

BEYOND THE INDIVIDUAL VICTIM: LINKING SEXUAL HARASSMENT, TEAM PROCESSES, AND TEAM PERFORMANCE

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Previous sexual harassment research and theory have focused primarily upon the individual level, with little attention to team- or organization-level outcomes. In this article, we extend research on outcomes associated with sexual harassment to the team level with an examination of the relationships between team ambient sexual harassment, team conflict, team cohesion, team citizenship behaviors, and team financial performance. Practical implications and a multilevel model to guide future sexual harassment research are offered.

Sexual harassment is widespread, and it has significant negative psychological and job-related consequences for victims (see Schneider, Swan, and Fitzgerald [1997] for a review). Despite the progress that has been made on understanding this phenomenon, researchers know surprisingly little about the impact of sexual harassment beyond the individual level. The exclusive focus upon individuals' outcomes may lead to neglect of important consequences that sexual harassment has for work teams and for organizations as a whole. The purpose of this article is to advance a multilevel perspective on sexual harassment and to examine *team-level* processes and outcomes related to team incidence of sexual harassment. Following the results, we highlight future directions for multilevel research on sexual harassment and offer practical implications for management.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Much of the early research on sexual harassment was conducted with widely varying definitions of

what constituted sexual harassment, leading to difficulties in comparing studies, inflated prevalence rates, and a generally confusing body of literature. Work by Fitzgerald and her colleagues addressed the definitional problems surrounding sexual harassment (Fitzgerald, Gelfand, & Drasgow, 1995), an accomplishment that led to greater consistency in conceptualization and measurement. They developed the Sexual Experiences Questionnaire (SEQ) and defined sexual harassment as a behavioral construct consisting of three dimensions: (1) *gender harassment*: insulting verbal and nonverbal behaviors conveying insulting, hostile, or degrading attitudes toward women; (2) *unwanted sexual attention*: verbal and nonverbal behaviors that are offensive, unwanted and unreciprocated (e.g., unwanted touching or grabbing; repeated and nonreciprocal requests for dates), and (3) *sexual coercion*: behaviors using bribes or threats, and/or making job-related benefits contingent upon sexual cooperation. More recently, Fitzgerald, Magley, Drasgow, and Waldo (1999) found that gender harassment actually had two distinct dimensions: *sexist hostility*, which comprises insulting verbal and nonverbal behaviors based on gender (e.g., making offensive sexist remarks), and *sexual hostility*, which comprises insulting, explicitly sexual verbal and nonverbal behaviors (e.g., repeatedly telling sexual stories). Given the evidence that women experience much higher rates of sexual harassment than do men (U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board [USMSPB], 1994) and that men's experiences of sexual harassment are dramatically different from women's (Berdahl, Magley, & Waldo, 1996), sexual harassment has been defined from a

This research was supported by a Clara Mayo Grant to the first author by the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues (SPSSI). We would like to acknowledge three anonymous reviewers for their insightful comments, and Katherine Klein, Paul Hanges, Ray Friedman, Terry Boles, Arzu Wasti, Lisa Nishii, Jonathan Ziegert, Virginia Smith-Major, and Hilary Gettman for their helpful suggestions on earlier versions of this article. Portions of this article were presented at the 2003 Academy of Management conference and in the *2003 Academy of Management Best Paper Proceedings*.

woman's perspective, and thus we focused on women's sexually harassing experiences and their implications for teamwork in this research.

Over the last two decades, research has shown that sexual harassment is an organizational stressor that has significant, negative outcomes for targets. In particular, outcomes that have been linked to sexual harassment include low job satisfaction, psychological distress, anxiety, and depression (Fitzgerald, Drasgow, Hulin, Gelfand, & Magley, 1997), job loss, career interruption, increased turnover, and absenteeism (USMSPB, 1994). The relationships between experiencing sexual harassment and these negative psychological and job-related outcomes have consistently been found across a variety of organizational settings and across cultures (Gelfand, Fitzgerald, & Drasgow, 1995; Wasti, Bergman, Glomb, & Drasgow, 2000).

LINKING SEXUAL HARASSMENT TO TEAM PROCESSES AND OUTCOMES

Although most research has focused upon outcomes experienced by direct targets of sexual harassment, sexual harassment also negatively impacts individuals who are not direct targets of harassment, and it is therefore a stressor that may pervade groups as a whole. In particular, Glomb, Richman, Hulin, Drasgow, Schneider, and Fitzgerald (1997) argued that sexual harassment is an organizational stressor that may be either discretionary or ambient. *Discretionary* stimuli are characteristics of a work environment that are transmitted to individuals differentially; *ambient* stimuli pervade a group setting and are potentially available to all group members (Hackman, 1992). Glomb and her coauthors (1997) introduced the construct of *ambient sexual harassment (ASH)* as a group-level phenomenon reflecting the general or ambient level of sexual harassment in a work group, which they then linked to individual-level outcomes (e.g., job satisfaction, health conditions, psychological conditions, work and job withdrawal). They argued that coworkers are often aware of colleagues' experiences with sexual harassment and that incidents of sexual harassment in a group may create a generally stressful environment that others in the work group also experience. In support of these arguments, Glomb and colleagues found that ambient sexual harassment explained variance in individuals' outcomes that went beyond the variance accounted for by being a direct target of sexual harassment. Their study provided the basis for conceptualizing sexual harassment as having team-level influences, yet it was solely aimed at under-

standing individual-level outcomes of exposure to harassment.

