolerated. If the workplace does not value the dignity of the men who are harassed enough to

respond, it is likely a workplace that tolerates disrespect and the objectification of all its employees. When an organization accepts traditional gender roles and perpetuates a power dynamic that endangers some of its employees, it quite clearly accepts patriarchal notions of masculinity and femininity within the workplace.

Although sexual harassment as it is most often conceptualized includes a male harasser and a female target, research has found white men are the least likely group to be accused of sexual harassment (Wayne, Riordan, & Thomas, 2001). Moreover, when they are accused, they are judged less severely than other groups, illustrating white male privilege is rampant in cases of sexual harassment. In a study of mock jury decisions where research participants assumed the role of a juror in a sexual harassment case, Wayne, Riordan, and Thomas (2001) found that regardless of the gender of the juror, white male harassers with female targets were the least harshly judged. Participants found female harassers guilty more often than male harassers, and instances of same-sex harassment were judged more severely than cases of different-sex harassment (Wayne et al., 2001). Thus, in a patriarchal society where privileged, white, straight men have the most power and the most potential to engage in sexually harassing behaviors, this same group of people is the most immune from being accused and reprimanded for those behaviors (Wayne et al., 2001). Privileged offenders' relative ease at getting away with sexual harassment may be due to the fact that male-against-female harassment is now normalized and even heteronormative when contrasted with same-sex harassment.

Giuffre and Williams (1994) reached a similar conclusion when they found restaurant employees only regarded sexual behaviors as sexually harassing when the initiators of the sexual contact were in supervisory positions, or were from a different race or sexual orientation. The fact that sexually inappropriate and technically illegal behavior is interpreted as innocuous when it comes from straight white men is a clear indication that the biases people have can cloud their judgment of coworkers' behaviors. When decision makers in organizations are aware of their potential biases because of training programs and other organization-wide efforts to communicate about sexual harassment, they are better equipped to negate those biases and give a fair hearing to any report of sexual harassment, regardless of the sex, race, or sexual orientation of the target or the accused. Education about those biases and prescriptions from the organizational communication field for practitioners about how to combat such biases could improve organizational decision makers' abilities to respond fairly and effectively to reports of sexual harassment.

### **The Inadequacy of Methods for Assessing Men's Experiences of Harassment**

Although the most common direction of sexual harassment is male-to-female, a wealth of scholarship shows men, too, are targets of sexual harassment in the workplace (Berdahl, Magley, & Waldo, 1996; Popovich, Campbell, Everton, Mangan, & Godinho, 1994; Waldo, Berdahl, & Fitzgerald, 1998). Vaux (1993) argued researching the sexual harassment experiences of men is

necessary because “the rates of harassment experiences reported by men [are] far higher than conventional wisdom [leads anyone] to expect, often similar to the rates for women” (p. 119; see also Waldo, Berdahl, & Fitzgerald, 1998). Waldo, Berdahl, and Fitzgerald (1998) estimated that as many as forty percent of men have experienced some form of sexual harassment in the workplace.

Nonetheless, in a cultural context of at least two millennia of patriarchy and a history fraught with almost exclusively male policymakers, the preponderance of research about sexual harassment has appropriately focused on the most common form of sexual harassment—male-to-female. As a symptom of the larger disease of patriarchy, sexual harassment necessarily reflects and perpetuates the power dynamics of patriarchy. Given that sexual harassment is based on power more than on sexual attraction or affection, a focus on women's experiences of sexual harassment makes sense because a patriarchal society, by definition, is one where men almost always have more power than women (Cleveland & Kerst, 1993; Pina et al., 2009; Vaux, 1993; Waldo et al., 1998).

