

Sexual Harassment in the Lives of Women of Color

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Sexual Harassment is a common occupational hazard for working women, with approximately half of all working women experiencing at least one sexually harassing incident in the workplace (Fitzgerald & Shullman, 1993; Illes, Hauserman, Schwochau & Stibal, 2003). Sexual harassment has been associated with a variety of negative psychological, health, and work/academic outcomes, such as increased posttraumatic stress, depression, anxiety, job and supervisor and job dissatisfaction, diminished work productivity, and physical health problems (e.g., Avina & O'Donohue, 2002; Schneider, Swan, & Fitzgerald, 1997; Willness, Steel, & Lee, 2007); which may persist for years after the harassment has ended (Glomb, Munson, Hulin, Bergman, & Drasgow, 1999). To date, sexual harassment research has largely focused on the experiences of White women with little consideration of Women of Color's unique experiences with sexual harassment. Thus, questions remain regarding potential differences and similarities in the nature, frequency, and perceptions of sexual harassment across diverse groups of women.

Although progress has been made, there continue to be gender and racial inequalities in the labor market, which disadvantages working Women of Color (Browne & Misra, 2003; Kim, 2006) and has the potential to influence how they are sexually harassed. *Double or multiple jeopardy* theory (Beal, 1970; King, 1988) suggests that Women of Color are multiply marginalized due to race, gender, and often social class, which places them at increased risk of victimization. Thus, sexual harassment should manifest more frequently and severely for women who hold multiple intersecting marginalized identities (Beal, 1970; Bowleg, Huang, Brooks, Black, & Burkholder, 2003; DeFour, David, Diaz, & Thompkins, 2003; King, 1988), which has been supported in recent studies (Berdhal & Moore, 2006; Buchanan, Settles, & Woods, in press). In addition to higher rates of a single form of harassment, Women of Color may also be targeted with multiple types of harassment based on these identities (e.g., racial and sexual

harassment), which has been associated with greater detriment to their psychological well-being than experiencing a single form alone (Buchanan & Fitzgerald, 2008). Moreover, because women of color live at the intersection of multiple forms of oppression, including race, gender, and often social class oppression, they often experience *racialized sexual harassment*, which is distinct from either racial or sexual harassment in that it simultaneously combines both forms such that neither is distinct, such as calling someone a “Black whore” (Buchanan, 2005a; Buchanan & Ormerod, 2002; Cho, 1997; Cortina, Fitzgerald, Drasgow, 2002; Texiera, 2002). Consequently, when sexual harassment occurs against the backdrop of multiple forms of workplace abuse, victims report elevated levels of distress (Buchanan & Fitzgerald, 2008; Cortina et al., 2002).

The purpose of this paper is to review sexual harassment research as it pertains to women of color in the United States. Although a review of the experiences of Women of Color from across the globe is beyond the scope of this chapter, there is evidence that both race and gender influence women’s harassment and victimization experiences around the world (e.g., DeSouza & Solberg, 2003; Sigal et al., 2005). We first review the legal, behavioral, and psychological definitions of sexual harassment and then examine the research on racial/ethnic differences in the frequency, perceptions, psychological consequences, and coping strategies related to sexual harassment among African American, Latina, and Asian American women. Finally, we conclude with suggestions for future research.

Definitions of Sexual Harassment

Legal definitions. Sexual harassment has been defined as both a legal and a psychological phenomenon (Gutek & Done, 2001). Title VII of the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1991 prohibit employment discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex and national origin². As originally

conceptualized, Title VII included gender-based *discrimination*, but did not address sexual harassment (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission [EEOC], 1980). It was not until the 1976 ruling in *Williams v. Saxby* that sexual harassment was legally recognized as a form of sex discrimination that violated Title VII. Subsequent cases further specified specific behaviors constituting sexual harassment. For example, *Barnes v. Costle* (1977) determined that *quid pro quo* (attempts to coerce sexual compliance via job-related threats or promises of benefits, e.g., termination or a job promotion) constituted a violation of Title VII. Similarly, *Meritor Savings Bank v. Vinson* (1986) set legal precedent for the recognition of a *hostile environment* as a form of sexual harassment. A hostile environment may be created when an employee perceives the workplace milieu to be hostile, or an employee's work performance is hindered, as a result of unwanted gender-based comments and behaviors, regardless of whether or not they result in tangible or economic job consequences.

Psychological and behavioral definitions. Psychologists have defined sexual harassment within a stress and coping framework (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) that encapsulates the individual's appraisal of her/his experience. From this perspective, sexual harassment is defined as "an unwanted sex-related behavior at work that is appraised by the recipient as offensive, exceeding her resources, or threatening her well-being" (Fitzgerald, Swan, & Magely, 1997, p. 20). Alternatively stated, the individual must appraise the situation as stressful and initiate a complex coping process, which can vary considerably based on individual factors, such as age or ethnicity, contextual factors of the organization (e.g., tolerance of sexual harassment or gender segregation), and the nature of the harassment, such as its frequency or severity. This perspective may explain why some targets of harassment report little or no distress while others experience harassment as a traumatic and significant psychological stressor (Avina & O'Donohue, 2002).

Behaviorally, sexual harassment has been classified into three distinct, but related dimensions (Fitzgerald, Gelfand, & Dragow, 1995). First, *gender harassment* refers to comments and behaviors that suggest insulting, hostile, and degrading attitudes toward women without the objective of gaining sexual submission. This can be further divided into two sub-types: *sexist hostility* (misogynistic conduct that demeans women without overt sexual content, such as comments that women are intellectually inferior to men) and *sexual hostility* (explicit sexual gestures or jokes, showing sexually explicit materials). Second, *unwanted sexual attention* includes uninvited touching, fondling, or repeated requests for dates or sexual interactions. Frequently, legal allegations of a hostile environment result from gender harassment and unwanted sexual attention. The third type of sexual harassment, *sexual coercion*, is the same as the legal definition of quid pro quo and refers to unwanted sexual attention with direct or implied job-related bribes or threats. These forms of sexual harassment can occur in varying degrees of severity and can co-occur within the same workplace (Gelfand, Fitzgerald, & Dragow, 1995; Langhout, Bergman, Cortina, Fitzgerald, Dragow, & Hunter Williams, 2005).

The Role of Race in Sexual Harassment

The research on sexual harassment among ethnic minority women has generally focused a distinct set of questions (Murrell, 1996). First, are commonly accepted estimates of harassment frequency, largely based on reports from White women, accurate for women of color? Do women of color experience unique forms of sexual harassment or higher rates of particular forms of sexual harassment when compared to White women? Third, are there racial differences between Women of Color and White women? Third, are there racial differences between Women of Color and White women in their perceptions and definitions of sexual harassment? Does ethnicity affect work-related, physical health, or psychological consequences for targets of

sexual harassment? And finally, do Women of Color utilize culture-specific or distinct coping strategies to deal with sexual harassment?