In the current study, we extended this research by examining *team-level* processes and outcomes associated with ambient sexual harassment. Such harassment reflects a summation of experiences reported by the members of a work team (cf. Glomb et al., 1997).¹ In multilevel theory terms, we propose that ambient sexual harassment emerges as a team-level property through an *additive* composition model (Chan, 1998: 236); the meaning of the higher-level (e.g., team) construct is a summary of the lower-level units (e.g., individuals' experiences), regardless of the variance among the lower-level units. Each team has an ambient sexual harassment score based upon a mean of all female team members' harassment experiences, and team members need not all be victims of harassment for ambient sexual harassment to be a team-level property. In formulating our research project, we proposed that high levels of ambient sexual harassment would be associated with high levels of team conflict, low levels of team cohesion, and low levels of team citizenship behaviors. We further proposed that these mediating processes would subsequently be associated with teams' financial performance. All constructs were conceptualized, measured, and aggregated (as appropriate) as properties of a team, and thus this was a single-level team model (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000).

Team Processes

Intragroup conflict refers to discrepant views or incompatibilities between members of a single group (Boulding, 1963). We adopted Jehn's (1995) conceptualization of team conflict as consisting of both task and relationship conflict. *Task conflict* is based upon the substance of a task and includes disagreements about how it should be performed. *Relationship conflict* includes personality incompatibilities, animosity, and rivalry between group members. Although scholars have recognized that

¹ Throughout this article, we use the terms *group* and *team* interchangeably. We adopted Guzzo and Dickson's definition of work groups or teams: "A work group is made up of individuals who see themselves and who are seen by others as a social entity, who are interdependent because of the tasks they perform as members of a group, who are embedded in one or more larger social systems (e.g. community, organization), and who perform tasks that affect others (such as customers or coworkers)" (1996: 308-309). Our main focus is on formal work groups or work teams, rather than on informal groups or temporary groups.

conflict can have both positive and negative consequences for groups, conflict stemming from interpersonal incompatibilities or tensions has been negatively linked to performance and morale (Jehn, 1995). Both forms of conflict are team-level constructs, as they reflect processes that emerge from interpersonal interactions within a team, and they cannot exist at the individual level. With regard to Chan's (1998) composition models, we conceptualized conflict as conforming to a referent shift consensus model—that is, a team's members share perceptions of the level of conflict experienced in the team, so there is within-team agreement.

We proposed that high levels of ambient sexual harassment in a team would create interpersonal difficulties that increase the levels of relationship conflict experienced by team members. Some targets of harassment may adopt direct coping strategies and confront the harasser,² thus creating *overt* tensions among members. Alternatively, they may engage in more indirect coping strategies—such as avoiding the harasser to prevent further abuse, or seeking social support by telling others about their experiences (Magley, 2002)—thereby increasing *covert* tensions among members. Team members who observe or hear about their colleagues being harassed may also adopt either direct or indirect coping strategies. For example, bystanders may confront the harasser to help prevent their colleagues from being harassed further, thereby creating overt tensions, or they may create covert tensions by talking behind the harasser's back, refusing to speak to the harasser, and so forth. In each of these cases, ambient sexual harassment would increase the relationship conflict experienced throughout the team. We were primarily interested in relationship conflict because nonproductive conflict and impaired interpersonal relationships are important components of this construct, yet we also explored results for task conflict.

Hypothesis 1. Ambient sexual harassment is positively related to team relationship conflict.

Cohesion typically refers to the forces that bind members to each other in a group, and it is widely recognized as an important indicator of team-level processes with implications for performance (Guzzo & Shea, 1992). With regard to Chan's (1998) composition models, we conceptualized cohesion as conforming to a referent shift consensus model, in that a team's members share perceptions of the

amount of cohesion in their team. We proposed that high levels of ambient sexual harassment would be associated with reports of low team cohesion throughout the team, as victims and bystanders to harassment are unlikely to identify strongly with a collective in which they experience or observe high levels of negative behaviors such as sexual harassment.

Hypothesis 2. Ambient sexual harassment is negatively related to team cohesion.

Although most research on organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs) has been done at the individual level, several scholars have shown that citizenship behavior is also a group-level phenomenon that is associated with important group-level outcomes, including sales team performance, work groups' production quality and quantity, and unit profits (Ehrhart, 2004; Koys, 2001; Podsakoff, Ahearne, & MacKenzie, 1997). We thus focused upon *team citizenship behaviors*, which we conceptualized as a team-level construct consisting of discretionary behaviors that enhance a *team's* social and psychological environment. While individual-level OCBs include behaviors that help any other organization member or an organization as a whole, team citizenship behaviors have a team as the referent. This construct reflects the normative level of citizenship behaviors performed by team members that are aimed at helping their team and/or other members. We proposed team citizenship behavior as a configural property of work groups (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000: 34): the performances of team members combine to determine team citizenship behaviors for a team as a whole and may reflect synergy among members, yet the contributions of individuals are not assumed to be homogeneous.

We hypothesized that high levels of ambient sexual harassment in a team are associated with low levels of team citizenship behaviors. In a group where there are high levels of ambient stressors such as sexual harassment, many team members may become unwilling to enact behaviors that help the team, given that negative acts persist throughout the team. Although there has been very little research on the antecedents to team citizenship behaviors (or aggregate OCBs), there is recent evidence in line with this argument. For instance, Ehrhart (2004) found that teams with a negative climate (with regard to fairness) had significantly lower levels of team citizenship behaviors than teams with a positive climate (Ehrhart, 2004). Accordingly:

² For simplicity, we refer to a single harasser, but the term should be construed to also include multiple harassers.

Hypothesis 3. Ambient sexual harassment is negatively related to team citizenship behaviors.

Team Financial Performance

Although many factors combine to determine teams' financial performance, we hypothesized that ambient sexual harassment would be related to financial performance through its relationship with the team processes outlined above. When group members work interdependently to complete a task, coordination, cooperation, and involvement among group members is essential for them to be effective (Tjosvold, 1995). If a group's members are experiencing high conflict, low cohesion, and low team citizenship, they are likely to have difficulty coordinating, and therefore, the group is likely to experience performance that is less than optimal.

