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SEXUAL HARASSMENT OF BLUE COLLAR WORKERS

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ABSTRACT

The problem of sexual harassment in work settings has received little empirical examination to date. This study used mailed questionnaires to elicit respondents' opinions about sexual harassment and their perceptions of its incidence, scope and recourses taken by victims. Systematic samples were drawn from a blue collar union's rosters of male and female members. The findings indicated that twenty-three percent of the respondents felt they had been sexually harassed (thirty-six percent of the women and eight percent of the men). Whereas the women viewed the problem in power-dominance terms, the men did not. Other findings in relation to scope and recourses are discussed.

This study examines the problem of sexual harassment in blue-collar work settings. A review of the literature showed only three studies of sexual harassment using scientific sampling techniques, which were done by the Federal Merit Systems Protection Board and Gutek, et al, in 1980 and 1981. This lack of attention in the scientific literature cannot be used as an indicator of its importance. As a social problem it has elicited growing public awareness, as shown in recent popular magazines and films and in recent public law and rulings, such as the 1964 Civil Rights Act and Equal Employment Opportunity Commission guidelines.

Sexual harassment is the unwanted imposition of sexual behavior within the context of an unequal power relationship (MacKinnon, 1979:1). Max Weber defined power as, "the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his/her own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests," (1947:142). This definition was used to conceptualize the potential dimensions of sexual harassment.

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Sexual harassment has been thought to occur when a person in a position to control or influence another person's job or career uses the position's authority and power to coerce the person into sexual relations, or to punish the person if he/she refuses (Alliance Against Sexual Coercion, 1978:2). Sexual harassment has negative effects upon its victims. If the victim complains, reprisals, such as dismissal, reprimands, sabotage of work, increased workloads, and poor personnel reports may occur (AASC, 1977:45). A recent survey reported that victims expressed feelings of powerlessness, self-consciousness, defeat, diminished ambition, decreased job satisfaction, impaired job performance, and physical symptoms (Safran, 1976). The Federal Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) survey reported that most victims felt that either their work or their emotional or physical condition became worse.

Examples of how sexual harassment affects its victims are plentiful in the literature. One Redbook study respondent said, "I was fired because I refused to give (sic) at the office," (Safran, 1976:149). Another said, "I've never felt so helpless and intimidated. When I complain, my boss says that the wrongdoing is in my imagination. Half the time he has me feeling guilty. . ." (Safran, 1976:149). A woman lawyer, who refused the attention of a powerful attorney in her firm reported how it affected her:

My health began to suffer. The tension involved in trying continually to fend him off without risking his ire was almost too much for me. I began to experience painful constrictions in my chest -- I was convinced I was heading for a heart attack (Backhouse and Cohen, 1981:20).

A woman construction worker who experienced sexual harassment from the men on the job concluded:

Sexual harassment is a good way to get back at you. It's their way of saying you're a nonperson, only a sexual object. They're right, it's completely humiliating, one of the toughest things to fight. It dehumanizes you when people are grabbing at you and yelling obscenities (Backhouse and Cohen, 1981:13).

The incidence of sexual harassment in work settings varies depending upon the survey viewed. The survey conducted by the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (Local 1585) at Michigan State University found 73 percent of the women custodians responding considered sexual harassment to be a problem (Farley, 1978). A 1976 Redbook reader survey found that 88 percent of the 9,000 responding women in white collar jobs reported sexual harassment at work (Safran, 1976). A 1980 survey of 23,000 federal employees concluded that 25 percent of all federal workers (42 percent of the women and 15 percent of the men) have been victims of sexual harassment in some form (Merit Systems Protection Board, 1981:3, 34-35). The Gutek study (1981) concluded that 53% of women and 37% of men had been harassed. A survey conducted on a U.S. naval base found that 81 percent of the women had experienced it (MacKinnon, 1979). Except for the MSPB and Gutek (1981) studies, the non-random sample of these studies dictates that their conclusions be considered only suggestive.

