

**NICOLE T. BUCHANAN**  
**RESEARCH STATEMENT**  
**(November 2008)**

During my tenure at MSU, I have worked toward integrating my research, teaching, and service endeavors into a series of projects that inform one another, contribute to research and clinical training, and serve the diverse needs of the psychology department, campus, and my own program of research. Many of these efforts reflect my interest in ethnic minority health and psychological well-being, and the impact of violence, trauma, and maltreatment on ethnic minority women. Historically, conducting research within ethnic minority communities has been challenging because medical and psychological science has pathologized members of these groups. Therefore, it is essential, personally and professionally, that I demonstrate care and respect in every facet of my work. To foster these relationships, I participate in a variety of service and teaching activities that reinforce my commitment to conducting ethical research that benefits members of the communities I study. Building these relationships is a slow process, but over time, I have been able to collect data for several studies and publications<sup>1</sup> with ethnic minority populations that are often reticent to participate in research.

In addition to reaching out to marginalized populations, my research also allows me to engage graduate and undergraduate students, often ethnic minorities, in every phase of the research process. As evidence of their involvement, since arriving at MSU, 55% of my articles and book chapters and 75% of my conference presentations are co-authored with graduate and undergraduate students. Further, my current graduate student advisee, Krystle Woods, won the American Psychological Association's (Division 12: Clinical Psychology) 2008 Dalmas A. Taylor Award for Outstanding Student Research based on a paper using data we collected at MSU.

My body of research is also increasingly attractive to funding agencies. I have received three grants to directly fund my work, a small internal grant to fund undergraduates' work in my lab, and two faculty loan grants from the National Institutes of Health predicated on proposals related to my research. I am currently a co-PI on a \$1.9 million grant proposal under review at the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism to study race-related stressors, such as discrimination and harassment, and protective mechanisms that influence the initiation and persistence of alcohol abuse among Black and White men and women. Using the initial findings from my current data, I will continue to seek external funding for my research. In sum, my current record of research success makes me confident that I will continue to build a strong program of research, teaching, and service that contributes to the discipline and fulfills MSU's mission as a premier land-grant, research I institution.

### **Research Overview**

Theories of interpersonal vulnerability, such as *double jeopardy theory* (Beal, 1970), posit that individuals are differentially targeted for victimization as a result of their relative marginalization across numerous social status and demographic variables. For example, women, as compared to men, are the primary targets of violence and victimization within their homes and at work (Denmark et al., 2007) and ethnic minorities have elevated rates of trauma exposure and interpersonal victimization compared to Whites (e.g., Finkelhor et al., 2007). Given that stress and trauma are directly related to well-being, these rates imply that examinations of social status variables, such as gender and race, are particularly relevant to our understanding of vulnerability to victimization and its psychological, physical, occupational, and academic consequences. Yet the nexus of such variables has been under-examined in the research literature to date.

To address these needs, my research foci revolve around ethnic minority health and well-being broadly defined. My work places an emphasis on the ways in which multiple social status dimensions (e.g., gender, race, age, social class) create unique experiences of victimization (e.g., sexual and racial harassment) within diverse groups. In particular, I examine the experiences of those targeted, and the resulting psychological, health, work, and academic outcomes. Although my primary research area examines ethnic minority women, I also study harassment among adults who vary in their race, gender, and age; bullying and harassment among adolescents;

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<sup>1</sup> A table of my publications by year is available on page 6. During my initial years at MSU I spent a considerable amount of time establishing relationships and collecting data with the communities I study. In recent years I have benefited from those early efforts. I have several recent publications and several manuscripts in press, under review, or in preparation. These more visible indicators of my productivity during the past three years reflect my current research and publication trajectory.

and ethnic minority health more generally. To this end, I also utilize multiple methodological strategies, recruit diverse samples from a variety of settings, and integrate theory from clinical, community and social psychology, sociology, feminist and critical race theory. As such, my research is advancing our collective knowledge on the ways in which experiences like harassment and bullying are similar and distinct across groups. Further, my work demonstrates how stress and victimization uniquely impact ethnic minority health.

### **Harassment as a function of race and gender**

When I entered the field, empirical research on sexual harassment rarely examined whether or not the experience differed by race. Similarly, racial harassment research rarely explored whether the experience differed for men and women. Although this body of research has grown since that time, notable gaps remain. Namely, sexual and racial harassment research has failed to systematically integrate, conceptually or methodologically, race and gender concomitantly. My first line of research addresses this gap by examining how gender and race influence the nature, prevalence, and outcomes associated with harassment experiences.