Hypothesis 4a. The relationship between ambient sexual harassment and team financial performance is mediated by team conflict.

Hypothesis 4b. The relationship between ambient sexual harassment and team financial performance is mediated by team cohesion.

Hypothesis 4c. The relationship between ambient sexual harassment and team financial performance is mediated by team citizenship behaviors.

The preceding hypotheses describe relationships for the total team incidence of ambient sexual harassment, yet as recommended by Fitzgerald et al. (1999), we also explored results for the subscales of ambient sexual harassment (i.e., sexist hostility, sexual hostility, unwanted sexual attention, sexual coercion) and their relationships with team processes and team financial performance.

METHODS

Sample, Setting, and Procedures

We needed an organization structured into teams that operated independently of one another (i.e., a loosely coupled organization), and we needed teams for which financial performance data were available. The site for this research was a food services organization in the mid-Atlantic United States that satisfied these criteria. Approximately half of the organization's employees were organized into teams, and all of these 35 teams were surveyed for this research. The organization consisted of four large centers with multiple restaurants in distinct locations, as well as several small

restaurants in other locations. The members of each team reported to work only at their team's location and worked their entire shift at that location, so team members had little contact with organization members outside of their team. Tasks performed by these teams included food preparation and cleanup (10 teams), service (14 teams), administration (4 teams), and mixed tasks, including food preparation, service, and cleanup (7 teams in the smaller restaurants). Controlling for team task type did not influence the results.

Participants were 273 (160 female, 113 male) employees and 35 supervisors, one for each team. Our total sample therefore was 308 individuals. All surveys were administered on site for each team separately. No identifying information was collected, so individual participants were guaranteed anonymity. Supervisors were surveyed to provide team citizenship behavior data only. We used supervisor ratings of team citizenship behaviors to reduce individuals' potential overestimates of their own levels of citizenship and ensure that any relationships observed with this variable were not due to common source response bias. The response rate was 81 percent for team members and 100 percent for supervisors. We required that each team have a minimum of three women who provided sexual harassment data because ambient sexual harassment scores computed for small work groups were likely to be unreliable (Glomb et al., 1997). Seven groups with fewer than three female participants were excluded from analyses. One additional team was excluded because its location had just opened prior to data collection, so its members had only been working together for a short time.

The final sample for hypothesis testing was 203 (144 female, 59 male) employees in 27 teams, and their 27 supervisors, who provided outcome data. The size of these teams ranged from 3 to 19 members (excluding the supervisors), with a mean of 8 participants per group. The gender distribution of these teams (excluding supervisors) ranged from 0 to 57 percent male; the average was 27 percent male. Four teams with no male members were retained in analyses because harassment may also be perpetrated by a male supervisor. Analyses without these female-only teams revealed that the impact of their exclusion on results was negligible. The racial distribution of team members was 31 percent, African American; 27 percent, Hispanic; 22 percent, Caucasian; 6 percent, Asian American; and 11 percent, other or mixed racial background; for 3 percent, racial data were missing. We followed recommendations for research on multicultural populations (e.g., Gelfand, Raver, & Ehrhart, 2002) to construct a Spanish version of the survey

through the translation–back-translation procedure to ensure that all employees had equally understandable and meaningful forms of the survey; 21 percent of the sample completed the Spanish version. Note that the SEQ’s factor structure has been replicated with Latinas (Cortina, 2001) and across societal cultures (Gelfand et al., 1995; Wasti et al., 2000).

Measures

Ambient sexual harassment. Participants completed the revised version of the SEQ (Fitzgerald et al., 1999), a 16-item measure designed to assess sexually harassing experiences of women perpetrated by either their supervisors or coworkers over the 24 months before survey administration. Example items include these: “treated you differently because of your sex” (sexist hostility), “repeatedly told sexual stories or jokes that were offensive to you” (sexual hostility), “made unwanted attempts to establish a romantic sexual relationship with you despite your efforts to discourage it” (unwanted sexual attention), and “implied faster promotions or better treatment if you were sexually cooperative” (sexual coercion). Participants indicated whether any of their supervisors or coworkers had displayed any of the sexually harassing behaviors on the following scale: 0 (“never”), 1 (“once or twice”), 2 (“sometimes”), 3 (“often”), and 4 (“many times”). All female team members’ responses to this scale were averaged to create scores for total ambient sexual harassment and for each subscale. Team-level reliability coefficients for total ambient sexual harassment, sexist hostility, sexual hostility, unwanted sexual attention, and sexual coercion were, respectively, .96, .81, .91, .96, and .96.

Team conflict. Participants responded to Pelled, Eisenhardt, and Xin’s (1999) eight-item measure of intragroup conflict on a scale ranging from 1 (“to no extent”) to 5 (“to a large extent”); the referent for each item was a participant’s work group. Example items are: “How much are personality clashes evident in your work group?” (relationship conflict) and “How often do the members of your work group disagree about how things should be done?” (task conflict). We mean-aggregated all team members’ responses to create team-level relationship conflict and task conflict scores (relationship conflict, team-level $\alpha = .85$; task conflict, team-level $\alpha = .86$).

Team cohesion. Participants responded to a four-item cohesion scale by O’Reilly and Caldwell (1985), on a scale ranging from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 5 (“strongly agree”). The referent for all

items was a participant’s work group. An example is, “Work group members stick together.” We mean-aggregated responses to create team-level scores (team-level $\alpha = .77$).