The history of studying sexual harassment creates some challenges for research about men's experiences of sexual harassment. DeSouza and Solberg (2004) argued research about men as targets of sexual harassment is sparse, particularly with regard to the sexual orientation of the target. DeSouza and Solberg suggested gay men and men who act in conventionally feminine ways are especially vulnerable to sexual harassment at the hands of straight men, but since the topic has barely been researched, more work needs to be done in the field. Understanding power dynamics is particularly important in researching this type of sexual harassment, one that includes two seemingly powerful actors (i.e., men). Especially in workplaces that are predominantly staffed by men, harassment on the basis of real or perceived sexual orientation can be a way for men to exercise power over one another, positioning the most masculine men near the top of the power chain and the less masculine men at a place on the power chain traditionally reserved for women (DeSouza & Solberg, 2004; Donovan & Drasgow, 1999). Thus, power dynamics among same-gendered co-workers interrupt the typified directionality of sexual harassment. Understanding sexual harassment in the larger context of patriarchy illuminates the possibility of various aggressor-target relationships. Sexual harassment is thus a complex, gendered phenomenon that includes male-to-female, female-to-male, male-to-male, and female-to-female harassment. In any case, the vast complexity of sexual harassment underscores the inadequacy of attempting to explain it with any one research methodology, particularly from a post-positivistic perspective. Rather, it suggests contemporary approaches, defined by a changing social-political attitude towards diversity within sexual orientations, must also be applied to researching sexual harassment.

Most scholars who study sexual harassment do so with scale-based instruments, and the Sexual Experiences Questionnaire (SEQ, Fitzgerald et al., 1988) is the most common tool for gauging experiences of sexual harassment. However, as Donovan and Drasgow (1999) argued, the SEQ cannot equivalently assess men's experiences of sexual harassment because it was originally created to gather data from female targets. Particularly, one of the questionnaire's major

flaws is it may omit questions about behaviors men would consider harassing that women would not find harassing. For instance, one question from the scale asks respondents if they have ever been treated differently at work because of their sex. This experience is uncommon for men because men often do not perceive they are being treated differently because of their sex. More importantly, it is the questions the survey does not ask that are troublesome for studies of men's experiences of sexual harassment. Men do report feeling harassed by hazing about acting feminine or by questions and jokes about penis size, and both of these are experiences the SEQ misses. Using the same scale for assessing men's experiences of sexual harassment is also problematic in theory because it ignores the relationship between sexual harassment and power as well as the different lived experiences of each target. The interaction of social role expectations and gendered privilege means sexual harassment is necessarily asymmetrical among male and female targets. As a result of these limitations to capturing men's experiences, Donovan and Drasgow suggested that a modified version of the scale be used for men instead. To that extent, the questionnaire should address the gendered interaction of the aggressor and the target because men may interpret behaviors of men differently than behaviors of women. For instance, men may not find staring or whistling by women sexually harassing, but they may find these same behaviors by men harassing. The incongruity between men's and women's reactions to staring and whistling again suggests men's and women's experiences as targets of sexual harassment are asymmetrical and vary with the gender and perceived sexual orientation of the aggressor.

Any instrument designed to capture men's experiences of sexual harassment also needs to consider the role of power in understanding sexual harassment. According to Pina et al. (2009), "patterns in western societies suggest that men typically hold more power than women, and the stereotypes prevailing between genders are that men are goal-oriented, powerful, and aggressive" (p. 131). Therefore, researchers must account for the dynamic of power rather than assuming sexual harassment is symmetrical, or the same for men as for women. Sexual harassment is an exercise of power and an usurpation of the target's power, so it cannot be monolithically understood. A Likert-type scale alone cannot wholly capture the communicative meaning in men's experiences of sexual harassment, particularly where issues of power are concerned. The richness of data from open-ended survey items or in-depth interviews promises to add much to understanding the nuanced ways men experience and react to sexual harassment.

The appropriateness of studying sexual harassment narratives is well documented, but most studies that examine narratives only consider women's stories (Bingham & Battey, 2005; Krollokke, 1998; Taylor & Conrad, 1992; Townsley & Geist, 2000; Wood, 1992). There are a few exceptions, however. Scarduzio and Geist-Martin (2008) provided critical analyses of narratives of two male professors who had experienced sexual harassment within academe; their examination illustrated the ways narratives (i.e., the sharing of one's story) become a way of healing fractured identities. Scarduzio and Geist-Martin (2010) expand narrative analysis to interrogate the ways in which ideological positioning shifts

within discourse about men's experiences with sexual harassment, and they contend that understanding the discursive practice of ideological positioning offers a way to better explain those experiences. Lee's (2000) study considered narratives of two men who have experienced sexual harassment in the workplace, one at the hands of a woman and one at the hands of another man. Lee's work is indicative of a qualitative approach to considering men's experiences with sexual harassment, and it rather dramatically illustrates some of the potential consequences of men's experience with sexual harassment. Indeed, of the two men's stories Lee shared, one eventually commits suicide as a result of the harassment, and the other attempts suicide.