The recourses women take in response to sexual harassment range from leaving the situation, to ignoring it, to complaining to peers and supervisors, to taking legal action. A Cornell survey showed that, of the women who experience sexual harassment, nine percent quit immediately, two percent asked for a transfer, and twenty-three percent ignored it at first (Farley, 1978). The Working Women United's survey found that, when women ignored it, the harassment intensified in seventy-six percent of the cases. Others feared their complaints would be ignored or they would be blamed or labeled as a trouble maker (MacKinnon, 1979). Recourses sought through company policy and unions have shown little result in the past. Policies in companies have been lacking until recently. Union effectiveness has been limited because only a small percentage of women workers belong to unions (AASC, 1977; Bularzik, 1978).

Legal recourses for sexual harassment consist of Title VII and IX of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the equal protection section of the United States Constitution, workman's compensation legislation, occupational health and safety statutes, criminal and tort law, state employment laws, and collective bargaining sanctions (AASC, 1977; Goldberg, 1978). Of the possible legal avenues, special note should be given to Titles VII and IX of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which specifically prohibit sex discrimination.

The literature review of the incidence, types and recourses taken in regard to sexual harassment revealed little research attention. Also, it appeared that authors rely on power theory to describe harassment in vertical relationships, but have given little recognition to the theoretical implications of co-worker (lateral) harassment. In addition, little attention has been given to the victim's relationship to the harasser, the types of harassment, and recourses taken, within the context of various work settings. Accordingly, the purpose of this study is to examine the incidence and characteristics of sexual harassment among one group, that of blue collar factory workers. Theoretical and research implications are discussed in relation to the findings.

Methodology

Design

This study uses the traditional one-sample, stratified by gender, cross-sectional survey design. As such, it represents exploratory-descriptive research, in which there is a single observation of many variables. The data was gathered during the summer of 1980 from respondents residing in a midwestern metropolitan area.

Sample

The populations were 1,561 male and 243 female blue collar members of one union in ten local manufacturing plants. The union business agent provided the roster of names and addresses. The names of each of the men and women were sequentially numbered and systematic samples with a random starts were selected. To have equal members of men and women, the population of women were over-sampled. The men's sample was drawn from two out of every ten workers and the women's sample was drawn from two out every three. This was done to reflect the nature of the study's focus on the workers in the two groups as the units of analysis, rather than on the total population. This procedure yielded an overall sample of 324 (164 men and 160 women).

Data Collection

A three-part paper and pencil questionnaire was developed. The first part contained questions on the respondent's socio-economic-demographic variables of job title, supervisory responsibility, years of paid employment, race, age, education, income and marital status. The second part was composed of a list of opinion statements which reflected the respondents' views on the definition and characteristics of sexual harassment. To enhance content and face validity, a list of statements was submitted to eight university social sciences faculty/staff and to ninety-four sociology students for evaluation. Both faculty/staff and student groups included men and women. From the initial fifty-four items, sixteen were selected on the basis of Likert scalability procedures as having a discriminatory power which exceeded .5 (See Goode and Hatt, 1952:275-276).

An internal reliability check was built into the list of opinion statements by including two which had similar content. A five-point Likert Scale (agree-disagree) was used with each of the statements in this part. The third section of the questionnaire dealt with the views of the respondents on 1) the incidence of sexual harassment of men and women in the work setting; 2) the types of harassment and, 3) types of recourse taken by the victims. Yes/no and check-off responses were used. In addition, space was provided for open-ended comments.

Numbered questionnaires were mailed to each member of the sample with stamped, self-addressed return envelopes enclosed. The first two waves included an explanatory cover letter and an endorsement letter from the union business agent; the third wave included only the authors' letter. Attempts were made to contact non-responders by telephone. The SPSS package was used for the computer analysis. Frequency distributions, cross-tabs and chi-square were used.