Team citizenship behaviors. Work group supervisors completed the 13-item Podsakoff et al. (1997) OCB scale, using a scale ranging from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 7 (“strongly agree”). Each supervisor was asked to indicate the extent to which citizenship behaviors occurred in the work group that he or she supervised *as a whole*. Thus, the work group was the referent and levels of team citizenship behaviors enacted in general, across all team members, were reported (cf. Ehrhart, 2004; Koys, 2001). Items include these: “help each other out if someone falls behind in his/her work” and “take steps to try to prevent problems with other group members.” All items were combined into a mean OCB score for each team ($\alpha = .88$).

Team financial performance. The financial performance of units in this organization was assessed by comparing the actual profits of each unit to those profits that had been projected. We obtained profit/loss data for each unit from company records, which ensured that observed relationships with this variable were not a result of common-source bias. This financial performance data covered units’ year-to-date profits/losses, which included the period during which we collected data (data were collected in October, and the financial performance indicators covered the period through November). We calculated percentage above/below projections for each unit (i.e., deviation from projection divided by actual projection) to make units’ performance comparable. Since the projections were based primarily upon units’ previous performance, this variable was an indicator of the extent to which each unit performed above or below previous levels. Each unit in our final sample met its minimum standard for financial performance and thus did better than projected, yet there was much variability in the extent to which teams exceeded their goals.

Covariates. We controlled for general levels of stress, racial diversity, team size, and the gender ratio in all of our analyses. First, team members completed the Stress in General (SIG) scale (Stanton, Balzer, Smith, Parra, & Ironson, 2001), an 18-item global measure of job stress that uses a “yes,” “no,” or “?” format. (We coded “no” as 0, “?” as 1.5, and “yes” as 3, after reverse-coding items as appropriate [Stanton et al., 2001]). The mean SIG score we calculated for each team controlled for several workplace stressors (team-level $\alpha = .84$). Second, we controlled for *racial diversity*, which has previously been shown to affect similar team processes,

TABLE 1
Descriptive Statistics and Correlations^a

Variable	Mean	s.d.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Total ambient sexual harassment	0.16	0.23	(.95)												
2. Ambient sexist hostility	0.22	0.27	.95	(.81)											
3. Ambient sexual hostility	0.17	0.25	.92	.79	(.91)										
4. Ambient unwanted sexual attention	0.10	0.22	.94	.85	.79	(.96)									
5. Relationship conflict	2.36	0.50	.36	.20	.49	.32	(.85)								
6. Task conflict	2.63	0.49	.44	.32	.57	.36	.74	(.86)							
7. Cohesion	3.83	0.34	.00	.09	-.18	.09	-.56	-.48	(.77)						
8. Team citizenship behaviors	5.03	0.91	-.27	-.29	-.30	-.15	-.14	.00	-.05						
9. Team financial performance	54	.40	-.15	-.02	-.30	-.09	-.52	-.35	.50	.08					
10. Team size	8	3	.57	.48	.56	.55	.02	.15	.23	-.23	.04				
11. Percent male	0.27	0.17	.23	.26	.17	.22	-.19	-.16	.30	.00	.16	.35			
12. Racial diversity	0.54	0.19	.14	.16	.01	.24	-.26	-.20	.14	-.05	.11	.02	.35		
13. Stress in general	1.21	0.32	.04	.17	.10	-.20	.18	.39	-.21	-.06	-.28	-.06	-.07	-.07	(.84)

^a $n = 27$. Correlations over .32 are statistically significant at $p < .05$ with a one-tailed test. Values on the diagonal in parentheses are the team-level reliability coefficients.

calculating Blau's (1977) index of heterogeneity as an indicator of racial diversity for each team. This index varies from a low of 0, which indicates no diversity, to a theoretical maximum of 1. Heterogeneity is defined as: $(1 - \sum p_i^2)$, where p is the proportion of the group members in a racial group and i is the number of different racial groups represented on a team. Third, we covaried *team size* because there is some evidence that larger teams have less positive interpersonal relations, and thus they may have higher levels of ambient sexual harassment as well. Finally, we calculated the *gender ratio* of each team (i.e., the percentage of men) to control for its effects because the gender ratios varied across teams.

ANALYSES AND RESULTS

We first evaluated the appropriateness of aggregating relationship conflict, task conflict, and cohesion. Tests of $r_{wg(j)}$ using a rectangular null distribution (James, Demaree, & Wolf, 1984) indicated good within-group agreement; the median values were .71 for relationship conflict, .72 for task conflict, and .84 for cohesion. ICC(1) tests had significant results for relationship conflict and task conflict, with values of .14 and .13, respectively (Bliese, 2000), but cohesion had a nonsignificant ICC(1) of .05. As the ICC(1) results supported aggregation for relationship and task conflict, and the $r_{wg(j)}$ results supported aggregation for cohesion, we aggregated all variables, yet cohesion's nonsignifi-

cant ICC(1) indicated that there might be insufficient between-group variance for us to find significant effects.

For the incidence of sexual harassment, data revealed that 31 percent of the female team members had experienced at least one sexually harassing behavior in the two years prior to the survey. Twenty-six percent of the women reported at least one behavior constituting sexist hostility, 17 percent reported at least one behavior constituting sexual hostility, 10 percent reported at least one behavior constituting unwanted sexual attention, and 5 percent reported at least one behavior constituting sexual coercion. The low base rates for sexual coercion were similar to those found in earlier research with the SEQ (e.g., Fitzgerald et al., 1999; Schneider et al., 1997), and since low-base-rate items cannot significantly correlate with other scales, we dropped sexual coercion in all analyses. Note that we explored results for sexual coercion and found that its inclusion in the total ambient sexual harassment score did not impact the results. Women's average total SEQ scores ranged from 0 to 3.00 and had a mean of .16, indicating that on average, they had experienced sexually harassing behaviors less than "once or twice" over the previous two years.