#### *The nature of sexual harassment*

My initial research questions built upon largely theoretical assertions that harassment manifests differently for Black women than for White women (Adams, 1997, Murrell, 1996). To examine this, I recruited professional Black women (e.g., accountants, executives, nurses, teachers) from two cities to participate in one of six focus groups discussing experiences of sexual and racial harassment in the workplace. Although higher occupational status typically offers individuals' protection from negative events, my research revealed that Black women experienced relatively high levels of both sexual and racial harassment, despite their professional status. Further, participants reported harassment experiences that combined racism and sexism simultaneously, such as comments fusing race and gender (e.g., *Black whore*) and being asked for sexual advice as if by virtue of their gender and race, they were experts on sex (Buchanan, 2005a). The initial publication based on this study was one of the first to define and find empirical support for *racialized sexual harassment* and is the most frequently cited publication on this topic (Buchanan & Ormerod, 2002). On the basis of this qualitative study, I created the Racialized Sexual Harassment Scale (Buchanan, 2005b) to further examine this phenomenon. Additionally, I have conducted several related studies using larger and more diverse samples of working adults, military personnel, and college students.

#### *The nature and prevalence of sexual harassment*

Considering that half of all working women will experience sexual harassment and 40-76% of ethnic minorities experience racial harassment annually, the lifetime prevalence of harassment among women of color is likely to be higher than estimates for men of color or White women (Berdahl & Moore, 2006; Bergman & Drasgow, 2003). However, research findings have been contradictory regarding the direction and strength of the relative prevalence of harassment for Black and White women (e.g., Berdahl & Moore, 2006; Cortina et al., 1998; Gruber, 2003). This inconsistency suggested to me that focusing solely on the frequency of overall sexual harassment masks potential race differences. I theorized that Black and White women might be targeted with different subtypes of sexual harassment (gender harassment, unwanted sexual attention, and sexual coercion), because of the unique stereotypes about each group. Specifically, Black women are stereotyped as being sexually available, whereas White women are stereotyped in terms of their domestic and family roles. Using a sample of women in the military, I found that Black women experienced higher rates of sexualized forms of harassment (e.g., unwanted touch, sexual coercion), whereas White women experienced higher rates of gender harassment (e.g., comments that women do not belong in certain jobs). Race and organizational status also interacted such that Black women of lower status reported the highest rates of sexual coercion (Buchanan, Settles & Woods, 2008).

#### *The prevalence and consequences of multiple forms of harassment by gender and race*

The above studies substantiated my earlier hypotheses that gender and race do influence the nature and likelihood of experiencing sexual harassment. My next aim was to understand the extent to which gender and race predict the likelihood of experiencing both sexual and racial harassment and the target's well-being subsequent to harassment. There is evidence that experiencing the same trauma multiple times or experiencing multiple types of trauma is more detrimental than experiencing a single traumatic event or a single form of trauma (Green et al., 2000; Krupnick et al., 2004). However, few researchers have included multiple forms of harassment within the same study and those that did found that they did not interact to predict well-being.

To reduce various confounds in previous studies, I examined both psychological and occupational outcomes associated with racial and sexual harassment, for a single population (Black working women from the same organization), and I limited harassment responses to include only those events that occurred within that work environment. Consistent with past studies, I did not find interactions predicting psychological well-being. However, there were interactive effects for two occupational variables: supervisor satisfaction and perceived organizational tolerance of harassment (Buchanan & Fitzgerald, 2008<sup>2</sup>). By focusing narrowly on the psychological effects of harassment, past researchers overlooked a key area affected by multiple forms of harassment -- women's perceptions of their organization and its leadership. Further, the emic, or within-group, design focusing on Black women within the same organization reduced external factors that may have suppressed this interaction effect.

The results of another study of over 2000 Black, multiracial, and White college students indicated that sexual and racial harassment commonly co-occurred and their frequencies were influenced by the target's gender and race. Racial harassment was more frequently directed toward ethnic minority men, with the exception that Black men and women reported equal rates of racial harassment. Compared to Whites, ethnic minorities were at higher risk of being targeted for sexual and racial harassment, with multiracial men and women being at the greatest risk. These findings support anecdotal writings that multiracial men and women are often sexualized as 'exotic', subjected to racial comments due to their distinctive physical features (Buchanan & Acevedo, 2004; Rockquemore & Brunson, 2002), and rejected by members of the multiple ethnic groups to which they belong (*double rejection*; Shih & Sanchez, 2005; Buckley & Carter, 2004).