Results

The overall net return rate of usable data collection instruments for the two sub-samples was forty-seven percent. According to Seltiz, et al, (1976) this is a typical return rate. The usable return rate of the women was fifty-three percent (81) and of the men, forty-seven percent (71). As a check of the respondents' representativeness, their socio-economic profile was submitted to the union business agent. Based on this knowledge of the characteristics of the workers, he felt the make-up of the respondents was representative of the populations as a whole, except that it contained fewer younger workers than he had expected. He concluded that the smaller number of younger workers might be due to recent lay-offs in the plants.

Respondent Description

The first variable measured, job title, showed a marked homogeneity in the positions held by the members of the two samples. The work force seemed to be well integrated by function. Fifteen percent of the men were in supervisory positions, but only six percent of the women were. The mode for years of paid employment for both men and women was eleven to fifteen years, however, forty percent of the men

had over fifteen years, while only eighteen percent of the women had over fifteen. Only four percent of the men were non-white, as compared with fourteen percent of the women.

Thirty-two percent of the men had some college or technical school compared to only sixteen percent of the women. The men were slightly older with thirty-four percent being 45 or older compared to twenty-nine percent for the women. Forty-two percent of the men had incomes of \$15,000 and above; but only seventeen percent of the women had that income level. Seventy-nine percent of the men and sixty-four percent of the women were married.

General Opinions

The men and women were in general agreement on nine of the sixteen variables (Table 1 on the following page).

A large majority of both groups agreed that using superior authority to force a person into unwanted sexual relations is a form of rape. For both groups, the statement about rape had the highest percentage of agreement. Both groups agreed that harassment is not reported to bosses. About half of the women and a third of the men felt that women put up with harassment because they felt nothing could be done. Only half of the women believed that enforcing present laws or speaking out to bosses would stop it. The men were similarly pessimistic on enforcing the laws and speaking out to bosses. Unfortunately, such pessimism can become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Twenty-three percent of the women and twenty-nine percent of the men reported familiarity with Title VII of the Civil Rights Act. These small percentages indicate a need for information to be provided to the workers.

Statistically significant differences, at the $p = .05$ level, in views between the two groups were reported on a number of variables. Half of the women felt that men believe they have a license to sexually harass women; however, a lesser percentage of men agreed. This same relationship held with the responses to the statement that male employers sexually harass females. About two-thirds of these blue-collar women felt that sexual harassment happened to women in all classes of society, but only twenty-eight percent of the men felt so.

In response to the definition that sexual harassment is unwanted sexual behavior toward women, seventy-two percent of the women agreed, but only forty-nine percent of the men did so. Sixty-three percent of the women agreed that the major function of sexual harassment is to preserve the dominance of males over females; but only thirty-one percent of the men agreed. While eighty percent of the women felt that harassment is upsetting, only thirty-three percent of the men agreed with the statement. The male respondents consistently viewed harassment as less of a problem to women than women did.

The two statements on power/dominance (statement #1 and #10) were used for an

TABLE 1
General Opinions: Comparison by Gender of
Percent of Percent Agreeing with Each Statement

Opinion Statement	Women *(N) %	Men *(N) %	p =
1. Often when a person sexually harasses another, exerting power is more important than gratification**	(47) 64	(35) 51	.32
2. Sexual harassment and sexism are the same	(20) 29	(7) 10	.02
3. Male employers sexually harass female employees	(35) 45	(19) 26	.05
4. When one person uses his/her superior authority and power to force another into unwanted sexual relations, s/he uses a form of rape.	(62) 83	(58) 79	.82
5. Sexual harassment is unwanted sexual behavior toward women.	(53) 72	(36) 49	.01
6. If sexual harassment has happened to you, it was upsetting***	(52) 80	(16) 33	.001
7. Women in all classes of society are harassed.	(49) 64	(20) 28	.001
8. In sexual harassment the man is at fault most of the time.	(27) 35	(19) 26	.56
9. Women put up with sexual harassment because they feel nothing can be done.	(41) 53	(25) 35	.07
10. The major function of sexual harassment is to preserve the dominance of males over females**.	(47) 63	(22) 31	.001
11. Men feel they have a license to sexually harass women.	(35) 46	(14) 19	.001
12. I believe I am familiar with current laws, such as Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which attempts to deal with sexual harassment.	(16) 23	(19) 29	.69
13. Most bosses are <u>not</u> willing to take action to eliminate sexual harassment.	(31) 41	(25) 34	.30
14. Sexual harassment would stop if women would speak out to bosses or other administrators.	(38) 51	(35) 51	.98
15. Sexual harassment would stop if the current laws (Title VII) were properly enforced.	(37) 52	(26) 40	.26
16. Most cases of sexual harassment are <u>not</u> reported to bosses or other administrators.	(58) 78	(51) 75	.60