Descriptive research about sexual harassment is intellectually generative, so additional interpretive, ethnographic, and narrative research from communication perspectives about men's experiences of sexual harassment would offer more insight into the topic and provide information about causes and helpful responses to it. Put another way, qualitative research of the variety that calls into question emotional responses and reactions to assumed sexual harassment, is an appropriate addition to measurements of both men's and women's experiences as targets of sexual harassment. Moreover, providing gender-sensitive conceptions of sexual harassment in surveys and other instruments will strengthen our understanding.

### **The Gendered Problems of Defining Sexual Harassment Categorically**

Men and women may not find the same behaviors harassing, making it difficult to offer any one accurate definition of sexual harassment. For example, Berdahl, Magley, and Waldo (1996) reported women are likely to feel harassed by excessive flirting, but men tend to find the same behavior complimentary (see also Katz, Hannon, & Whitten, 1996; Shea, 1993). Insofar as the definition of sexual harassment presupposes the behaviors are uninvited and unwanted, most behaviors that can be sexually harassing are thusly labeled only circumstantially and contextually (Berdahl et al., 1996; Donovan & Drasgow, 1999). Excessive flirting is not sexual harassment if the target actively encourages it, enjoys it, or both. Only extreme behaviors, then, like rape and sexual imposition can categorically be classified as sexual harassment, and those are instances where the latter label is a legal and moral understatement (Vaux, 1993).

As Berdahl et al. (1996) noted the psychological definition of harassment requires a behavior be both stressful and threatening for the target. Indeed, "what women may experience as sexually harassing may more often be experienced by men as social-sexual behavior that is nonthreatening" (p. 529). DeFour et al. (2003) agreed, noting while women may feel annoyed or threatened by repeated sexual advances, "the great majority of men report that they are flattered by women's advances" (p. 37). The same, they suggest, is not necessarily true in same-sex episodes of harassment. When people appreciate the attention they are receiving and the attention is positive and healthy, the behavior is not sexual harassment, despite its potential agreement with legal definitions. Therefore, current estimates of men's experiences of sexual harassment may be inflated if the rates are based on a categorical classification of particular behaviors as

sexually harassing without a consideration of the target's emotional response to the behavior (Berdahl et al., 1996; Waldo, Berdahl, & Fitzgerald, 1998). In other words, if a man is given a questionnaire and asked whether he has experienced certain behaviors (e.g., whistling, staring) without a question about whether he found those behaviors harassing, the results would be skewed. The realization that different behaviors may be perceived as harassing or benign again suggests men and women interpret behaviors in varied ways, underscoring the necessity of revised methods for measuring men's experiences of sexual harassment.

### **Discussion and Implications**

Biases in reporting sexually harassing behaviors can have important legal implications for organizations. Organizations and individuals are liable for sexual harassment, so organizational decision makers need to be aware of the predispositions that people in their organizations have regarding what counts as sexually harassing behavior. Organizational leaders who are responsible for creating and executing sexual ethics policies need to be aware men can be targets and that those least likely to be accused of harassment (i.e., white men) are also the most likely to be aggressors. Some researchers have found men who are targets of male-induced sexual harassment are unlikely to report the sexual harassment because of stigmas that associate their role as target with gayness (DuBois, Knapp, Faley, & Kustis, 1998). Specifically, some men fear that in reporting incidences of sexual harassment—especially but not exclusively those where men are the aggressors—they will be perceived as gay (Calderwood, 1987; Goyer & Eddleman, 1984). Power, then, functions not just in the commission of sexual harassment but also in the suppression of reporting about it, particularly for those who fear the stigma of being labeled as gay or for those who do not wish to be “outed” in this way. Men who decide not to report sexual harassment because they fear they could be perceived as gay choose heterosexual privilege over their own dignity. The decision not to report harassment for fear of being perceived as gay, which ostensibly allows the target to maintain some of his own power, is actually an act of submission that gives the aggressor even more power, leaving their harassing behavior unchallenged and thusly deeming it appropriate.

DuBois et al. (1998) also found the impact of sexual harassment on men is more devastating when the harasser is another man because being sexually harassed by another man challenges patriarchal notions of masculinity more than being harassed by a woman. Coupled with the finding that men are less likely to report same-sex harassment, this suggests the most harmful form of sexual harassment (i.e., male-to-male) is least likely to be reported. Thus, organizations' policies should proactively mitigate sexual harassment and intentionally endeavor to create contexts where targets will feel empowered to report sexual harassment.

