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Towards an Integrative Model of Sexual Harassment: An Examination of Power, Attitudes, Gender/Role Match, and Some Interactions.

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TOWARDS AN INTEGRATIVE MODEL OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT: AN EXAMINATION OF POWER, ATTITUDES, GENDER/ROLE MATCH, AND SOME INTERACTIONS

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In this paper the author suggests that a general problem in the models of sexual harassment in the literature today is their oversimplicity. The complexity of sexual harassment requires more complex models. The author attempts to integrate three existing models from the literature (the psychological model, the organizational model, and the socio-cultural model) into a single, more comprehensive model of sexual harassment. From the psychological models, the author examines the impact that "attitudes towards women" has upon the presence of harassment; from the organizational model, "power distance" was examined; and, from the socio-cultural model, "gender based role expectations" were examined. Hypotheses are posited for each main effect and for some interactions. Finally, based on insights into the forces resulting in sexual harassment generated by this model, a suggestion is made for an alternative approach to the traditional organizational strategy for managing the risks associated with sexual harassment.

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INTRODUCTION

According to a 1995 report on sexual harassment by the National Council for Research on Women, at least 50 percent of working women will be sexually harassed during their careers. Research suggests that women in nontraditional jobs are especially likely to be sexually harassed. For example, surveys of female accounting professionals indicate that sexual harassment is widespread and pervasive in the traditional male accounting profession. A 1995 survey of female internal auditors reported in *The Internal Auditor* revealed that 24 percent had been sexually harassed (Serepca, 1995). As in the accounting profession, the Armed Forces is also a traditionally male dominated career environment which has experienced problems of sexual harassment. In 1990 approximately 10 percent of the active duty armed forces personnel were female, up from 2 percent in 1972 (Morris, 1994). By 1998, this proportion had risen to 13.9 percent (DMDC, 1998). The Defense Manpower Data Center conducted a worldwide sexual harassment survey of active duty military personnel in 1988. Of the 20,000 respondents 64% of the females and 17% of the males reported that they had experienced behaviors ranging from jokes and catcalls to more serious forms of harassment such as assault or rape (Webb, 1991).

The pervasiveness of sexual harassment of women in the traditionally male-dominated career fields leaves no doubt that sexual harassment is an issue whose time has come. Sexual harassment is an issue for victims and for the companies for which they work. There is much evidence to suggest that victims of sexual harassment suffer from more than the embarrassment and humiliation of the harassment itself. The experience is stressful and psychologically damaging with long-lasting effects. The cost of such occurrences can be dear to both the employer and the victim.

The corporate economic cost of this behavior is becoming more and more evident. In 1994 the *Wall Street Journal* reported the average sex discrimination/harassment verdict awarded in 1993 exceeded $255,000. Awards to some victims have run into the millions of dollars. For example, a freight clerk at Wal-Mart in Missouri was awarded $5 million after her supervisor made crude comments about her body and Wal-mart management failed to take corrective action.

In addition to direct costs that include attorney's fees, settlements, and awards, there are indirect costs associated with sexual harassment. For example, a study conducted by *Working Woman* in 1988 concluded that sexual harassment costs the typical Fortune 500 firm $6.7 million per year in reduced productivity, increased absenteeism and employee turnover. Faley (1991) estimated that the annual dollar cost of sexual harassment in the military due to lost productivity and sick leave/absence was nearly $43 million.

The costs of sexual harassment to its victims are also monumental. The most common psychological effects of sexual harassment cited by women include fear, anger, anxiety, depression, self-questioning, and self-blaming. The physical manifestations of sexual harassment include such health problems as headaches, sleep disturbance, disordered eating, gastrointestinal disorders, and nausea. Many of these effects also result in additional costs to companies reflected in higher insurance claims, more sick leave taken, and failure to achieve maximum potential returns from their human resource investment (Dansky and Kilpatrick, 1997: 169).

The leaders and policy makers of private business and government institutions have realized the tremendous cost of sexual harassment in terms of human suffering as well as in dollars. The literature on sexual harassment contains strategies for organizational leaders to abate these costs. These strategies tend to be reactive in nature and primarily aimed at reducing the economic costs associated with sexual harassment once the problem has been made evident.