Sexual harassment frequency

Findings regarding the frequency and prevalence of sexual harassment across racial groups are contradictory. When compared to White women, some researchers found that Women of Color had comparable or lower rates of sexual harassment (e.g., Culbertson & Rosenfeld, 1994; Kalof, Eby, Matheson, & Kroska, 2001; Piotrkowski, 1998; Shupe, Cortina, Ramos, Fitzgerald, & Salisbury, 2002; Wyatt & Riederle, 1994). For example, using a single-item assessment, Piotrkowski (1998) found no significant differences in rates of gender harassment among White, African American women clerical workers. Similarly, there were no racial differences in the overall rates of sexual harassment, gender harassment, and unwanted sexual attention in a college sample of Black, Hispanic, Asian, and White college students (Kalof et al., 2001) or African American, Hispanic, and White active duty female Navy officers (Culbertson & Rosenfeld, 1994).

Conversely, when compared to men and White women, Women of Color reported higher rates of sexual harassment (Berdahl & Moore, 2006; Bergman & Drasgow, 2003; Cortina, Swan, Fitzgerald & Waldo, 1998; Gruber & Bjorn, 1982; Hughes & Dodge, 1997; Mecca & Rubin, 1999; Nelson & Probst, 2004). Ethnic minority women reported higher rates of sexual harassment than ethnic minority men, White men, and White women in a multiracial sample (Asian, Caribbean, African, Latin American, Aboriginal, Arab, and Pacific Islander) of 238 employees from five separate organizations (Berdahl & Moore, 2006). In a sample using female undergraduates (e.g. Cortina et al., 1998) and in a sample of more than 22,000 ethnically diverse military personnel (Bergman & Drasgow, 2003; Fitzgerald, Magley, Drasgow, & Waldo, 1999),

ethnic minority women reported higher mean rates of sexual harassment, and in some cases twice the rate, when compared to White women. Moreover, these studies used the Sexual Experiences Questionnaire (SEQ; Fitzgerald et al., 1988), which is a behaviorally based measure of sexual harassment and its subscales, gender harassment, unwanted sexual attention, and sexual coercion). This measure does not use the term “sexual harassment” until the final item, avoiding labeling biases that tend to underestimate prevalence rates (Magley, Hulin, Fitzgerald, & DeNardo, 1999). The SEQ has been validated for use with many ethnic minority and cultural groups (e.g., Cortina, 2001; DeSouza & Solberg, 2003; Gelfand et al., 1995) and is currently the most psychometrically sound and comprehensive assessment of psychological/behavioral dimensions of sexual harassment (Arvey & Cavanaugh, 1995; Paludi & Paludi, 2003).

The contradictory findings on racial differences in the frequency of sexual harassment may be partially explained by the failure to consider contextual factors that increase women’s vulnerability, such as job status (e.g., white vs. blue-collar work), and the failure to consider racial differences in subtypes and severity of harassment. For example, African American women experienced high rates of sexual harassment when they were employed in blue-collar or traditionally male-dominated positions, such as transit workers (Mansfield, Koch, Henderson, Vicary, & Young, 1991), autoworkers (Gruber & Bjorn, 1982), and military personnel in various branches of the armed forces (Fitzgerald et al., 1999). Women of color also may experience differing rates of sexual harassment subtypes and severity. In a Los Angeles community sample of women employed in a variety of positions from unskilled labor to professional status, White women experienced higher rates of unwanted touch and comments, however, Black women reported higher rates of unwanted explicitly sexual verbal propositions and comments constituting sexual coercion (Wyatt & Riederle, 1995). Among autoworkers, Black women

reported more severe forms of sexual harassment than White women (Gruber & Bjorn, 1982). Although this was not replicated in a subsequent study of autoworkers (Gruber & Bjorn, 1986), racial differences in severity have been supported among samples of firefighters (Yoder & Berendsen, 2001) and military personnel (Buchanan et al., in press). More recently, a sample of nearly 8,000 Black and White women military personnel examined differences in sexual harassment subtypes by both race and organizational status, operationalized via military rank, and found that White women reported more overall sexual harassment (Buchanan et al., in press). However, when sexual harassment subtypes were considered, White women reported more gender harassment and crude behavior, whereas Black women reported more unwanted sexual attention and sexual coercion. Enlisted women reported higher rates of each subtype than officers. Further, Black enlisted personnel reported more sexual coercion than White enlistees, but officers reported similarly low rates regardless of ethnicity. These findings suggest that high organizational status may buffer the increased risk associated with ethnic minority status.

Perceptions and Definitions of Sexual Harassment across Cultural Groups

Cultural groups differ in their perceptions and definitions of acceptable sexual behaviors and interactions, including sexual harassment (Cortina, 2001; Shupe et al., 2002; Wasti, Bergman, Glomb, & Drasgow, 2000). Studies have examined participants' perceptions from vignettes of potentially harassing interactions and their perceptions of their own sexual harassment experiences. Vignette studies have found many similarities in how individuals perceive harassment. For example, across a professionally diverse sample of Air Force Academy cadets, undergraduates, and business employees, Black, Hispanic, and White women all rated behaviors in a vignette as more sexually harassing if they were committed by a perpetrator that was male, older, low in social status, high in organizational status and power, or physically

unattractive (Hendrix, 2000). Another study presented sexual harassment vignettes that manipulated the race of the perpetrator and target (Black or White) to Black and White undergraduate women and found similar ratings regardless of the race of the participant (Shelton & Chavous, 1999). However, perceptions of the severity of the harassment did differ depending on the race of the target and the perpetrator. When the perpetrator was a White man, particularly a supervisor, Black and White participants rated the event as sexual harassment, but rated harassment of a White woman as more severe than that of a Black woman. Further, when the vignettes described a Black woman being harassed by a Black man, both Black and White participants were more likely to perceive the behavior as appropriate and humorous, particularly if he was a coworker. According to the investigators, these findings likely reflect a tendency to “trivialize” sexual harassment when the victim and perpetrator are African-American (Shelton & Chavous, 1999).

Results from vignette studies may not reflect individuals’ reactions and perceptions of personally experienced sexual harassment (Gutek & Koss, 1993; Woodzicka & LaFrance, 2001). To address this, researchers have examined how culture affects the perceptions of women who had experienced sexual harassment. For example, compared to highly acculturated Mexican American women and White women, more Latinas with low to moderate levels of acculturation interpreted certain behaviors (e.g., staring/ogling, comments about their body) as sexually motivated and offensive (Cortina, 2001; Fitzgerald et al., 1999; Shupe et al., 2002). In a qualitative study of Latinas, one participant stated, “What I’ve seen is that [White women] are more open... if it’s something sexual they’ll laugh and giggle about it, and I would take that offensively” (Cortina, 2001, p. 176). This quote reinforces the assertion that behaviors may carry different meanings across cultures.