This study also revealed that sexual and racial harassment had individual and additive effects on each indicator of well-being (posttraumatic stress, depression, clinical symptomology, satisfaction with life, and health satisfaction). In addition, in the presence of any racial harassment, as sexual harassment increased, depression and general clinical symptomology increased and health satisfaction decreased. As expected, those experiencing low levels of both types of harassment fared better than those experiencing high levels of either type, and those experiencing high levels of both types of harassment reported significantly worse outcomes overall. Last, the influence of sexual harassment and racial harassment on outcomes differed by race, gender, and type of harassment. For example, the relationship between harassment and outcomes was strongest for multiracial and Black men and weakest for multiracial and Black women. These findings were driven largely by relatively low levels of distress among Black and Multiracial men at low levels of harassment, and conversely, the relatively high levels reported by Multiracial and Black women when harassment was low (Buchanan, Bergman, Woods, Bruce, & Lichty, invited resubmission, *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*).

Together my studies on the co-occurrence of sexual and racial harassment demonstrate that: 1) those who experience racial harassment are at far greater risk of experiencing sexual harassment (and vice versa), 2) this risk varies depending on one's combined gender-race status, 3) there are individual, joint, and interactive effects of experiencing both sexual and racial harassment, and 4) gender and race further moderate the relationships between harassment and outcomes. Thus, my work makes an important contribution by clearly illustrating that the gender and race of the target are related to the amount of harassment targets experience and their well-being following harassment.

#### *Other influences on the harassment experience*

Building on this work, I have incorporated additional variables related to race, such as the race of the perpetrator. In a sample of Black women sexually harassed by either a White man (cross-racial sexual harassment) or a Black man (intra-racial sexual harassment), I found that the rates of sexual harassment did not differ by the perpetrator's race. However, using my Racialized Sexual Harassment Scale (Buchanan, 2005b) I found that cross-racial sexual harassment was more likely to include harassment that focused simultaneously on participant's race and gender and involved higher-status perpetrators (e.g., a supervisor as opposed to a coworker) compared to intra-racial harassment. Perhaps as a result, women appraised cross-racial sexual harassment as more offensive, threatening, and frightening than intra-racial sexual harassment, which in turn was associated with increased posttraumatic stress symptoms (Woods, Buchanan & Settles, in press<sup>3</sup>). This study is the first to

<sup>2</sup> The first author won the American Psychological Association's Carolyn Payton Early Career Award & the Association for Women in Psychology's Women of Color Award based on this paper.

<sup>3</sup> The first author won the American Psychological Association's (Division 12) Dalmis A. Taylor Award for Outstanding Student Research based on this paper.

quantitatively examine perpetrator race in actual experiences of sexual harassment, rather than written vignettes of hypothetical harassment, contributing both conceptually and methodologically to the field.

Race may also play a role in the effectiveness of social attitudes as buffers of the negative effects of harassment on outcomes. Studies primarily comprised of White women have supported the theory that feminist attitudes are protective when women experience gender-related mistreatment (Fischer & Good, 2004; Klonis et al., 1997). However, socio-historical differences between Black and White women's interpretations of feminist and traditional gender attitudes suggest that feminism has been more positive for White women than Black women. Thus, feminist attitudes might not offer the same psychological protection to Black women that it does to White women. Using my sample of sexually harassed Black and White women in college, we found that feminist attitudes *buffered* the negative effects of sexual harassment on psychological well-being for White women. However, for Black women, the same attitudes *exacerbated* the negative effects of sexual harassment on psychological well-being (Rederstorff, Buchanan, & Settles, 2007<sup>4</sup>). These results imply that gender and gender-role attitudes may function differently for Black and White women, raising the question of whether or not their basic perceptions of their gender also differ. Using our data from focus groups of Black and White women, my colleagues and I found that the two groups of women perceived their gender-roles and the benefits of womanhood differently (Settles, Pratt-Hyatt, & Buchanan, 2008). These qualitative results support our findings regarding the effects of feminist attitudes on sexually harassed women; to the extent that Black and White women perceive their gender-roles and womanhood differently, feminist gender-role attitudes should be differentially protective when they are confronted with negative gender-related events.