Note: χ^2 statistic with 2 degrees of freedom. The strongly agree and agree responses are collapsed into one agree category.

*N varies for women and men combined from 136 to 149 respondents except for statement 6.

**Reliability check, see text.

***113 responded to this item which suggests some confusion over the item as worded.

internal reliability check. The women had only a one point spread between their responses on the two questions, but the spread for the men was twenty points. Women were consistent in viewing harassment in power/dominance terms. The lesser agreement by the men than the women was consistent in terms of men seeing power as being less important than sexual gratification.

A visual inspection of Table 1 further reveals that the majority of women agreed that the use of power or force to secure sexual relations is rape, sexual harassment is usually not reported to bosses, sexual harassment is unwanted behavior and is upsetting, the power play is more important than sexual gratification, and such harassment happens to women in all classes of society. However, the majority disagreed or were neutral about sexism and sexual harassment being the same, the man is at fault most of the time and familiarity with Title VII of the Civil Rights Act.

To determine potentially relevant intervening variables, "Crosstabs" on each of the demographic variables were accomplished. Supervisors tended to view sexual harassment as less upsetting than non-supervisors ($\chi^2 = 18.81$, 2 d.f., $p = .001$). They also agreed less that bosses are not willing to take action against sexual harassment ($\chi^2 = 6.63$, 2 d.f., $p = .04$). Workers with ten or more years of work experience agreed less that the function of sexual harassment is to preserve the dominance of men over women. In regard to race, non-whites are more familiar with Title VII of the Civil Rights Act ($\chi^2 = 6.58$, 2 d.f., $p = .04$) than whites. Non-whites also agreed less that sexual harassment is not reported ($\chi^2 = 7.29$, 2 d.f., $p = .03$).

Workers over forty-four tended to agree less with the statement that women put up with sexual harassment because nothing can be done ($\chi^2 = 7.95$, 2 d.f., $p = .002$). Workers with more than twelve years of education agreed more that women in all classes in our society are sexually harassed ($\chi^2 = 6.61$, 2 d.f., $p = .04$). Workers' incomes and marital status showed no significant relationships to any of the opinion variables. An overall interaction between gender and each of these variables can be seen, though, in that the men's sample included more supervisors, tended to be older, to have more education and years of work experience and included a smaller percentage of non-whites. Therefore, the significant variable in accounting for the differences in opinions was gender.

Incidence

Thirty-six percent (29) of the women respondents and eight percent (6) of the male respondents reported being sexually harassed. The combined rate was twenty-three percent which is similar to the Merit Systems Protection Board Survey finding rate of twenty-five percent. The number of respondents having knowledge of people being harassed was even higher, as indicated in Table 2, which also shows the type of harasser. (Table 2 on the following page.)

Forty-seven percent of women said they knew women who had been sexually harassed and twenty-one percent knew men who had been harassed. Thirty-six percent of the men said they knew women who had been harassed and twenty-two percent knew men who had been harassed.

TABLE 2
Knowledge of Harassed and the Source
of Harassment by Gender

Variables	Women		Men		p =
	(N)	%	(N)	%	
1. Known women harassed	(37)	47	(24)	36	.17
2. Known men harassed	(16)	21	(15)	22	.74
3. Victim of boss' harassment	(15)	19	(4)	6	.02
4. Victim of co-worker	(23)	29	(4)	6	.001
5. Victim of customers	(5)	6	(1)	1	.10

Note: χ^2 statistic with 1 degree of freedom. The overall N for the men was 71 and for the women was 81.