After aggregating variables, we calculated descriptive statistics and intercorrelations, which appear in Table 1. Ambient sexual harassment and its subscales were significantly, positively related to team size (r 's = .48 to .57), with larger teams tending to have higher average levels of sexual harass-

TABLE 2
Results of Regression Analyses of Team Processes and Financial Performance on
Total Ambient Sexual Harassment and Subscales

Predictors	Team Relationship Conflict		Team Task Conflict		Team Cohesion		Team Citizenship Behaviors		Team Financial Performance	
	β	Step R^2	β	Step R^2	β	Step R^2	β	Step R^2	β	Step R^2
Step 1		.11		.23		.14		.07		.10
Team size	.08		.24		.14		-.27		-.03	
Percent male	-.14		-.17		.22		.12		.13	
Stress in general	.16		.38*		-.19		-.07		-.27	
Racial diversity	-.21		-.12		.05		-.09		.05	
Step 2	.56**	.21	.54**	.19	-.20	.03	-.19	.03	-.24	.04
Total ambient sexual harassment										
Step 2	.29	.06	.29	.06	-.01	.00	-.23	.04	-.01	.00
Ambient sexist hostility										
Step 2	.68**	.31	.65**	.28	-.41*	.11	-.24	.04	-.42*	.12
Ambient sexual hostility										
Step 2	.62**	.24	.59**	.22	-.13	.01	-.03	.00	-.27	.05
Ambient unwanted sexual attention										

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

One-tailed tests.

ment. When conducting research with teams of variable size, some researchers have used adjusted ordinary least squares (OLS) regression estimates for differences in group size because the reliability of the group means is typically higher in large teams than in small teams. Here, OLS analysis would require weighting the data from large teams to be more influential than data from small teams. However, because of our finding that sexual harassment was positively related to team size, we report regression analyses unweighted by group size. Weighting the regression analyses so that large teams were more influential would have necessarily made teams with high ambient sexual harassment more influential, and we wanted to avoid such analytical bias in favor of our hypotheses. Furthermore, we conducted additional regression analyses to explore the effects of using OLS estimates weighted by team size and found that the impact on results was negligible.

We conducted hierarchical linear regressions to test Hypotheses 1 through 4c for total ambient sexual harassment as well as each of the ambient sexual harassment subscales. The covariates team size, percent male, racial diversity, and generalized level of stress were entered together as the first step in all regressions. Table 2 details these results.

We hypothesized that ambient sexual harassment is significantly, positively associated with

levels of relationship conflict in teams. In support of Hypothesis 1, overall levels of ambient sexual harassment were significantly related to relationship conflict ($\beta = .56, p < .01$). Ambient sexual harassment accounted for 21 percent of the variance in relationship conflict. This same pattern of results was repeated for ambient sexual hostility ($\beta = .68, p < .01$) and ambient unwanted sexual attention ($\beta = .62, p < .01$), but results for ambient sexist hostility were nonsignificant. We explored whether ambient sexual harassment was associated with task conflict. The results were parallel to those for relationship conflict; overall ambient sexual harassment ($\beta = .54, p < .01$), ambient sexual hostility ($\beta = .65, p < .01$), and ambient unwanted sexual attention ($\beta = .59, p < .01$) were significantly, positively related to task conflict.

In Hypothesis 2, we stated that ambient sexual harassment is negatively related to team cohesion. The results indicated that overall levels of ambient sexual harassment were not significantly related to cohesion. However, we found that ambient sexual hostility was significantly, negatively related to team cohesion ($\beta = -.41, p < .05$) and that it accounted for 11 percent of the variance in cohesion. Thus, Hypothesis 2 was supported for ambient sexual hostility.

We hypothesized that ambient sexual harassment is negatively related to team citizenship be-

haviors (Hypothesis 3). As seen in Table 2, overall ambient sexual harassment and its subscales demonstrated nonsignificant, negative relationships with team citizenship behaviors. Hypothesis 3 was not supported.

Overall ambient sexual harassment demonstrated a nonsignificant, negative relationship with team financial performance, yet ambient sexual hostility was significantly, negatively related to financial performance ($\beta = -.42, p < .05$) and accounted for 12 percent of its variance. On the basis of the regression results and the criteria set forth by Baron and Kenny (1986), it was possible to test the mediational paths between ambient sexual harassment and financial performance (Hypothesis 4a and 4b) for ambient sexual hostility. As described, ambient sexual hostility was significantly related to relationship conflict, task conflict, cohesion, and financial performance. Relationship conflict ($\beta = -.48, \Delta R^2 = .21, p < .01$) and cohesion ($\beta = .47, \Delta R^2 = .19, p < .05$) were significantly related to financial performance, yet task conflict was not ($\beta = -.27, \Delta R^2 = .06, n.s.$); thus, task conflict could not mediate. In support of Hypothesis 4a, Baron and Kenny's (1986) final step of mediational analyses for relationship conflict supported mediation. Relationship conflict remained significantly related to team financial performance when ambient sexual hostility was controlled ($\beta = -.41, p < .05$), yet ambient sexual hostility was no longer significantly related to financial performance ($\beta = -.14, n.s.$). In support of Hypothesis 4b, the final step of analyses for cohesion also supported mediation. The relationship between cohesion and team financial performance remained significant when ambient sexual hostility was controlled ($\beta = .39, p < .05$), yet ambient sexual hostility was no longer significantly related to financial performance ($\beta = -.26, n.s.$). Thus, Hypotheses 4a and 4b were supported for ambient sexual hostility.

DISCUSSION

In this article, we extended the study of outcomes of sexual harassment to the team level with an examination of the relationships between ambient sexual harassment, team processes, and team financial performance. Our results demonstrated that at the team level, ambient sexual harassment was positively related to relationship and task conflict. We also found that ambient sexual hostility was negatively related to team cohesion and team financial performance. Team relationship conflict and cohesion mediated the relationship between ambient sexual hostility and team financial performance, suggesting that harassment may have far-

reaching implications for teams' performance through its influence on everyday team processes. Overall, these results extend the extant literature by demonstrating that sexual harassment is significantly associated with indicators of teams' functioning and performance.