The reactive strategies outline a number of steps that firms can take to reduce the risk of litigation and financial loss resulting from job-related incidents of sexual harassment. The firm's culpability against sexual harassment can be significantly reduced by (Schumacher and Fester, 1996: 19-22):

1. Developing a definitive policy addressing sexual harassment that is clearly and regularly communicated to employees and effectively implemented;

2. Insuring that all management and nonmanagement members are provided a copy of the policy, are instructed as to its importance, and understand the sanctions for harassment;

3. Providing a grievance procedure for employees to report sexual harassment to one other than the alleged harasser;

4. Conducting prompt, thorough, and documented investigations of all complaints;

5. Taking swift remedial action to protect the victim from further harassment; and

6. Enforcing sexual harassment policies quickly, consistently, and aggressively.

But, beyond the suggestions for developing harassment policies, making those policies known to the organizational members, and providing organizational members with programs designed to raise their general awareness of behaviors which may be harassing, very little emphasis has been placed on proactive strategies for managing the risks associated with harassing behaviors.

A proactive strategy for managing the problem of sexual harassment is one which identifies areas within an organization where the potential for a sexual harassment problem is the highest and where intervention strategies would abate the risk prior to any incident. This proactive strategy has two very important advantages over a reactive strategy. First, whereas the reactive strategy seeks to reduce the suffering or compensate the victim for suffering as a result of harassment, the proactive strategy seeks to identify areas of greatest risk and take steps to reduce the risk of sexual harassment in the first place. Second, the proactive strategy suggested here allows an organization to utilize its scarce resources devoted to prevention of sexual harassment in a manner that will potentially benefit the organization and its members the most.

In this paper some organizational characteristics and individual attributes which contribute most prominently to the propensity for sexual harassment to occur will be identified. The primary purpose is to examine the interaction of these variables. Whereas the literature predominately examines the main effects of these variables on sexual harassment, it is argued here that the ability to truly understand sexual harassment lies in understanding how these terms interact with one another to produce different types of sexual harassment and the likelihood of the problem to exist. By identifying those organizational factors and personal attributes, and understanding how they interact with one another, more effective strategies can be developed to prevent problems.

Environmental, Organizational, And Individual Attributes As Predictors Of Sexual Harassment

There are numerous theories and models of sexual harassment in the literature of the 1980's and 1990's. Tangri and Hayes (1997) have provided an excellent summary/overview of the different approaches to understanding sexual harassment. They have identified natural/biological models, organizational models, sociocultural models, and individual differences models. The model to be presented here reflects something from each of these approaches. Absent, however, will be coverage of the natural/biological models because they are beyond the scope of the present endeavor.

The magnitude of the impact that sexual harassment has upon an organization necessitates the development of more complex models so that a better understanding of the problem can be achieved and remedies can be developed. A general criticism of the existing models is their simplicity. They tend to focus on main effects of the factors relating to sexual harassment. That is, they fail to look at how new effects can arise as a result of unique combinations of contributing factors. The present model represents only a beginning effort to move towards more complex models. This model incorporates three factors: power, attitudes towards women, and gender/job match, drawn from existing models. The paragraphs that follow discuss the relationship that each of these three factors has with sexual harassment and some possible interactions among the factors.

Main Effect of Power on Sexual Harassment

The misuse and abuse of power is a common theme in promiscuous sexual behaviors, in sexual harassment, and in sex crimes. Evidence of the misuse of power for selfish, sexual gratification has been demonstrated time and time again in the popular media. Some of the more sensational examples of this might include the following. Ervin (Magic) Johnson used his "star power" as a sports personality and basketball superstar to sleep with a self-reported 20,000 women in his career. Senator Bob Packwood was investigated by the Senate Ethics Committee for the sexual harassment of his female subordinates and finally had to resign from his Senate seat. Finally, and most recently, the incidents which led to the court martial and conviction of several drill sergeants at the Army's Aberdeen Proving Grounds were founded on the use of power over female recruits to obtain sexual favors.

Power is a factor central to sexual harassment. Power will be examined here as a dimension or characteristic of an organization's culture. The operationalization of power to be examined here is that of Hofstede's power distance. Hofstede (1991) defined power distance as "...the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept the fact that power is distributed unequally." Whereas Hofstede assessed power distance as a cultural characteristic of a country, the concept has been employed at the organizational level (see Bochner & Hesketh, 1994).