Together, the above studies represent a unique body of research that underscores the importance of examining gender, race, and their joint influences on victimization experiences. Further, this research demonstrates the need to assess multiple forms of harassment when examining psychological and organizational stressors among women of color. By considering these factors, I have been able to empirically investigate many important issues of relevance to ethnic minority women. My work has also examined relationships between harassment, appraisal, and outcomes that had hitherto been hypothesized, but unexamined. One contribution of my program of research is that it is among the first to theoretically and empirically investigate their relevance in a comprehensive manner that includes qualitative and quantitative methods across diverse samples of men and women from a variety of work and academic environments. In recognition of the contribution of this research, I recently received the Carolyn Payton Early Career Award from the American Psychological Association (Div. 35), and research awards from the International Coalition Against Sexual Harassment and the Association for Women in Psychology. My graduate student (Krystle Woods) has also received research awards and grants for our research in this area, including the American Psychological Association's Dalmas A. Taylor Award for Outstanding Student Research (from Division 12: Clinical Psychology). This research has resulted in several peer-reviewed publications in print, in press, and under review, as well as dozens of presentations at national and international conferences, the vast majority of which are co-authored with graduate and undergraduate students. Findings from these preliminary studies also provide avenues for future federal and foundation funding, such as the Ford Foundation and NIH. During the summer of 2009, I plan to submit a proposal to NIH to further examine how race- and gender-based victimization impacts additional facets of targets' lives and how these effects may manifest differently across men and women from multiple ethnic groups.

### **Gendered bullying and early manifestations of harassment among adolescents**

My research on sexual harassment with adults led me to question how these adult workplace behaviors develop and whether similar experiences are reported among adolescents in schools. Therefore, in a second line of research, I began examining gendered bullying and sexual harassment among adolescents.<sup>5</sup> Gendered bullying includes a variety of ways in which bullying differentially targets someone due to his or her gender or is used to reinforce stereotyped gender roles. In qualitative interviews, I found that teachers defined harassment and bullying very narrowly and focused almost exclusively on the most extreme behaviors (e.g., physical contact, overtly sexual comments). Further, they were more likely to dismiss such behaviors when a relationship existed between

<sup>4</sup> This paper reflects an equal contribution among the authors, which is noted in the paper. The first author is a graduate student who completed an initial draft as a comprehensive examination.

<sup>5</sup> My research on bullying and adolescent harassment has been highlighted in *MSU Today* and the Michigan Agricultural Experiment Stations' publication, *Futures*.

the students or if the teacher him or herself had a friendly or mentoring relationship with the perpetrator (Anagnostopoulos, Buchanan, Periera & Lichty, in press). These biases differentially protected some students (e.g., outgoing, well-liked students) while overlooking the experiences of other students (e.g., gay and lesbian students, those being victimized within a friendship or a dating relationship). Further, teachers were uncertain of the extent to which school anti-harassment policies addressed more ambiguous behaviors and, as a result, were reluctant to reprimand offending students unless the offense was egregious (Buchanan, Anagnostopoulos, Periera & Lichty, in progress). In a separate study, I examined the sexual harassment policies of over 780 schools across several states and found that over 80% of schools were not in compliance with the federal recommendations regarding harassment policies. Thus, teachers' confusion regarding which behaviors are covered under their school's anti-harassment policies may be valid. Further these gaps in the schools' policies increase students risk of being harassed, hampers teachers ability to respond, and exposes schools to potentially costly legal entanglements (Lichty, Torres, Valenti, & Buchanan, 2008).

### **Ethnic minority health**

My third line of research reflects my continued interest in ethnic minority health and psychological well-being more broadly and in how status variables intersect to influence the experiences of women of color in the U.S. In this work, I consider how status variables (e.g., gender, race) influence the relationship between health and outcomes. I have collaborated with Dr. Tamara Baker at the University of South Florida to examine physical and mental health among Black women. We recently completed a paper on health disparities among Black women (Baker, Buchanan, & Spencer, under review, *Journal of the National Medical Association*) and a study on the influences of depression and locus of control on Black women's chronic pain (Baker, Buchanan & Corson, 2008). In the second study on Black women with chronic pain, I examined whether women's attributions about their health impacted how much pain they experienced. I found that Black women with an internal locus of control for health reported significantly *more* pain than women who believed their health outcomes were outside of their control (Baker, Buchanan & Corson, 2008). This result runs counter to theories that perceived control over one's physical and mental health (internal locus of control) is protective (e.g., Cross et al., 2006; Cousson-Gelie et al., 2005). Instead, for the Black women in our sample, an internal locus of control may be related to the belief that unrelenting negative experiences, such as chronic pain, are the result of their own behavior. Blaming themselves for their inability to overcome their chronic pain may then contribute to negative outcomes.