The results of this study suggest that relationships between ambient sexual harassment, team processes, and team outcomes may be quite different depending upon the type of harassment that a team is experiencing. The strongest relationships in support of the hypotheses were found for ambient sexual hostility, which is a form of harassment consisting of insulting verbal and nonverbal behaviors that are explicitly sexual (Fitzgerald et al., 1999). In contrast, we found no significant relationships between ambient sexist hostility (that is, insulting verbal and nonverbal behaviors that discriminate on the basis of gender), team processes, and team outcomes. Ambient unwanted sexual attention (behaviors such as repeated requests for dates, which are aimed at eliciting sexual attention) was related to team conflict, but not to other team processes. These results suggest that it is essential for future research and theory to further explore different forms of harassment in teams, given this evidence that they are differentially related to team processes and performance. We speculate that sexual hostility may be particularly damaging for team processes because the acts are both clearly hostile and overtly sexual, and thus team members cannot simply attribute them to misguided attempts to establish romantic relationships (as in unwanted sexual attention) or sexist attitudes (as in sexist hostility).

Surprisingly, ambient sexual harassment and its subscales were not significantly related to team citizenship behaviors, although the relationships were all in the proposed direction and ambient sexual harassment accounted for 3 percent of the variance in team citizenship behaviors. One consideration for interpreting these results is the level of statistical power to detect effects in this study. A power analysis indicated that the power to detect a medium effect with an alpha level of .05 was 46 percent, and the power to detect a large effect was 86 percent (Cohen, 1988). Cohen recommended power of at least 80 percent, and thus the present study could only detect large effects, if they existed. With a larger sample of teams, these relationships might have emerged as statistically significant. Future research should continue to explore the relationship between ambient sexual harassment and team citizenship behaviors, and researchers should perhaps consider using alternative measures of team citizenship behaviors. For instance,

one could have supervisors rate all team members individually before aggregating ratings to the team level, or one could use team members' self-ratings (cf. Ehrhart, 2004; Podsakoff et al., 1997).

Implications for Management

To date, sexual harassment has been seen as a problem that largely affects individuals, but this research demonstrates—to organizational decision makers and scholars alike—that sexual harassment is not just an individual problem: it is related to the functioning of teams and their ultimate performance. Although researchers have been arguing that sexual harassment is an organizational issue for some time (e.g., Hanisch, 1996), research has largely focused on identifying how individual victims are impaired. Our research demonstrates to organizational decision makers that eliminating sexual harassment not only makes good moral and legal sense—it also makes good *business* sense.

This research also illustrates that managers of teams need to focus on creating a climate that does not permit sexual harassment (Hulin, Fitzgerald, & Drasgow, 1996). As Hulin and colleagues (1996) noted, employees in organizational climates that are intolerant of sexual harassment report shared perceptions of clear sanctions or punishment for perpetrating sexual harassment. However, if sexual harassment goes unpunished, employees may perceive that it is informally permitted or even supported in their teams (i.e., there is a climate for sexual harassment). It is important for team managers to openly discuss the inappropriateness of harassment and make it clear that all sexually harassing behaviors are forbidden, even mild behaviors that perpetrators think are “just good fun.” When clear cases of sexual harassment arise, punishment should be swift and severe to prevent future instances of harassment, as well as to reduce negative implications for teams' performance.

The results of this study are also highly relevant to the design of training programs in organizations. Typically, organizations' sexual harassment training focuses on individual victims of harassment, yet this research demonstrates that sexual harassment training needs to address team dynamics related to harassment, and that team effectiveness training also needs to directly incorporate issues of harassment. Training segments could be developed to help change group norms regarding sexual harassment. For instance, emphasis could be placed on the negative outcomes of sexual harassment for *entire* teams so that members realize that they may ultimately be harming everyone on their teams when they perpetrate harassment. Team members

might then think twice about engaging in such harmful behaviors or might be more willing to confront their fellow team members about discontinuing harassment. Such training could also encourage team members who have witnessed or heard about harassment to utilize formal or informal channels to report their experiences and thus help prevent negative repercussions such as conflict, low cohesion, or impaired performance. Moreover, because bystanders may be unwilling to report harassment for fear of reprisal, organizations need to create systems and structures that enable team members to anonymously report harassment.

Limitations

One important limitation is that we were not able to identify the perpetrators of sexual harassment. The directors of the organization were concerned about identifying individual supervisors as perpetrators, so we were not permitted to assess whether the perpetrator(s) were team supervisors or team members. Furthermore, the SEQ (Fitzgerald et al., 1999), which we used because it is generally considered the most psychometrically sound measure of sexual harassment, asks individuals whether they have been in situations in which any of their *supervisors or coworkers* exhibited sexually harassing behaviors. Thus, because of the host organization's concerns and the instructions for the SEQ, we were not able to differentiate between supervisors and coworkers as perpetrators. Moreover, although we specifically chose a research site where teams were in physically distinct locations and team members did not work in more than one location, we could not guarantee that perpetrators were parts of the teams that were surveyed. As an anonymous reviewer noted, the nature of perpetrators of sexual harassment is an important issue to address in future research, possibly by revising the SEQ so that it assesses harassment from each source (here, team supervisors and coworkers) separately.