According to Hofstede, power distance is a measure of the power inequity between the more and the less powerful members of an institution. Power distance refers to how much inequity people are willing to accept and regard as proper in the organization's distribution of authority, prestige, status, wealth, etc. Bochner and Hesketh (1994) summarized the differences between high and low power distance organizational cultures in the following ways. In organizations with high power distance individuals behave submissively to superiors in terms of the organizational hierarchy. They are not willing to openly disagree with the higher authority. In fact, they prefer an autocratic or paternalistic supervisor, tend to be more task oriented, and are more likely to subscribe to McGregor's Theory X than Theory Y. Low power distance organizations, on the other hand, prefer a more participative or consultative leadership style in their supervisors, are not afraid to openly disagree with the boss, tend to be more people oriented, and tend to believe in the Theory Y perspective of the working person.

Based on the explanation of the power distance concept and the proposition that as power distance increases the likelihood of abuse of that power increases, it may be arguably assumed that members of a military institution measure high on the power distance index (i.e., that its members do expect and accept the fact that those with rank have the right to control and influence those with less rank). This would be especially true in the relationship between basic recruits and their instructors. Recruits are "drilled" to obey those of higher rank and are expected to be compliant to orders without debate or question.

The *quid pro quo* form of sexual harassment is most likely to occur in a high power distance organizational culture. *Quid pro quo* sexual harassment is the offer, by one in power, to enter into an exchange of organizational rewards for sexual favors from a subordinate. This type of harassment is likely because the supervisor has all the power and the subordinate is submissive and not likely to report the abuse of that power to anyone of higher authority. The motive for the act would be simple personal gratification. The perpetrator of the harassment is likely to view the behavior as within his or her power and right and the victim is likely to view the situation as just his or her own personal misfortune. Hofstede (1991) argued, "Being a victim of power abuse by one's boss is just bad luck; there is no assumption that there should be a means of redress against such a situation. If it gets too bad, people may join forces for a violent revolt." This seems to parallel the basic events at the Aberdeen Proving Grounds Training Center. The drill sergeants abused their power for their personal sexual gratification. The abuse went unreported by the victims until one victim finally spoke out; then many others reported the misuse of the power by the drill sergeants.

Main Effect of Attitudes Towards Women on Sexual Harassment

Studies abound which find that women and men differ in their perceptions of the extent to which behaviors are sexually harassing (e.g., Fitzgerald & Ormerod, 1991; Reilly et al., 1986; Powell, 1986; Collins & Blodgett, 1981; Gutek et al., 1980). These studies and others have demonstrated that women tend to be more likely to recognize that sexual harassment is a problem and that men have a higher threshold for judging a particular harassing behavior as sexual harassment. Malovich and Stake (1990), in studying attitudes towards harassment, and Tucker and Whaley (1996), while examining perceptions of harassing behaviors, have suggested that the main effect of gender as a predictor of perceptions of sexual harassment is lost when attitude towards women is controlled. Gender, it is suggested, is just a surrogate measure of gender-based attitudes.

The focus here will be on attitudes towards women as a personal attribute influencing one's perceptions of sexually harassing behaviors. Attitude towards women represents one's perceptions of the appropriateness of traditional men's and women's behaviors and roles in our society. Traditional attitudes towards women may be characterized, for example, by the belief that women are better at certain jobs and tasks and that men are better at others, or, that certain behaviors considered acceptable when displayed by men are less acceptable when displayed by women. A less traditional attitude towards women is characterized by an equality of men and women in their acceptable behaviors and jobs.

Main Effect of Gender/Job Match and Sexual Harassment

Research has demonstrated that women in traditionally male-dominated careers or blue-collar jobs experience more sexual harassment than women in other work settings (Gutek, 1992; Gutek, et al. 1990; Izraeli, 1983; Hagman 1988; Hogbacka et al., 1987, in O'Donohue, 1997). The sex-role spillover model (Gutek & Morasch, 1982) offers one explanation of this phenomena. The spillover theory suggests that men hold role perceptions of women based on their traditional role in our culture. These traditional role expectations include the nurturing role (as mother), the sex-object role, and helper role (as wife). What have been traditionally viewed as women's careers is consistent with these role expectations. For example, as teachers and nurses, women are nurturing; as exotic dancers and some types of actresses they may be seen as sex objects; and as secretaries and dental assistants they are helpers. When women take jobs outside of these traditional areas to work with and for men there is the potential for the men to perceive the women in their gender role over and above their work role. It's argued that men in traditionally male-dominated careers and with little experience in working with women in these roles, may rely on these inappropriate gender-based role expectations in guiding their interactions with women. The result of the inappropriate expected role is male behavior which is likely to be inappropriate and perceived to be sexually harassing.