Nineteen percent of the women respondents identified bosses as harassing them, twenty-nine percent identified co-workers and six percent identified customers. For men, six percent of the respondents reported being victimized by bosses and co-workers and one percent by customers. There was little disagreement between the groups on knowledge of women and men who had been harassed. However, in terms of their own victimization by bosses and co-workers, the differences between the men and women were statistically significant. It was surprising that the harassment rate reported by women was validated by a high percentage of men who knew women who were harassed.

A checklist of possible types of sexual harassment was provided to the respondents. Their responses are shown in Table 3.

TABLE 3
Harassed Respondents' Reporting of Type by Gender

Type	Women		Men	
	(N)	%	(N)	%
1. Verbal	(25)	86	(5)	83
2. Chilling atmosphere	(9)	31	(2)	33
3. Unwanted touching	(14)	48	(1)	16
4. Job altered	(7)	24	(2)	33
5. Intercourse with consent	(0)	0	(0)	0
6. Rape	(1)	3	(0)	1

Note: N equals 29 women - 6 men of study total of 71 men and 81 women.

Because of the smaller number of respondents on this issue, tests of statistical significance were not considered to be appropriate. However, comparisons suggest differences between the samples. For both samples, verbal harassment was identified as being the most frequent. For women the next most frequent was unwanted touching,

fondling. For men, the next most frequent types were chilling atmosphere and their jobs being altered. These were also the next types for women. Neither group reported unwanted intercourse with consent, but one woman (three percent of the total women harassed) reported being raped. The actual act of intercourse, as a job requirement, was of small significance, in contrast to the social control problems of verbal abuse and the ways victims were treated in their specific jobs.

Recourses Taken

Harassed respondents were provided with a checklist to indicate to whom they reported the harassment incidents. The response represented a continuum of informal to formal reporting efforts, as indicated in Table 4.

TABLE 4
Harassed Respondents' Recourses Taken
by Gender

Reported it to:	Women		Men	
	(N)	%	(N)	%
1. Spouse, if married	(10)	34	(2)	33
2. Friend	(9)	31	(3)	50
3. Co-worker	(18)	62	(2)	33
4. Supervisor	(8)	28	(3)	50
5. Administrator/boss	(7)	24	(1)	17
6. Union	(8)	28	(2)	33
7. Police/Law enforcement	(0)	0	(0)	0
8. Private attorney	(0)	0	(0)	0
9. State Human Rights Commission	(0)	0	(0)	0
10. Did not report	(9)	31	(1)	17

Note: N equals 29 women - 6 men of study total of 71 men and 81 women.

Again, statistical tests were not run, but comparisons do suggest differences. The modal response for harassed women (about two-thirds) was to report it to co-workers. The modal response for men (fifty percent) was to report it to their spouses. Few women reported it to the formal company-union level. The women seemed less inclined to seek the protection of the formal power structure. No one in the two groups had taken formal recourse outside the company/union context. What accounts for this lack of turning to formal recourses? Unfortunately, this study did not ask such questions. Is it "machoism" on the part of the males and "learned helplessness" on the part of the females? The answers to such problems will be crucial to determine how to combat the harassment problem.

As is often the case, respondents can speak eloquently for themselves. About

half of the women and a third of the men provided additional comments. Some of the comments confirmed the experiences of the victims in the literature review while others denied them. Both men and women indicated that they had been harassed. One man wrote, "Sexual harassment is not just confined to women as victims. In factories, sexual activities are used to solve the problems of boredom for some people." Another man wrote, "There are women supervisors that now pull the same stunts that men used to, but not as often." Still another man wrote, "Sexual harassment is not only carried out by men but more often by women..."

One woman wrote, "I feel sexual harassment is an everyday occurrence. Joking around with the guys is one way to get along, but there comes a time when it's not funny anymore. When you finally tell this person to go jump, they think your (sic) a bitch and harass you even more... I wonder how men would feel, put in (sic) this situation?" Another woman wrote, "I don't think you would want to hear about the terrible harassment that's made me suffer." Still another said, "(Sexual harassment) is no good. I have had a lot of harassment. (It) does not only mean that someone tries to get in (sic) my nickers (sic), it (also) means not getting a decent break in a job..."