Coping with Sexual Harassment

Coping refers to cognitive or behavioral strategies that an individual uses to minimize the harm caused by a stressful event or series of events (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Fitzgerald, Swan, and Fisher (1995) extended the Lazarus-Folkman model to define coping with sexual harassment as either problem-focused (externally-focused) or emotion-focused (internally-focused). Magley (2002) extended this further to define a two-dimensional model with engagement-disengagement and cognitive-behavioral dimensions. Within this model, engagement-disengagement reflects the extent to which an individual actively addresses the problem, with engagement reflecting more active involvement. Cognitive strategies address the problem internally or psychologically (e.g., minimizing or avoiding thinking about the harassment) and behavioral strategies address the problem by attempting to change the situation itself, such as transferring to a new workplace or telling the perpetrator to stop.

Few studies have attempted to incorporate the role of race/ethnicity or culture in the coping process (examples include: Buchanan, Settles, & Langhout, 2007; Cortina, 2004; Magley, 2002; Wasti & Cortina, 2002); yet, women do not necessarily respond to sexual harassment in uniform ways as a result of a variety of cultural and contextual constraints. Compared to more highly acculturated Latinas and White women, fewer less acculturated Latinas quit their jobs after being sexually harassed, perhaps due to their greater economic vulnerability and more limited employment options (Cortina, 2004; Shupe et al., 2002), Latinas also have reported using more avoidance, denial, and seeking social support to cope with harassment than formal organizational mechanisms, such as filing a formal complaint or talking with a supervisor (Cortina & Wasti, 2005; Wasti & Cortina, 2002). Conversely, in a Los Angeles community sample of 248 Black and White women, comparable percentages of both racial groups used the

following strategies to cope with sexual harassment: demanding that the harassment stop, verbally threatening the harasser or pushing him, consulting with others about the harassment, avoiding the harasser, or trying get the harasser fired (Wyatt & Riederle, 1995). Finally, there may be vast within ethnic groups differences in coping responses. One study of sexually harassed Black women in the military found six distinct patterns of coping and that these patterns of coping were differentially related to psychological well-being and work-related outcomes (Buchanan et al., 2007).

Outcomes Related to Sexual Harassment

Across racial and ethnic groups, sexual harassment has been associated with negative psychological, physical, and health-related outcomes (see Avina & O'Donohue, 2002; Fitzgerald, Drasgow, et al., 1997; O'Connell & Korabik, 2000). Nevertheless, factors related to culture impact outcomes, such as level of acculturation, relative social and organization status, and beliefs regarding gender roles. For example, Latinas who are less acculturated are more offended by potentially sexually harassing behaviors than are more highly acculturated counterparts (Cortina, 2004; Shupe et al., 2002), and being more offended is associated with greater detriment to job satisfaction and psychological well-being (Langhout et al., 2005). Among military personnel, race and organization status impacted the frequency of sexual harassment subtypes and outcomes. Specifically, enlisted women reported more distress following gender harassment, unwanted sexual attention and sexual coercion than officers and Black women experienced more psychological distress associated with gender harassment than did White women (Buchanan et al., in press)

Feminist consciousness has been associated with greater psychological well-being and resiliency (Fischer & Good, 2004; Snyder & Hasbrouck, 1996), better ability to cope with sexist

experiences (Klonis, Endo, Crosby, & Worell, 1997), and an increased likelihood of a woman perceiving her negative experience as sexual harassment (Fischer, Tokar, Good, Hill, & Blum, 2000). However, among undergraduate women, gender role attitudes and race moderated the relationship between sexual harassment and psychological well-being (Rederstoff, Buchanan, & Settles, 2007). As predicted, sexually harassed White women who endorsed feminist beliefs were protected psychologically whereas sexually harassed Black women who held stronger feminist ideologies reported greater clinical distress. The authors theorized that while embracing a feminist ideology may be protective for White women, it may create a “double consciousness” for Black women. This double consciousness increases their awareness of both race- and gender-based oppression and concomitantly heightens the detrimental effects on Black women’s psychological well-being. Together, these findings demonstrate that although women, regardless of their race or ethnicity, are harmed by sexual harassment, these relationships may be attenuated or exacerbated by factors related to race and culture.

To conclude, many researchers speculate that women of color may be at greater risk for sexual harassment due to race-based stereotypes that overly sexualize them, their lack of social and organizational power, economic vulnerability, and marginalized status as members of at least two stigmatized groups (women and people of color) (Collins, 2000; Murrell, 1996). However:

Although race appears to be an important determinant for describing frequencies and risks of harassment experiences and may affect the coping responses of the targets, race does not moderate the relationships among sexual harassment, and the variables proposed as its antecedents and outcomes (Bergman & Drasgow, 2003, p. 143).

Alternatively stated, race alone is not the sole factor that shapes sexual harassment for women of color. Other factors must also be considered, such as: 1) characteristics of the harassing behavior

or the perpetrator (e.g., the frequency, duration, and type of harassment experienced as well as a number, race, and level of power held by the harasser); 2) contextual factors specific to the organization (e.g., the organization's tolerance for harassing behavior, the gender or ethnic ratios of employees, token status, and whether the worksite is predominantly White, male, or blue-collar); and 3) individual characteristics that may increase vulnerability to harassment, such as a victims' age, income, and acculturation level (Cortina et al., 2002; Wyatt & Riederle, 1995).

Sexual Harassment Among Specific Racial Groups

Combining different ethnic groups, without consideration of the diversity between or within these ethnic groups, is problematic and can mask important factors that impact their sexual harassment. Stereotypes, cultural norms and gender-role expectations differ across Black, Latina, and Asian women and such differences influence their harassment experiences as well as their perceptions of harassment and styles of coping. In the next section we review research on sexual harassment specific to Black women, Latinas, and women of Asian descent in the United States. In particular, we focus on the prevalence, nature, and types of sexual harassment experienced, consequences of harassment on their psychological well-being, and their strategies for coping with harassment.

African-American Women

Under slavery and for many decades post-slavery, there were no legal protections for Black women who were sexually exploited. Further, sexual stereotypes of Black women, such as the Jezebel, presented them as sexually insatiable, grossly immoral, and thus, unable to be a true victim of sexual assault (Bell, 2004; Collins, 2000; West 2008). These sexualized representations of Black women persist to the present (Bryant-Davis, 2005; Poran, 2006; Sanches-Hucles, Hudgins, & Gamble, 2005; Wilcox, 2005) and result in others viewing Black women in a

sexualized manner (Bell, 2004; Collins, 2000; Settles, 2006; West, 2008). Such stereotypes also have been associated with increased endorsement of violence against Black women (Gillum, 2002), disparate treatment of Black women who have been sexually assaulted (Campbell, Wasco, Ahrens, Sefl, & Barnes, 2001; Davis, 1998), and sexual crimes against Black women being investigated less rigorously, prosecuted less frequently, and punished less severely than similar crimes against White women (Donovan & Williams, 2002; Neville & Hamer, 2001).