A different argument seeking to explain this behavior was put forth by Carothers and Crull (1984). They suggest that women in traditionally female occupations are more likely to experience *quid pro quo* harassment. This form of harassment arises from the harasser's internalization of the sex role for women in our culture, i.e., a sex object. Women in nontraditional careers are more likely to experience the hostile environment form of harassment. Here, women are perceived as a threat to the men's economic and social status. The harassment is the men's aggressive response to that threat (Carothers & Crull, 1984).

In general the model suggested here would predict that women in traditionally female careers/jobs (e.g., teacher, nurse, or secretary) with male immediate supervisors are not likely to experience the more severe forms of hostile environment sexual harassment. Women in this situation are likely, however, to experience less severe forms of sexual harassment such as a mild form of hostile environment sexual harassment, *quid pro quo* sexual harassment, or general sexism, that does not reach the threshold of sexual harassment.

Interactions of Predictor Variables

A criticism of the models of sexual harassment mentioned above is their over simplicity, and in large part these models have not considered how different factors may interact with one another to result in different types of sexual harassment and differing levels of severity. Presented below is a three-factor model of sexual harassment which considers how power distance, attitudes towards women, and gender/job match might interact (See Figures 1a and 1b).

FIGURE 1a

A MODEL OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT BEHAVIORS FOR WOMEN IN TRADITIONAL WORK ROLES (i.e., secretaries, teachers, nurses, etc.) WITH MALE SUPERVISORS

Power Distance	Attitudes Towards Women: Traditional	Attitudes Towards Women: Nontraditional
High	I *Quid pro quo* sexual harassment	IV Unconscious use of power resulting in hostile environment sexual harassment
Low	II Simple sexism	III Least likely environment for sexual harassment

FIGURE 1b

A MODEL OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT BEHAVIORS FOR WOMEN IN NONTRADITIONAL WORK ROLES (i.e., business executives, construction trades, etc.) WITH MALE SUPERVISORS

Power Distance	Attitudes Towards Women: Traditional	Attitudes Towards Women: Nontraditional
High	I *Quid pro quo* and conscious use of power resulting in hostile environment sexual harassment	IV Unconscious use of power resulting in hostile environment sexual harassment
Low	II Conscious use of illegitimate sources of power resulting in hostile environment	III Least likely environment for sexual harassment

The model suggests that power distance may interact with attitudes towards women and gender/job match to produce differing types of sexual harassment and differing levels of severity. The low power distance situation is represented in Quadrants II and III of Figure 1a, where women are in traditionally female-dominated careers or jobs. In the low power distance situation in general we can expect fewer potential problems with sexual harassment. But, if we consider the attitudes towards women of the male supervisor and/or other males in the work environment, there may be observed subtle differences in the behavior of the men towards the women. Where traditional attitudes towards women prevail (Quadrant I), the type of behavior experienced by women on the part of their male supervisor and/or other males in the work environment would most likely be a form of sexism not generally classified as harassment. In the low power distance situation, supervisors and subordinates consider themselves as essentially equal (Hofstede, 1991). Only their roles within the organization are different, that difference being an artifact of the division of labor necessitated by the need for efficiency within the organization. In this situation the abuse of power cannot exist because there are no perceived power differences. A male supervisor and other males in that environment are likely to treat the women differently than the men. For example, they may compliment a woman on her new dress or hair style (in a nonsexual way), but not men. The supervisor may ask a women to fix coffee and a male subordinate to help move a small table. Or, the males may express opinions which suggest that women are inherently better at certain tasks than men and *vice versa*. These attitudes may result in discrimination based on gender but will not likely cross the threshold of sexual harassment.

In Quadrant III of Figure 1a, where contemporary attitudes exist these sexist behaviors are not as likely to occur, thus creating the most egalitarian work environment free from any forms of sexism or sexual harassment. As the attitudes of the males in the work environment towards women change from traditional to nontraditional, the probabilities of women having to cope with sexism or sexual harassment are the lowest. The lack of perceived power differences and a liberated attitude towards women and their role in the work environment alleviate some of the cultural and personal pressures resulting in sexual harassment. The sources of sexual harassment which may exist are not systemic. They are more likely to be attributable to a man's idiosyncratic attraction to a female subordinate or coworker.

The *quid pro quo* form of sexual harassment is most likely to occur in a high power distance organizational culture, when the immediate supervisor and/or male coworkers hold traditional attitudes towards women and the women are in traditionally female careers or jobs (Quadrant I in Figure 1a above). This type of harassment is likely because the supervisor has all the power and the subordinate is submissive to superiors and not likely to report the abuse of that power to anyone of higher authority. The motive for the act, as stated earlier, is simple sexual gratification. The perpetrator of the *quid pro quo* harassment is likely to view the behavior as within his power and his right. The victim is likely to view the situation as simply her own personal misfortune, a circumstance she will have to endure.