Gruber (2006) argued the most effective sexual harassment policies are those that are best publicized as a part of the organization's culture (see also Hotchkiss, 1994). For example, Gruber found organizations with explicit policies against sexual harassment, clear procedures for reporting and responding to

sexual harassment, and training programs that informed employees about these policies experienced a decrease in incidences of sexual harassment and an increase in reporting behaviors when incidences did occur. Pina et al. (2009) argued that while a number of training programs do exist, and are effective in educating employers and employees about sexual harassment, they fall short because they do not address the power dynamics that underlie sexual harassment in the first place. In other words, training programs focus on behaviors rather than the socially constructed gender dynamics of patriarchal hegemony that perpetuate those behaviors—leaving the greater issue unaddressed and unresolved.

Unfortunately, the issue of whether sexual harassment is reported is just one part of an organization's responsibility related to sexual harassment. Another integral piece is whether the staff person in the organization who hears the allegation of sexual harassment takes the report seriously (Madera, Podratz, King, & Hebl, 2007). Popovich et al. (1994) discovered people find the less common types of sexual harassment less believable, especially when the situation includes a female aggressor and a male target (see also Madera et al., 2007). This finding, combined with the fact that men perceive a stigma (i.e., gayness) related to reporting sexual harassment, suggests that even in organizations with the best policies and the best intentions, the sexual harassment of men by both women and men is likely to be underreported and inadequately addressed, possibly leaving corporations vulnerable to several legal liabilities. Employers are liable any time a workplace is burdened by sexual harassment because the workplace becomes a hostile one for its employees. Unless the employer has made significant strides to prevent and respond to sexual harassment, the legal liability falls to the corporation (Kelly, Kadue, & Mignin, 2005).

The current research about the sexual harassment of men, while informative, leaves many questions unanswered. This review has demonstrated that researchers do know that current empirical methods for studying men's experiences of sexual harassment are inadequate, that women and men experience potentially harassing behaviors differently, that sexual harassment is related to a patriarchal understanding of masculinity defined by male-central power dynamics, that privileged people are the least likely to be accused of sexual harassment, and that the sexual harassment of men has real implications for organizational sexual ethics policies. While psychologists and sociologists have conducted most of this research, researchers from the field of organizational communication are relatively silent about men's experiences of sexual harassment.

This research gap is disappointing and surprising because sexual harassment policies and organizational understandings of masculinity and femininity are inexorably related to organizational culture. Further, an organization's decisions about how to communicate about sexual harassment have a significant influence on the way it defines sexual harassment and responds to such allegations. Moreover, how it communicates about sexual harassment provides the framework for how targets will respond to such actions within the workplace and cultivates their level of comfort with reporting alleged sexual harassment. Communication on the part of the organization could be particularly important concerning female-to-male and male-to-male incidents.

Sexual harassment is an important research topic for the fields of psychology, law, sociology, medicine, and gender studies, but the field of organizational communication could also bring a useful perspective to research about men's experiences with sexual harassment, especially related to organizations' cultures and structures. For example, organizational communication scholars are equipped with specific vocabularies to offer suggestions to organizations about ways to improve their cultures and climates communicatively. As organizational communication scholars conduct research on men's experiences of sexual harassment, two specific recommendations emerge from a synthesis of this review: (1) methodological triangulation is perhaps the most appropriate means of gathering data, and (2) research about training programs may be particularly useful. There are some general gender differences in defining behaviors as more or less harassing, so using the same scales to capture men's and women's experiences of sexual harassment is inadequate. Furthermore, because power is a central component of sexual harassment, scale-based research about sexual harassment is necessarily incomplete. The value of generalizable data about sexual harassment means that scale-based research is still useful and important, but at the same time, improved scales for men's experiences and additional interpretive research will help organizations learn more about the communicative richness of the sexual harassment experiences of men. Thus, mixed methodological approaches to studying men's experiences of sexual harassment are useful. Researchers should not abandon or rely entirely on any one way of understanding this issue. Most of the studies reviewed here used scale-based methods, and some used narrative or interpretive methods, but a combination of those methods promises to be particularly generative. For example, a study in which research participants respond to a traditional scale about sexual harassment and write brief narratives about their experiences would allow researchers to understand which parts of each person's experiences the scale captured, and the narratives would offer further explanation on those items as well as filling in the gaps for anything the scale missed. Alternatively, asking participants to take a traditional scale and then interviewing participants about the scale as a tool for explaining their experiences would offer a deeper understanding than either method by itself. Similar mixed methods studies could be used on either side of the implementation of a training program designed at curbing sexual harassment and raising awareness about the diversity of its impact.