We used cross-sectional data to test the proposed model, and thus it is not possible to infer any causality in the relationships that were found. Longitudinal research on this topic is clearly needed. Experimental data, such as an experimental evaluation of the impact of team sexual harassment training interventions on team ambient sexual harassment, team processes, and team performance, would also be beneficial for clarifying causality. The data for ambient sexual harassment, conflict, and cohesion were all gathered from team members, making it possible that common-source bias may have inflated the observed relationships. We

used only women's data for sexual harassment and used all team members' data for other variables, a procedure that reduced the possible impact of common-source bias. We also used supervisors' ratings of OCBs and financial indicators from company records to reduce the impact of this bias. Another concern is whether the results will generalize to other populations. The incidence rate of sexual harassment was slightly lower than that found in other research with the SEQ, perhaps in part because of the somewhat low average tenure among the employees sampled here (between 2 and 3 years). We believe that the negative associations of sexual harassment will likely be even stronger in teams with more sexual harassment, yet this issue needs to be addressed in future research. Research that examines ambient sexual harassment across a variety of organizations in diverse industries would be helpful for addressing the generalizability of the current findings.

Future Directions for the Multilevel Study of Sexual Harassment

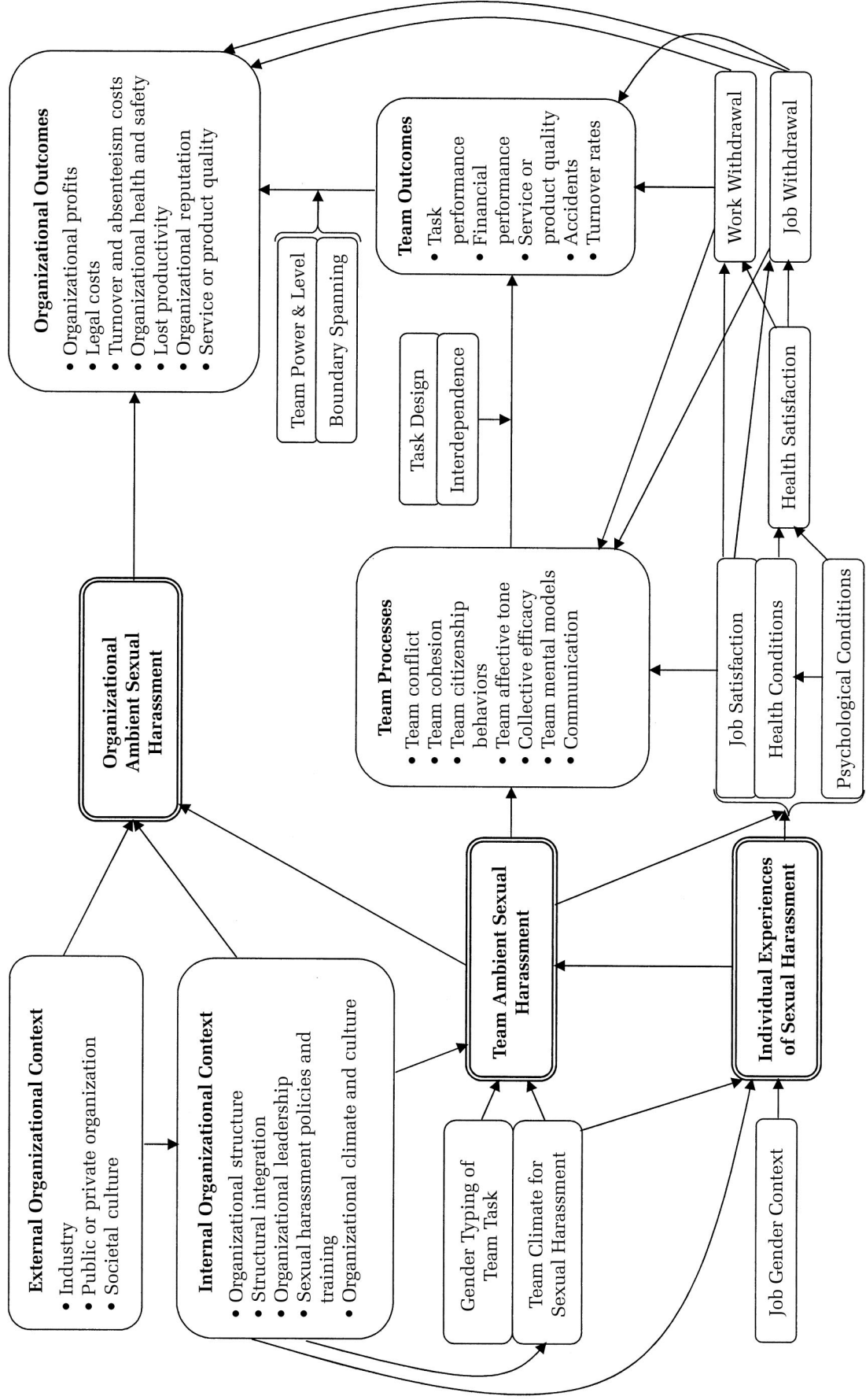
This study sets the stage for future multilevel research and theory on sexual harassment by providing initial evidence that team levels of ambient sexual harassment are associated with team interpersonal processes and a team financial outcome. We chose to examine processes that are typically considered defining characteristics of teams (Levi, 2001), yet it is important for future work to continue to expand the boundaries of sexual harassment research. Additional team-level outcomes, organizational levels of ambient sexual harassment, and organization-level outcomes should be explored. Furthermore, although the focus of the current research was on outcomes associated with ambient sexual harassment, multilevel research is also needed to understand the antecedents of ambient sexual harassment within and across levels. In Figure 1, we illustrate key variables and possible relationships to be investigated in future team-, organization-, and cross-level research. At the bottom of the figure is an individual-level model of the antecedents and consequences of sexual harassment that was tested by Fitzgerald and her coauthors (1997) and has been validated across settings and across cultures. In the middle of Figure 1 is a team-level model that included the one tested in this study (with additional variables specified), and at the top is an organization-level model. Cross-level relationships are also indicated. Because of the abundance of individual-level sexual harassment research and space limitations, we focus on research possibilities at the team and organization

levels, and across levels. Interested readers should refer to Fitzgerald and coauthors to learn more about individual-level relationships and to Glomb and her colleagues (1997) to learn more about the relationships between team ambient sexual harassment and individual-level outcomes.