Moving from Quadrant I to Quadrant IV of Figure 1a, where attitude towards women has changed from traditional to nontraditional, the type of harassment may be expected to change. In this situation the victim may expect to experience a hostile environment form of sexual harassment of which the perpetrator is not even aware. Bargh and Raymond (1995) explain how unintended sexual harassment is the result of an automatic mental link between the harasser's concepts of power and sex. In some men the idea of power is habitually associated with the idea of sex. For these men, the sex act itself is a woman's submission to a man's control and power. When an attractive woman, in deference to a male supervisor's organizational power, behaves submissively, compliantly to his wishes, or politely laughs at his jokes, her behaviors trigger an unconscious sexual schema in the man's attribution of her behaviors. Thus, he perceives her behaviors as being sexually receptive to him and he responds accordingly. The outcome of this phenomenon is that she views herself as a victim of harassment and he sees himself as "led on" by the woman. The harasser acknowledges his behavior but does not ascribe the same motive to that behavior as the victim; he perceives his actions as complimentary—she, as threatening.

If the gender/job match dimension of the situation changes (occupational role held by women changes from "women in traditional work role" to "women in nontraditional work role"), the model suggests a change in the environment for sexual harassment in both Quadrants I and II (See Figure 1b.). For Quadrant I, the model suggests a change in the type of sexual harassment from just *quid pro quo* harassment to one with *quid pro quo* and hostile environment harassment. The *quid pro quo* sexual harassment is a function of the high power distance condition as describe above. The development of the additional hostile environment sexual harassment is explained by Pryor and Whalen (1997).

Pryor and Whalen (1997) argue that when women are the minority of a work group their gender becomes an outstanding identifying characteristic. This magnifies the use of gender-based categorizations and can lead to exaggerated and often stereotypical evaluations of the female in a predominately male environment. According to the social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), the recognition of the interpersonal differences can also result in the development of an ingroup-outgroup perspective of the work environment which can result in the devaluation of the outgroup (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1993). The outgroup women are perceived as a threat, either an economic threat in the sense of competition for jobs or promotions, for example, or as a threat to the ingroup's self esteem, such as a woman succeeding in a traditionally masculine job such as a policeman, fireman, coal miner, etc., thus taking away from the masculine image of the male ingroup. Either type of threat may result in a gender-based hostility directed towards the female outgroup. In other words, the males are likely to respond with a hostile environment form of sexual harassment which is meant to intimidate the victim and drive her away, thus eliminating the perceived threat.

In Quadrant II with low power distance the likelihood of *quid pro quo* sexual harassment is diminished because of the absence of the organizational power base from which to negotiate for sexual favors. However, the hostile environment sexual harassment situation would remain unchanged. The male ingroup would still seek to retaliate against the perceived threat from the female outgroup.

TOWARDS MORE EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES

The most effective way to manage the risk of sexual harassment is to develop a strategy which targets the underlying, causal factors of sexual harassment. The goal is to change or otherwise prevent those factors from initiating the offensive behaviors. The model presented above posits that sexual harassment is the result of an interaction of multiple factors. The interactions of these factors can produce different types of sexual harassment and differing levels of severity of the offensive behavior. The realization that harassing behaviors can have different sources strongly suggests that correcting these behaviors will require multiple strategies.

The strategy presented as the standard policy and punishment approach to remedy the harassment problem may be the most effective strategy for one type of harassment--*quid pro quo* sexual harassment. *Quid pro quo* sexual harassment is the result of a rational, calculated, cognitive process. The harasser attempts to enter into an exchange of services with the victim. Here policies can clearly define these types of behaviors as unacceptable and explain the punishment which would result from violation. These policies work in a fashion similar to speed limits on our highways. The maximum legal speed is posted and the penalty for violating the speed limit is publicized. When violators are caught they are punished in systematic fashion. Drivers on the highways, for the most part, make informed decisions factoring the risks involved and the potential benefits from speeding. Most, not all, choose to stay reasonably within the limits of the law.

Further, this strategy helps victims of sexual harassment understand their rights and outlines grievance procedures for reporting offenses. This approach may go a long way to remove the sense of helplessness for the victim by outlining a proper course of action for all involved. Clear sanctions create an expected remedy to the situation. The policy and punishment strategy, however, falls far short of significantly reducing the hostile environment form of sexual harassment.