Other comments included: (Sexual harassment is) "When they just keep bothering you... or making your job harder," "It is oppression;" "Having to worry, being disturbed, troubled;" "Use of force to manipulate;" "Sexual remarks, laughter, patting;" "No give - no job;" "You are made to feel less effective on the job;" "I feel that women have no recourse... It doesn't leave you with a good feeling inside. It's a hopeless feeling. Very upsetting. And to realize that you have to go into work day after day, it takes a lot of will power to force yourself to go into this kind of atmosphere. I gave up." One woman, obviously upset by the problem, wrote on the front page of the questionnaire, "Stick it in your shorts." This may reflect her rather direct, blue-collar method of dealing with sexual harassment.

Discussion

The demographic data indicate that men outnumbered the women in the work force (in contrast to the samples) by approximately 7 to 1. The men had more years in the work force, had more whites in the group, were better educated, occupied more supervisory positions, were slightly older, had better incomes and more were married. These data may reflect the more recent entrance of women in increasing numbers to blue-collar industrial settings. It also reflects a basis for the male-dominant power structures in blue collar settings.

In relating to the opinion statements, both groups showed an antipathy toward the use of coercion to secure sexual relations, a pessimism toward the value of reporting to bosses and enforcing existing laws and lack of knowledge of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act. The men saw power/dominance as less of a factor, but the women had little doubt about its playing the major role. Statistically significant differences in views between the samples surfaced on men having "licenses" to harass women, the belief that sexual harassment was unwanted, it happens to women at all levels of our societal structure and is upsetting to women.

The results on admitted harassment in this study are different from most other studies in two respects. First, the percentage (23% for men and women) is lower than reported in most of the "quasi-studies," but is comparable to the random-sample based Merit Systems Protection Board survey. This difference with the "quasi-studies" may be the result of the sample having been randomly selected and the nature of the work setting. In the factory setting, the opportunities for private encounters may be fewer. Many of the "quasi-studies" were at the "white collar" or university levels. In any regard, a relationship between class and the incidence of perceived harassment may be evident. Blue collar workers seem to report it less.

The second difference between this study and most of its predecessor "quasi-studies" is that the person doing the harassing is more frequently a co-worker, rather than the boss/employer. This same finding was also listed in the Merit Systems Protection Board survey. This difference may be explained to some extent by the pattern of contact in the blue collar setting. A worker interacts with the employer/administrator less frequently and on a less personal basis.

Another finding of this study is that by almost a five to one margin, more women reported being harassed than men. However, the number of men who admit being harassed indicates that it is not just a woman's problem, which is consistent with the Merit Systems Protection Board survey. With power/dominance as a major factor in harassment, the number of sexually harassed men may increase, as more women become bosses/employers.

Those who admitted to being harassed identified verbal harassment as the form most frequently experienced (86% of the women, 83% of the men), as shown in Table 3. Unfortunately, the study didn't ascertain if "foul language" was perceived as harassment. Blue collar women may be more tolerant of it than their counterparts in other work settings. Certainly, language reflects the different class cultures.

A striking difference is found in the area of unwanted touching. Forty-eight percent of the women said they experienced unwanted touching, whereas only sixteen percent of the men did. The difference can be explained in part by the touching customs in this country. Touching can be viewed as indicating intimacy or power. Henley (1977) found that the more powerful person in a dyadic relationship touches the less powerful person. Women, enmeshed in the subservient female role stereotype, may feel this power differential keenly and resent being touched by men with whom they do not have an intimate relationship.

Despite the faith expressed by respondents that affirmative results came from reporting incidences of harassment, the respondents in this study did not have much success when they reported being harassed (17 reportings out of 60 for the women, 3 reportings out of 13 for the men). As attitudes and policies toward harassment continue to change, the harassment recourse effectiveness rate should also increase.