Building on the findings that venerate the utility of sexual harassment training programs in organizations (DeSouza & Solberg, 2004; Giuffre & Williams, 1994; Pina et al., 2009), we recommend that research about the communicative effectiveness of training programs is an urgent need to which organizational communication scholars are equipped to respond. Lee (2000) asserted sexual harassment against men is often undergirded by restrictive definitions of ideal masculinity. Men who are targets of sexual harassment are often targeted because their harassers perceive that they are not masculine enough. Sexual harassment is therefore a form of sexism and moral exclusion (Vaux, 1993). DeSouza and Solberg (2004) suggested one of the best ways to subvert sexual harassment is to offer people alternatives to patriarchy by providing training

programs that educate members of an organization about the value of human diversity. When people begin to set aside the cultural construct of patriarchal oppression, sexual harassment will have less influence because protecting traditional masculinity will cease to be valuable for people. Following Pina et al. (2009), for instance, organizational communication scholars might develop training programs that not only educate employees about the technical and legal distinctions related to sexual harassment, but also address deeper questions about systemic power dynamics and the pervasiveness of hegemonic masculinity that bring about sexual harassment.

Scholars know training can be effective, however, answers to specific issues regarding what kind of training should be conducted, by whom, for whom, how often, for how long, and on what topics are unclear. Awareness-raising, especially about biases related to race, gender, and sexual orientation in the reporting and response to sexual harassment is an important first step in mitigating the problem of sexual harassment generally and the ignorance about men's experiences with sexual harassment specifically. Further research can uncover the most useful style, type, and duration of awareness-raising communication efforts. To the degree that sexual harassment is a communication phenomenon, communication can also be a part of its resolution.

Since 1974, when Carmita Wood resigned from her job because of several unwanted sexual advances and used the phrase sexual harassment in a lawsuit against her workplace, sexual harassment has changed from an insidious and nameless phenomenon that plagued countless workplaces to a problem that has been identified, labeled, and legislated against (Freedman, 2002). Nonetheless, sexual harassment still exists and remains harmful for women and men. While scholars from many different disciplines contribute much to knowledge about sexual harassment and how to mitigate it, men's experiences as targets of sexual harassment especially need continued scholarly attention. Specifically, organizational communication scholars are well-equipped to produce new knowledge that builds on the current literature and, more important, continues to work for the elimination of all forms of sexual harassment in the workplace. This literature review begins this work by planting the seed for future interrogation of men's experiences of sexual harassment and the ways in which the academy goes about defining, assessing, and dealing with those experiences.

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### Notes

1. A copy of this commercial can be found at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vP7kPrdayTM>
2. We choose the word *target* rather than *victim* for two reasons. First, as Spry (1995) argued, *victim* is a hegemonic term that often (in discourse about sexual violence or sexual harassment) explains (mostly) women's experiences in

men's terms. Such a move is problematic and disempowering to the agency of the target. Second, what sexual harassment means for men is part of the question this essay seeks to address. Put another way, current discourse often suggests that men are *victims* of sexual harassment, although those men may not consider the behaviors described as sexually harassing to be offensive or unwanted. While both terms are inadequate, *target* is more precise in this case.

3. Anita Hill made sexual harassment allegations against current Associate Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court Clarence Thomas during his confirmation hearings. Hill's testimony, aired on public television in 1991, brought national attention to sexual harassment in the workplace. While the allegations held no legal repercussions, Beasley noted, "to many observers they symbolized a public referendum on sexual harassment and other gender inequities in late twentieth-century America" (n.d.).
4. Giddens (1976, p. 111) functionally defined power as "the capacity of the actor to intervene in a series of events so as to alter their course; as such [power] is the 'can' that mediates between intentions or wants and the actual realization of the outcome sought." Within the context of sexual harassment, power becomes especially important when it is hegemonic, that is, when the targets accept their marginalization as normative (Hall, 1985).