Team-level model of sexual harassment. Now that this research has established the relationship between team ambient sexual harassment, team processes, and a team outcome, it is important for future research to investigate team-level antecedents, additional group processes, additional outcomes, and possible moderators. For example, we propose that team climate for sexual harassment (Hulin et al., 1996) and the gender traditionality of a team task will be predictors of levels of harassment in teams, and that harassment will tend to create a negative group affective tone, poor communication, low collective efficacy, and an inability to establish team mental models. We further suggest that these team processes may mediate the relationship between ambient sexual harassment and a host of team outcomes, including turnover, indicators of task performance (e.g., the quality or quantity of products), and indicators of occupational safety and health (e.g., the frequency of accidents). Interdependence and task design may moderate these relationships between processes and outcomes in such a way that high interdependence and complex tasks may make the relationships between group processes and group outcomes even stronger.

Organization-level model of sexual harassment. As seen in Figure 1, we propose that factors external to an organization and internal organizational characteristics are both predictors of organizational ambient sexual harassment. Regarding the external context, we argue that industry will influence organizational ambient sexual harassment, expecting that traditionally male-dominated industries (e.g., steel, automotive, military) will have higher organizational levels of harassment. We further posit that organizations relying upon government funds will tend to implement stronger anti-harassment policies and have lower levels of harassment owing to greater external accountability and legal compliance. However, the positive benefits of external accountability and legal compliance may be greatly reduced in heavily male-dominated governmental organizations, such as the military. Furthermore, given that an increasing proportion of consumer purchases are made by women (Blum, Fields, & Goodman, 1994), service organizations may feel more pressure to engage in socially approved practices and implement strong anti-harassment policies than manufacturing organiza-

FIGURE 1
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tions. Societal culture is also likely to influence organizational levels of ambient sexual harassment. We propose that patriarchal cultures, which have strong gender roles and asymmetrical standards for men's and women's sexual behavior, will tend to have high levels of ambient sexual harassment because in such cultures, men's sexually assertive behaviors are often excused as "normal" (Cortina & Wasti, 2005). Cultures high in vertical collectivism, in which the integrity of the in-group and the need to sacrifice personal goals to maintain group harmony is emphasized (Triandis & Gelfand, 1998), will also tend to have high levels of ambient sexual harassment, because women feel pressured to accept sexually explicit behaviors rather than speak up and break harmony.

Factors internal to organizations may also be important antecedents to organizational ambient sexual harassment. For example, we propose that harassment will be higher in hierarchical organizations that accentuate power differentials than in flatter organizations. We also expect that organizations with low structural integration with regard to women in upper-level leadership positions, and organizations whose leaders fail to communicate that sexual harassment is not tolerated, will have high levels of ambient sexual harassment. The existence of formal sexual harassment policies and procedures, as well as informal practices related to harassment (i.e., climate for harassment), both communicate the extent to which sexual harassment is forbidden or permitted and should impact actual levels of organizational ambient sexual harassment. Although we have listed these antecedents independently, it will be important for future research to examine interactions among them in predicting organizational levels of harassment. For example, when sexual harassment training is implemented in an organization that has a climate that is very permissive of harassment, backlash and, ultimately, higher levels of sexual harassment may result. Figure 1 also lists several organization-level outcomes of ambient sexual harassment, which researchers need to investigate to determine the consequences of harassment for organizations as a whole.

Cross-level models of sexual harassment. Organizations are hierarchically nested systems, and it is unlikely that relations on one level will be unaffected by other levels (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000); therefore, Figure 1 specifies both bottom-up and top-down cross-level paths. For example, ambient sexual harassment rates at team and organizational levels are bottom-up processes consisting of summations of individuals' experiences. Bottom-up processes also include the proposed paths between

individual-level satisfaction and team processes, and between team outcomes and organizational outcomes. Such processes may not be isomorphic across levels but may instead emerge as distinctly different across levels (that is, they are "compilation models"; Kozlowski and Klein [2000]). Further, additional variables may also moderate these relationships; for instance, team outcomes may be more strongly related to organizational outcomes for powerful or executive-level teams, or for boundary-spanning teams. Figure 1 also presents top-down direct effects that should be examined in future research, such as the relationships between organizational characteristics and both team climate for sexual harassment and individual experiences of sexual harassment (see Fitzgerald et al., 1997; Hulin et al., 1996).

One final direction for future inquiry is for scholars to consider alternative approaches to conceptualizing and measuring sexual harassment at the team and organizational levels. We drew from previous work on ambient sexual harassment (Glomb et al., 1997) to study it as a summative construct representing the average frequency of sexual harassment experienced by women within a team. One alternative suggested by an anonymous reviewer would be to focus on understanding the *patterns* of sexual harassment in teams and in organizations. For example, one might be interested in determining whether team members are conspiring to harass a single member or whether highly central (powerful) members are enacting the harassment. One possibility for empirically assessing such patterns would be social network analysis, whereby team members would rate their experiences of harassment with each other member. When combined, these data would give researchers a map of the patterns of sexual harassment within a given team, and team features associated with these different patterns could then be discerned.

Over a decade ago, in their review of the sexual harassment literature, Fitzgerald and Shullman stated, "We are struck even more forcefully than usual by the value—indeed, the necessity—of a multilevel analysis" (1993: 23). We have begun to answer this call to action and have proposed some avenues for future multilevel theory and research on sexual harassment. Yet it is clear that much work is needed to further scholars' understanding of the antecedents and consequences of sexual harassment extending beyond individual victims.

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