This study has several practical and theoretical implications. First, it is likely that questions which ask respondents about whether or not sexual harassment is a problem, if the respondent knows of victims of harassment, and if the respondent, specifically, has been harassed, will elicit quantitatively different responses. Only the last question may have much validity. This may account for the wide variation in incidence findings between various studies. However, the variations may also be accounted for by the use of studies which have biased or idiosyncratic samples.

From a policy standpoint, a work force in which twenty-three percent have experienced sexual harassment may need further attention. Companies must have policies which clearly state their acceptance of the illegal nature of the act, their willingness to follow up on complaints and to punish policy violators. Federal and State legal recourses exist to support complainants. It is the companies' and unions' responsibility to educate the workers on their availability. It will take the "institutionalization" of formal recourses to change the status quo. If the union or the firm has a newsletter, the problem and recourses can be discussed on a sustained basis. Case studies can be featured in the newsletter for "consciousness raising" purposes. The firm or union can sponsor outside expert to come into the plant to train supervisors or to assist groups of victims in dealing with the problem.

A work environment, in which women experience the stress of unwanted sexual advances from men in the vertical (formal) power structure and from men in the horizontal (informal) power structure, as seen in Figure 1, has little social justice and may constrain women's job performance. This constraint can have a negative impact on the company's profit margin.

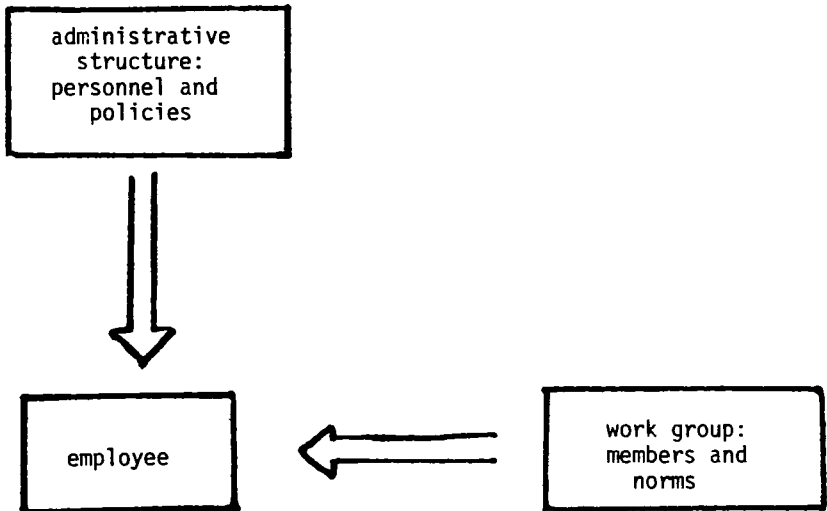


Figure 1. Power structure impacts on employees

As clearly indicated in this study and the Merit Systems Protection Board study, contrary to popular belief, the main source of sexual harassment is co-workers. This is not to say, of course, that the vertical power factor is not in operation. As indicated in Weber's power definition, the more powerful actor will overcome resistance "regardless of the basis on which this probability rests." The italics are these authors.

Whereas previous writers have focused on the vertical power relationship as the basis for the unequal power situation and on men corrupting this power for their sexual gratification, a horizontal power theory, based on informal group dynamics must be developed to explain the sexual harassment victim-co-worker situation. Perhaps the primary intervening variables are those of social or actual distance or opportunity for social contact with the victim. Certainly in blue collar factory settings men control this informal power structure. All of the sociological properties and internal forces of primary groups may be manipulated by the existing informal power structure to preserve its dominance, including differential status allocation, stigmatization, labeling, scapegoating and sexual harassment, as forms of social control.

In regard to research needs, the methodology of this study could be replicated in other blue collar settings, as well as white collar and professional settings. An attitude scale should be developed, which could be used over time to pick up attitudinal changes on this topic. Further exploration of the contexts of sexual harassment and the specific recourses taken, should be undertaken and, of course, the anti-harassment laws and policy impacts should be evaluated.

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