Black women's work history in the United States may also affect how they are perceived by others and how they are sexually harassed. The "cult of true womanhood" became the standard for the ideal woman by the mid-1800's and defined the ideal woman as submissive, self-sacrificing, pious, sexually restrained, and dedicated to caring for her family and home to the exclusion of paid employment (Browne & Kennelly, 1999; Collins, 2000; Frankenberg, 2003; Perkins, 1983; Scully & Bart, 2003; Welter, 1966). The cult of true womanhood did not apply to Black women and did not reflect the realities of their lives. From slavery to the present, Black women have been seen less as "proper women" (Santamarina, 2006; Stone & McKee, 1999; Yoder & Berendsen, 2001) and more as more capable of performing traditionally masculine jobs (e.g., industrial and field work) (Davis, 2002; Pascale, 2001). These differences in the perceptions of Black women workers, particularly when combined with sexualized stereotypes of Black women are likely to impact the frequency and nature of their harassment experiences (Adams, 1997; Buchanan et al., in press).

Sexual Harassment Frequency among Black Women

The frequency of sexual harassment among Black women has been found to vary based on their location. In university settings between 30% and 62% of Black female undergraduates reported at least one sexually harassing experience during college (Cortina et al., 1998; Kalof et

al., 2001; Mecca & Rubin, 1999). Among low income Black union workers in Boston, approximately one-third of women had experienced at least one type of sexual harassment in the year prior to the survey (Krieger, Waterman, Hartman, Bates, Stoddard, Quinn, et al., 2006). A comparable rate (34%) of Black women in a Los Angeles community sample had reported sexual harassment, which primarily took the form of sexual propositions, such as “Let me see how that blouse fits” (Wyatt & Riederle, 1995, p. 314).

Black women employed in blue-collar, lower status positions or traditionally male-dominated professions, such as the auto industry (Gruber & Bjorn, 1982), law enforcement (Texeira, 2002), and the military (Fitzgerald et al., 1999) appear to be at greater risk. For example, African American women enlistees in the Navy reported more sexual harassment as compared to African American women Navy officers (41% vs. 29% respectively; Culbertson & Rosenfeld, 1994). More than two-thirds of Black women firefighters also reported undesired sexually suggestive looks and gestures, pressure for dates, and sexist name calling (Yoder and Aniakudo, 1996, 1997).

Examining only total harassment scores may mask Black women’s relatively high rates of severe and sexualized types of sexual harassment. In a study of more than 7000 female military personnel, Black women, particularly those with low organizational status (enlisted personnel) reported significantly higher rates of unwanted sexual attention and sexual coercion (25% and 8% respectively) compared to Black female officers (10% and 2%) or White female officers (14% and 2% respectively; Buchanan et al., in press). Similarly, Mecca and Rubin (1999) discovered that although gender harassment (48%) was the most frequently reported form of sexual harassment in their college sample of 100 African American women, they also reported uncommonly high rates of seductive behavior (13%; inappropriate and offensive sexual advances

such as unwanted personal discussions or proposition) and sexual seduction (19%; being touched by a professor in a way sexual manner). Black women firefighters described being targeted for “pranks” or “initiation rites,” some of which were reminiscent of adolescent stunts, such as pouring eggs into the victim’s boots. Other pranks were malicious or even life-threatening, for example, having the victim’s car towed away or tampering with her equipment in a manner that could result in injury or death (Yoder & Aniakudo, 1996; 1997).

Racialized sexual harassment, which is distinct from either racial or sexual harassment and combines multiple forms of oppression, is also a common experience (Buchanan, 2005a; Buchanan & Ormerod, 2002; Cho, 1997; Texiera, 2002). For example, on her first day at work, one White coworker said to a Black female firefighter: “I’m gonna tell you why I don’t like you. Number one...cuz you’re Black. And number two, cuz you’re a woman” (Yoder & Aniakudo, 1996, p. 263). Black college women described a particularly distressing category of harassment based on racial stereotypes concerning their sexuality or physical features (e.g., Black women are sexually promiscuous or have large buttocks; Mecca & Rubin, 1999).

This form of sexualization also occurs in professional settings. In focus groups with university administrators, academic advisors, bankers, and Black women in other professional and executive-level positions, there were numerous accounts of inappropriate sexual comments. For example, one woman was told by her White male coworker, “I bet you are a slave to sex” (Buchanan & Ormerod, 2002, p. 115), conjuring both the enslavement of Black women and the stereotypes of them as hypersexed. Women also described a form of *covert sexual harassment* (Buchanan, 2005a) that could be conceptualized as *racialized gender harassment* that appeared to be differentially targeted toward Black women. These behaviors were typified by comments, such as implying Black women were incompetent or irresponsible. Others described difficulties

with White subordinates, often women, who refused to perform job duties for Black female supervisors despite the tasks being part of their job requirements and tasks they had done previously for White male supervisors (such as making photocopies or coffee). Participants perceived these events as refusals to engage in behaviors that might imply that they were “serving,” or were subordinate to, a Black woman.

Black Women, Coping Responses, and Consequences of Sexual Harassment

For some Black women, sexualized comments evoke particularly strong feelings because rape, childhood sexual abuse, and sexual harassment during and post-slavery were pervasive and frequent experiences (Collins, 2000; Davis, 1998). The Jezebel stereotype, which stigmatized Black women as hypersexual, was used to justify this sexual violence (Bell, 2004; West 2008). Under slavery, these crimes were deemed property crimes against the assaulted woman’s slavemaster, not a sexual assault against the victim (Davis, 1998). Despite legal changes, Black women continued to be perceived as potentially culpable in the eyes of some hospital staff, rape advocates, police officers, and court officials (Campbell et al., 2001; Donovan & Williams, 2002; Neville & Hamer, 2001). These historical traumas are intergenerational and continue to live in the collective memories of contemporary African American women. As a result, some Black women have developed a culture of silence, secrecy, and shame around sexual harassment (Adams, 1997; Davis, 2003; West, 2006); as such, many avenues of coping with sexual assault and harassment, such as seeking legal redress, may not be considered viable options.

Consequently, some Black women may remain silent when sexually harassed and may even be reluctant to label offensive behavior as sexual harassment. Even when the behavior was identified as disgusting and hostile, approximately one-third of participants in a community sample of Black women took no action against the perpetrator (Wyatt & Riederle, 1995).