Based on the logic presented in the integrative model presented above, the policy and punishment strategy would seem not to be very effective in preventing hostile environment. The hostile environment form of sexual harassment is not the result of the same type of thinking that produces *quid pro quo* sexual harassment. Hostile environment sexual harassment is the result of errant cognitive processes involving inappropriate stereotypes, misattributions of behaviors, and/or attitudes inconsistent with the organizational culture. An effective strategy for reducing

the risk of hostile environment sexual harassment must be more involved than the relatively simple policy and punishment approach. An effective strategy to reduce the risk of hostile environment sexual harassment must focus on education concerning the complex issues of gender-based stereotypes, attribution theory, attitudes, and organizational culture. Educational remedies require a deeper intervention into the organization.

Such a strategy must be designed with several levels of intervention. The first level should focus on education about sexual harassment policy, grievance procedures and consequences, appropriate sexual and social relationships, gender-based stereotypes, and role expectations. It should also incorporate the topics of gender-based discrimination and equal rights in the workplace without gender bias. The first level is similar to the policy and punishment strategy. All members of an organization should receive this training beginning first with the highest level leadership and proceeding down the organizational hierarchy.

The second level of the intervention strategy should involve all persons with subordinates, again starting from the top down. At this level, the instructional content should focus on developing an understanding of the psychological processes discussed above in reference to *quid pro quo* sexual harassment (Figure 1a, Quadrant I) and hostile environment sexual harassment (Figure 1a, Quadrant IV and Figure 1b, Quadrants I and IV). At this level the discussions of *quid pro quo* and hostile environment sexual harassment should be designed to reinforce the experience participants had with the level one intervention and to go beyond the basic level of understanding the sexual harassment. Discussions should focus on the ways in which traditional values with respect to women's roles in society, gender-based stereotypes, role expectations, and "spill over theory" work to create the environment in which sexual harassment can become a serious problem. Only through an awareness of these issues can one be protected from the problems associated with them.

The third level of intervention would be used on an *ad hoc* basis for those work groups or units about to experience a change in the dominant gender composition of their work group. This would be a change from a "single gender" or "predominant gender" work unit to a "mixed gender" work unit. The intervention here should precede the anticipated change and should be designed to eliminate any perceived threat, economic or otherwise, which might cause the situation described in Figure 1b, Quadrant II. It is here that harassers utilize hostile environment sexual harassment to drive out the source of that threat.

The fourth level of intervention is designed for persons found, after due process, to be harassers. The typical range of outcomes for a harasser can vary from a written reprimand attached to their personnel file and a "don't do that again," to financial penalty and termination. For many, the event is an absolute barrier to any further career growth. In the military a harasser may face imprisonment. The recent $26.6 million judgment found against Miller Brewing Company for firing Jerold MacKenzie for sexual harassment (Jones, 1997) suggests that organizations should examine avenues other than termination of harassers as a cure for sexual harassment.

Rather than looking to punishment, the organization might explore treatment for the harasser. Because some forms of sexual harassment are the result of errant cognitive processes, treatment to correct those processes is possible. As a company invests in programs to treat employees who abuse alcohol or other drugs, organizations might invest in similar programs to change the cognitive processes and behaviors which result in sexually harassing environments. These programs would be conducted by professional therapists and involve cognitive and behavior therapy. Policies should govern participation in these programs in a fashion similar to the drug treatment programs currently in existence in many large organizations today.

CONCLUSION

Sexual harassment is a serious problem in organizations today. Attempts to effectively cope with the problem have not achieved the success level desired. It is argued here that to reduce the risks of sexual harassment it is essential to first understand the nature of the problem and its causes. Without the understanding of the problem, one is faced with a trial-and-error approach to finding a solution. The model presented here is only representative of the type of model needed to comprehensively understand sexual harassment and to work towards its elimination. As the whole sexual harassment process becomes more fully understood, strategies for attacking the problem will become more effective. It will allow those in leadership positions to identify groups with the greatest likelihood for problems and implement preventive action rather than corrective action for that specific area.

The multilevel strategy suggested in this paper should serve only as a guide or general model for more fully articulated efforts. The development of the content of such a strategy is beyond the scope of this paper and represents an area of research yet to be explored in the literature. I believe this type of information will be key to implementing a proactive strategy for managing the risk of sexual harassment.

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