Similarly, of the 52% of Black undergraduate women who endorsed at least one item on the *Sexual Experiences Questionnaire* (Fitzgerald et al, 1988), the majority (96%) did not label this offensive conduct as sexual harassment (Mecca & Rubin, 1999). Other Black women remained silent due to fear of retaliation in the form of economic sanctions or job loss, whereas others did not want to reinforce stereotypes about the hypersexual or angry Black woman (Taylor & Richardson, 2006; West, in press). When the harasser was an African American man, victims were sometimes pressured by community members and harassers to minimize the behavior. One participant explained, “As an African American, for whatever reason, black men feel like there is a window of ‘okayness.’ They feel, because your [sic] black, ‘I can come and talk to you like there are no laws being broke, just because we are of the same [race/culture]’” (Taylor & Richardson, 2006, p. 82).

On the other hand, many women did not passively accept their victimization. To illustrate, a majority of Black women firefighters directly confronted the harassers and several used physical self-defense tactics to counter the sexual harassment (Yoder & Aniakudo, 1995). In a community sample, 24% of Black respondents did one of the following when confronted with workplace sexual harassment: reprimanded the harasser and demanded that he stop; threatened him verbally, pushed or kicked him; reported the offensive behavior, or attempted to have the harasser fired (Wyatt & Riederle, 1995). In a study of nearly 3,000 Black women serving in the U.S. Armed Forces, several patterns of coping were defined, many of which used active coping strategies including confronting the perpetrator and formally reporting his behavior (Buchanan et al., 2007). However, these patterns of coping were associated with differences in their psychological well-being and work-related outcomes; ironically, those engaging in the most direct and assertive forms of coping had the worst outcomes. Further, some coping responses can

strengthen women in the long-term; specifically, embracing a Black feminist ideology can empower African American women to actively fight against sexual harassment by mobilizing at a grassroots level or using the media to educate the larger community (Ransby, 1995; West, in press).

As stated previously, sexual harassment is associated with negative mental health consequences and several factors can further exacerbate its harm. For example, harassment attacking multiple salient identities (such as one's race and one's gender) may be especially upsetting (Settles, 2006; King 2003). Further, experiencing multiple forms of trauma or a single trauma that occurs many times is not only common, but is also associated with increased psychological harm (Green, et al., 2000; Krupnick, Green, Stockton, Goodman, Corcoran, & Petty, 2004). Consistent with this, 78% of African American women who had been harassed at work, compared to 43% of their non-harassed counterparts, reported a history of sexual violence (Wyatt & Riederle, 1994), and psychological well-being was further impaired when a victim has a prior history of sexual violence, such as childhood sexual abuse or adult rape. Further, although embracing a Black feminist epistemology can increase activism and improve one's sense of agency following harassment (Ransby, 1995; West, in press), there may be a psychological cost. Among sexually harassed Black women in college, those who endorsed more feminist attitudes reported the most psychological distress. To explain these counterintuitive findings, the researchers posited that "...for Black women, feminist, nontraditional gender attitudes may indicate a greater awareness of inequity among different groups in society. This awareness, or double consciousness, may be costly..." (Rederstorff et al., 2007, p. 57). Furthermore, Black feminist undergraduates may be more aware of the history of sexual mistreatment and the social and legal response, thus they may be more reluctant to seek counseling or legal recourse given

that these systems have been historically unresponsive to sexual violence against African American women (Campbell et al., 2001; Donovan & Williams, 2002; Neville & Hamer, 2001).

Together, this implies that experiencing sexual harassment together with racial harassment will also be associated with poorer outcomes, however few studies have examined the combined effects of experiencing both. In a sample of 91 Black working women, sexual harassment and racial harassment uniquely predicted a multitude of psychological and work-related outcomes and those who experienced both forms of harassment reported significantly worse outcomes (Buchanan & Fitzgerald, 2008). Moreover, the interaction of sexual and racial harassment was statistically significant indicating that when both sexual and racial harassment were present and either form became frequent, dissatisfaction with one's supervisor and perceptions of organizational tolerance of harassment increased significantly. These findings provide evidence that when studying the harassment experiences of Black women, an analysis of both race and gender-based harassment is essential.

Latinas

Latinos represent the largest ethnic minority group in the U. S. and demographic projections indicate that they will continue to increase in numbers over the next several decades (Pew Research Center, 2005; U. S. Bureau of the Census 2007), which places increasing numbers of Latinas in American workplaces where the potential for sexual harassment is high. Similar to Black women, Latinas in the U. S. are stereotyped, sexualized, and subjected to double jeopardy. These factors combined with cultural values within Hispanic culture, such as collectivism, impatience, familism, machismo, and traditional gender-role norms (Romero, 2004), and other variables related to culture, such as level of acculturation to the dominant U. S. culture, are likely to affect how Latinas experience, perceive, and cope with sexual harassment (Cortina,

200; Cox, Dorfman, & Stephan, 2005)

Sexual Harassment Frequency among Latinas

Across a variety of workplaces and positions, Latinas reported substantial rates of sexual harassment. For example, among low-income union workers in Boston, 17.4% of Hispanic women experienced at least one type of sexual harassment in the year prior to the survey (Krieger et al., 2006). Higher rates were reported among Hispanic women military personnel: sexist hostility (63.1%), sexual hostility (73.4%), unwanted sexual attention (45.1%), and sexual coercion (12.2%; Fitzgerald et al., 1999). Latinas with less organizational status in the military are at greater risk; with enlisted Latinas reporting more sexual harassment than Latina officers (48% vs. 32%, respectively; Culbertson & Rosenfeld, 1994). In a sample of low income Latinas (primarily of Mexican descent) who were enrolled in public adult schools or job training centers in San Diego, similarly high rates of sexual harassment (60%) were found (Cortina, 2001).

Latinas who are employed in academic and professional settings also experience sexual harassment (Taylor & Richardson, 2006). For instance, 60% of Latina college students had been harassed (Cortina et al., 1998). Latinas in another university sample reported lower, yet substantial rates of overall sexual harassment (30.8%), gender harassment (23%), and unwanted sexual attention (7.7%; Kalof et al., 2001). Among 152 Latinas (primarily Mexican American) employed at a large public university, one-third reported sexual harassment and believed it was one of the most underreported problems in the organization (Segura, 1992).

Similar to the experiences reported by Black women, sexual harassment among Latinas often occurred in conjunction with other forms of sexual harassment and racial harassment (Cortina et al., 2002). Almost one-third (30%) of participants surveyed by Cortina (2001) had encountered three forms of sexual harassment (sexist hostility, sexual hostility, or unwanted

sexual attention) and those experiencing personal sexual harassment were also likely to have witnessed someone else being sexually harassed. In another predominately Latina sample, 69.2% had observed the sexual harassment of others within their organization, such as observing a coworker being targeted by male supervisors or co-workers who were telling suggestive stories or offensive jokes, heard someone make offensive remarks about the appearance, body, or sexual activities of someone else (Hitlan, Schneider, & Walsh, 2006).

One culturally-relevant concern is that Latinas vary in their level of acculturation, or the extent to which they have integrated the mainstream U.S. culture into their lifestyles. Acculturation levels have been associated with the frequency and perceptions of harassment, and with how women respond and cope when harassed. Studies have demonstrated that rather than increasing Latinas' vulnerability to harassment, remaining ensconced in traditional Hispanic culture may be protective. As a collectivistic culture, ingroup safety and security are paramount (Triandis, 1995); therefore, less acculturated Latinos may be more protective of one another and buffer one another from sexual harassment (Shupe et al., 2002). For example, among food plant workers, more acculturated Latinas reported higher rates of sexual harassment than their less assimilated counterparts (61% vs. 23%, respectively; Shupe et al., 2002).

On the other hand, lower levels of acculturation may be associated with other factors that increase Latinas' vulnerability to sexual harassment, particularly if they lack citizenship status or work in low status positions, such as *maquiladoras* (workers who assemble consumer goods in manufacturing plants along the U.S.-Mexico border; Arriola, 1999-2000), maids and domestic household workers (Velloso, 1996-1997), and farm and migrant workers (Castaneda & Zavella, 2003). Economic vulnerability, limited employment alternatives, language barriers, and fear of

deportation among recent Hispanic immigrants could increase their exposure to sexual harassment and make them less willing to report the offensive conduct.

Latinas, Coping Responses, and Consequences of Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment has been consistently associated with mental health problems and psychological distress, including feelings of anger and powerlessness. For some victims, stereotypes of “hot Latinas” who are hypersexual or low-income and uneducated “baby-makers” added to their distress (Segura, 1992; Taylor & Richardson, 2006). A variety of other factors have been associated with Latina’s perceptions of severity and distress associated with sexual harassment, such as the frequency of personal harassment and exposure to bystander sexual harassment (Hitlan et al., 2006), sexual harassment that co-occurred with racial harassment, the perpetrator’s level of power within the organization, and the victim’s higher level of acculturation (Cortina et al., 2002). Although lower acculturation appears to buffer Latinas from being harassed, it is not clear if it also buffers or exacerbates negative outcomes when they are harassed. Less acculturated Latinas in the food processing plants reported more negative job-related effects, but similar levels of psychological distress as highly acculturated Latinas (Shupe et al. 2002). Conversely, in a community sample, as Latinas became more acculturated with the dominant White American culture, they experienced sexual harassment as more severe (Cortina et al., 2002), which was associated with lower satisfaction with work, coworkers, and supervisors; job withdrawal, in the form of absenteeism, tardiness, neglect of non-mandatory job duties; as well as increased depressive, anxious, and somatic symptoms. These researchers speculate that greater affiliation with the dominant U.S. culture may be associated with more feminist beliefs, which in turn fosters greater awareness of sexual harassment. Furthermore, as Latinas adopt more U. S. cultural standards, they may encounter conflict with more traditional

family members and friends, which may limit their support system. With a limited support system, sexual harassment and the stress associated with the offensive conduct may be perceived as more severe (Cortina et al., 2002).

In order to cope with sexual harassment, Latinas most commonly attempted to procure assistance from female friends (68%) and family members (52%). Generally, these informal support networks were perceived as supportive. However, Latina victims experienced less positive support when they were faced with more severe sexual harassment, possibly because family members began to blame the victim for “allowing” the sexual harassment to continue. Latinas, particularly if they were less acculturated, who received unsupportive social responses experienced sharp declines in job satisfaction as sexual harassment intensified in severity (Cortina, 2004).

In addition, greater social proximity to the harasser was associated with less willingness to disclose the offensive conduct to family members. Given the highly cohesive and interconnected makeup of traditional Hispanic families and communities (*familismo*), Latinas may be disbelieved or silenced when they reveal the misconduct of a perpetrator who is a member of the extended family network (Cortina, 2004). Moreover, ingroup members may use their cultural familiarity to gain access to their victims and to ensure her silence. As one Latina explained, “I think a Hispanic male is more likely to say something to me than he would a Caucasian woman, because he would feel like we have that ‘special bond’, that I wouldn’t be offended” (Taylor & Richardson, 2006, p. 82). In other cases, there is a culture of silence around sexual harassment within Hispanic social networks. For example, two female coworkers, who had been harassed and remained silent, discouraged a Latina community worker from reporting

her sexual harassment “for fear that exposing the perpetrators would undermine their movement and embarrass the Latino community” (Ontiveros, 1997, p. 189).

To conclude, sexually harassed Latinas sought help from multiple sources, particularly if they had been harassed by an organizationally powerful man or perceived the harassment to be severe. Overall, 38% of Hispanic American working women in a community sample, sought help from formal, organizational sources to resolve their sexual harassment complaints. More specifically, they spoke to a supervisor about the offensive conduct, reported the harasser, and filed a grievance (Cortina, 2004). Although some of the Latinas admitted that they feared retaliation or were concerned about being labeled a troublemaker, they found ways to assert themselves and document their dissatisfaction with their mistreatment (Segura, 1992). For instance, some victims directly challenged sexual harassment, while others used subtle and nonverbal methods to communicate their displeasure, such as frowning and failing to reciprocate interest (Cortina & Wasti, 2005).

Asian Women

Although the research on this population is limited, anecdotal accounts and interviews (Cho, 1997-1998; Davar, 1999) and empirical studies suggest that working women of Asian descent experience substantial rates of sexual harassment. For example, Asian American or Pacific Islander women military personnel reported sexist hostility (58.7%), sexual hostility (66.2%), unwanted sexual attention (40.2%) and sexual coercion (10.8%) (Fitzgerald et al., 1999). Sexual harassment is a problem on college campuses as well (e.g. Chen, 1997; Green & Kim, 2005). One professor asserted, “At almost every campus where I have been, both as a student and faculty member, I have encountered appalling cases of sexual harassment against Asian Pacific and Asian Pacific American women” (Cho, 1997-1998, p. 181). As evidence of

this, 46% of Asian/East Indian American college students had been harassed (Cortina et al., 1998); however, in another college sample students who identified as Asian, Pacific Islander, or Filipino reported somewhat lower rates (33%; Kalof et al., 2001).

Economic marginalization, language barriers, citizenship status, and lack of familiarity with sexual harassment laws in the U.S. made some Asian women especially vulnerable to sexual harassment, such as Filipians who worked as live-in caregivers (Welsh, Carr, MacQuarrie, & Huntley, 2006) and Asian immigrant women who were employed in garment factories (Louie, 2001). Many victims attributed their sexual harassment to sexualized stereotypes of Asian women, including portrayals of them as exotic geishas, prostitutes who service military personnel, and “mail-order” brides who are gracious, uncomplaining servants (Cho, 1997-1998). In a college sample of Asian American women, including women of Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Filipino, South Asian, and Vietnamese descent, 69% believed that Asian American women’s sexual harassment differed from that experienced by White women and that these differences were related to how women from their ethnic group were perceived, or misperceived, by the harasser (Chen, 1997). For example, one South Asian woman was told that she was overreacting to her supervisor’s “multicultural interest” when “he said he’d read in the *Kama Sutra* about all the sexual tricks ‘my people’ could do” (Davar, 1999, p. 42). At other times, the cultural expectation that they would respond passively, and thus be less likely to resist, made Asian American women prime targets of sexual harassment. Despite these challenges, some Asian American women have organized other workers, complained, or taken legal action to stop their harassment (Cho, 1997-1998; Davar, 1999; Louie, 2001).

Asian American women face similar challenges in their harassment experiences and ability to cope with other women of color. Acculturation levels also influence their perceptions and

responses to sexual harassment. The limited research suggests that that less acculturated, more traditional Asian Americans are more tolerant of sexual harassment than Asian Americans that are more affiliated with the dominant U.S. culture (Kennedy & Gorzalka, 2002). Also, Asian American women report elevated rates of intersecting forms of harassment, such as racialized sexual harassment, which often conjures sexualized stereotypes of Asian women (Cho, 1996, 1997; Holder, Nee, & Ellis, 2000). Finally, Asian culture is generally collectivistic and Asian Americans are attentive to *loss of face*, the shame associated with behaving in a way that embarrasses the group or one's family. Loss of face often promotes behaviors that maintain, while discouraging behaviors that disrupt, intergroup harmony (Zane & Mak, 2003) and has been associated with a variety of behaviors among Asian Americans, including reduced sexual aggression (Hall, Sue, Narang, & Lilly, 2000; Hall, Tetan, DeGarmo, Sue, & Stephens, 2005). However, loss of face may also limit the coping responses of Asian American women who have been sexually harassed, particularly if the perpetrator is an ingroup member.

Conclusion

To conclude, several points can be gleaned from the research on sexual harassment in the lives of African American, Hispanic, and Asian American women. First, although women of color who are employed in lower-status, blue-collar, or male-dominated professions may be somewhat more vulnerable to sexual harassment, it remains a problem for women, particularly women of color, employed in all professions (e.g., Baker, 2004). Second, the perpetrators of sexual harassment may be male or female supervisors, co-workers, and even subordinates. In fact, as members of at least two socially marginalized groups (women and people of color), they may be more vulnerable to *contrapower harassment* by less organizationally powerful Caucasian employees, of either gender, who may use their societal race and/or gender privileges to

undermine the authority of women of color (Rospenda, Richman, & Nawyn, 1998). Third, it is possible to experience sexual harassment independently or in conjunction with other forms of harassment. For example, a sexually harassed Latina who is employed in a mostly Hispanic context may not perceive herself to be a victim of racial harassment. More commonly, however, women of color experience racialized sexual harassment, which combines elements of both racism and sexism (Buchanan & Ormerod, 2002; Buchanan, 2005a; Cho, 1997; Texiera, 2002). Related to this, women of color consistently mentioned the links between sexual harassment and stereotypes or oppressive images, such as Black women Jezebels, hot-blooded Latinas, and Asian geishas. Such misrepresentations are deeply rooted in the history of sexual violence against these respective ethnic groups (Cho, 1997; Davis, 2003) and continue to influence the contemporary sexual harassment experiences of women of color. Further, although women of color may be more distressed by interracial sexual harassment (Woods, Buchanan, & Settles, 2007), they are often encouraged to honor a code of silence regarding intra-racial sexual harassment in order to protect men of color and their communities from negative attention (Ontiveros, 1997). These demands can come at a high personal cost to women of color's well-being. Last, despite these challenges, women of color are active help seekers and use a variety of strategies to cope with and resist sexual harassment, including consulting with their social support system of friends and relatives, filing lawsuits, and directly confronting their harassers. They are not only victims, but resilient survivors (Hill, 1997; West, in press).

Future Directions

To date, there has been a dearth of research addressing the sexual harassment of women of color and this research has been peppered across many fields, such as psychology and sociology, without a critical mass of research from any one discipline. This is particularly

surprising given that Black women have been overrepresented as plaintiffs in sexual harassment lawsuits. In fact, many of the first cases used to define sexual harassment case law were brought forward by Black women (e.g., *Barnes v. Costle*, 1977; *Meritor Savings Bank v. Vinson*, 1986) and one of the most publicized debates on sexual harassment involved Anita Hill and Clarence Thomas, who were both Black (Crenshaw, 1992; Hill, 1997). Increasingly, scholars have recognized the need for additional research in this area (e.g., DeFour et al., 2003; Murrell, 1996) and identified several domains for future investigation. In particular, future investigators should strive to conduct more research on especially vulnerable populations, sexual harassment in different settings, and improve and expand research methodologies.

More Research on Diverse Populations

There is a need for more research on racial differences and similarities in sexual harassment, including frequency and prevalence rates, perceptions and definitions of sexual harassment, and the psychological, physical, and job-related consequences associated with this form of workplace abuse. To date, the vast majority of research on race and harassment has focused on Black, Latina, and East Asian women, with little research on multiracial/biracial, Native American, South Asian, or immigrant women. These are groups that may be especially vulnerable to sexual harassment or face unique forms of harassment and constraints on their responses, yet they often neglected by researchers (Rospenda, Richman, & Shannon, in press; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2006). Available research suggests that Native American women are also at high risk for sexual harassment. When compared to other ethnic groups, Native American women in the military worked in organizational environments that were more tolerant of sexual harassment and they reported the highest rates of sexual harassment including: sexist hostility (73.8%), sexual hostility (82%), unwanted sexual attention (55.6%), and sexual coercion (26.1%);

Fitzgerald et al., 1999). Anecdotal and qualitative findings among multiracial college women indicate that multiracial women may be at risk of sexual exploitation and sexual harassment (Buchanan & Acevedo, 2004; Buckley & Carter, 2004). In the only quantitative study of harassment among this population, undergraduate multiracial women experienced the highest rates of sexual harassment compared to Black, White, Latino/a, and Asian men and women (Buchanan, Bergman, Bruce, & Lichty, 2007). These findings imply that multiracial women are especially vulnerable, yet they are largely absent from the extant literature.

In addition to assessing similarities and differences across racial/ethnic groups, it is important to also consider within group and individual differences. Race and gender stereotypes manifest differently across groups and cultural norms and gender-role expectations also differ within groups. Thus, nuances and cultural factors may differentially influence Latinas from Mexico, Spain, and Puerto Rico or Black American and Black Caribbean women may cope with harassment differently. Nevertheless, the ethnic composition of racial groups are rarely reported in sexual harassment research or formally examined. In addition, future researchers need to expand their investigations to consider women of color of various ages, levels of racial identity or acculturation, and income and professional statuses. In particular, there is a special need for information on sexual harassment among lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered women. When compared to their heterosexual counterparts, sexual minorities encounter more harassment in the work place (Krieger et al., 2006) and in university settings (Cortina et al., 1998). Interestingly, perpetrators sometimes tailor their types of harassment based on the victim's perceived sexual orientation. Single heterosexual women may be pestered for dates and sexual interactions, while lesbians may be treated with hostility because they are disinterested in romantic relationships with men (Hoffmann, 2004). By including these multiple identities,

researchers can better articulate how race, socioeconomic class, gender, and sexual orientation converge to influence the victim's experience with sexual harassment.

Sexual Harassment across Diverse Settings

In addition to workplaces and colleges, girls/women of color have reported sexual harassment in elementary and high school settings with a variety of negative outcomes, including some not commonly reported among adults, such as stealing and fighting (Goldstein, Malanchuk, Davis-Kean, & Eccles, 2007). Future researchers should explore these associations and devise prevention and intervention programs for these young victims. There is also a need to investigate women of color's experiences with sexual harassment in faith communities (Whitson, 1997), low-income housing (Reed, Collinsworth, & Fitzgerald, 2005), social settings (Wyatt & Riederle, 1995) and public settings, such as the street (Perry, 2007). Even professionally dressed African American women have been solicited as prostitutes (Wyatt, 1997) and women continue to be harassed and assaulted publically, often with the implicit consent of onlookers. For example, nearly 60 women were surrounded and assaulted, and then doused with water and beer when they attempted to leave the New York City's 2000 Annual Puerto Rican Day Parade/ Rather than intervene, bystanders videotaped the assaults and police were slow to respond to the victims' pleas for help (Laniya, 2005). These forms of sexual harassment can be traumatic and should not be minimized simply because they may not fall under the legal protections provided for harassment in the workplace or in educational institutions.

Improve Methodology, Policies, and Interventions

Traditionally, researchers have utilized problematic forms of "ethnic lumping" to address limitations related to small sample sizes of ethnic minorities. Frequently, multiple ethnic groups (e.g., Asians, Arabs, and Africans) are combined and categorized as "minorities" (e.g., Berdahl

& Moore, 2006). In other cases, researchers combined several groups, for example Korean, Chinese, and Japanese, and categorized them as “Asian American” women without consideration of ethnic subgroup differences (e.g., Chen, 1997). Still, other researchers have conducted research using “Latinas” or Hispanic women, which exclusively or primarily consisted of Mexican American women rather than Latinas as a whole (e.g., Segura, 1992). Although each of these represent strong studies with important findings, these practices limit our understanding of the generalizability of research findings and distort our knowledge of whom the results represent. In order to make meaningful racial or ethnic subgroup comparisons, larger samples are required. Conversely, researchers can focus on emic approaches that seek to explore the phenomenon within a specific group without conducting comparisons across groups.

Appropriate assessment of the harassment experiences of women of color remains a significant concern and culturally-sensitive instruments are needed. Although standardized measures, such as the Sexual Experiences Questionnaire (Fitzgerald et al., 1988), appear to be reliable and valid, researchers may need to modify these scales to include items that better capture the experiences of women of color. For example, Cortina (2001) used focus group responses to create additional items for the Sexual Experiences Questionnaire that were representative of the experiences of Latinas (SEQ-L; Cortina, 2001). Other researchers also have successfully used qualitative methods, such as focus groups, to better understand sexual harassment in the lives of women of color (e.g., (Buchanan, 2005a; Taylor & Richardson, 2006), which has led to the development of a measure of racialized sexual harassment (Buchanan, 2005b). To investigate sexual harassment among recent immigrants, non-English speakers, and women who are isolated or unfamiliar with traditional research methods, investigators may need to conduct life-history interviews or immerse themselves into these marginalized communities

via participant-observation methodology (Castaneda & Zavella, 2003). Various forms of qualitative research methodologies can be an invaluable first step in assessing contextual, cultural, and perceptual experiences of women of color as well as factors that limit their ability to respond effectively. With this knowledge investigators can develop theoretical models that reflect universal as well as issues of particular relevance to women of color, such as race-based stereotypes that are relevant to particular ethnic groups (Cortina et al, 2002).

Policies and practices must also be adapted to address the unique experiences of Women of Color. Many organizational policies and federal laws against sexual harassment separate experiences based on race and those based on sex; yet, the literature presented here indicates that they often co-occur. As such, it is important that legislation and policy actively incorporate racialized sexual harassment into their descriptions of prohibited behaviors under sexual harassment and racial harassment. Trainings and interventions must also address this reality if they are to be effective in preventing the types of harassment experiences commonly perpetrated against Women of Color. Further, race and gender are not independent of other factors, such as organizational status or socioeconomic status, which may also increase the likelihood of a woman being targeted for harassment. Therefore, interventions addressing multiple factors that increase a woman's risk of harassment are needed.

To conclude, the larger phenomenon of sexual harassment appears to be etic or universal. However, for women of color, sexual harassment is often racialized, rooted in a long history of discrimination and sexual violence, and fostered by the current inequities in the workplace and academic settings. Consequently, researchers must continue to explore how racism and other forms of oppression carve unique contours into an otherwise common experience.

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Footnotes

¹ The term *Women of Color* is used to refer collectively to the four ethnic groups mostly commonly discussed in this chapter (African American or Black, Latina or Hispanic American, Asian American, and Native American). Where possible, the specific ethnic subgroup will be identified (e.g., Mexican American). The terminology used to refer to racial groups may vary based on regional, political, and personal preference. However, the author will use the terminology used by researchers in the original article referenced in this chapter.

² Sexual harassment in federally-funded schools and universities is prohibited under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, which states that students cannot be discriminated against, excluded from participation, or denied educational benefits on the basis of his or her sex. Therefore, under Title IX, schools that receive federal funds are accountable sexually harassing behavior by a student or staff member if the school could reasonably have known that it was occurring and resulted in a student being denied equal access to educational programs or activities (Mann & Miller, 2000; Stein, 1999). The Office for Civil Rights of the U.S. Department of Education established school sexual harassment policy and procedure mandates and guidelines to ensure school compliance with Title IX in 1997 and 2001 (Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education, 1997, 2001, Paludi & Paludi, 2003).