In addition, I am a co-PI on an interdisciplinary research team studying the experiences of Black women living with severe mental illness. This project focuses on participants' understanding of their illness, potential recovery, social support, and societal stigma as well as their histories of trauma prior and subsequent to their illness. We conduct individual interviews lasting 6-24 hours over 1-4 days and use life history and narrative analysis to examine their interpretations of their life experiences. Data collection for this project progresses at a slow pace because of the depth of the interviews and because we are sampling members of a population that rarely participates in research (severely mentally ill Black women). Nevertheless, this process will yield a wealth of rare data, making the time invested worthwhile. My service activities have also been of benefit in collecting this data because my visibility in the community increases our ability to successfully recruit participants. Although we will continue to conduct interviews, we already have a paper under review describing the utility of these methods in conducting sensitive research with marginalized populations (Sosulski, Buchanan & Donnell, under review, *Qualitative Inquiry*).

### **Current and future research**

Over the next several years, I will expand each of these lines of research in order to: 1) better understand the interface of target characteristics (e.g., ethnicity, age, gender) and traumatic experiences (e.g., harassment), 2) determine the extent to which adolescent bullying and harassment manifest differently based upon status characteristics, and 3) explore additional ways in which race, gender, and social class influence psychological/physical health and coping among ethnic minorities in the U.S. (details follow).

#### *Harassment as a function of race and gender*

In addition to researching the intersections of race and gender with actual experiences of harassment, I am also interested in the ways in which witnesses' perceptions of harassment depend on both the target's race and gender, and the perpetrator's race and gender. I used professional actors to produce videos of harassment

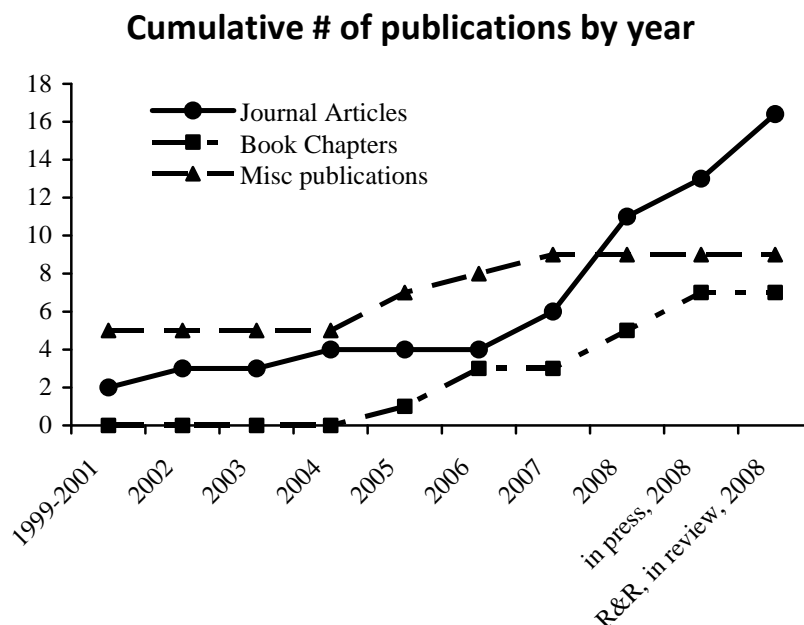
scenarios in which I manipulated the race of the perpetrator and the target. Consistent with my hypotheses, the initial findings indicated that observers rated harassment vignettes differently based on the race of the target (Black or White). I am now examining how the race of the perpetrator, as well as various permutations of perpetrator and target race, influences perceptions of harassment by observers. In one segment of this study, participants indicated how they believed the case should be handled if the target were to file a complaint (ranging from firing the perpetrator for harassment to firing the target for filing a false report). These findings will provide additional understanding of the ways in which bystanders perceive harassment based on the race of the individuals involved. Further, they will indicate whether or not the outcome of harassment complaints vary as a result of target and perpetrator race, providing insight into how such cases are handled within organizations.

*Gendered bullying and early manifestations of harassment among adolescents*

My research with adolescent bullying and harassment has focused largely on the ways in which harassment is used to reinforce gender-role expectations and the challenges school administrators face in addressing these behaviors (e.g., barriers to teacher interventions, limitations of school anti-harassment policies). In the next phase of this research I plan to explore student perceptions of such behaviors and the ways in which additional factors, such as race and sexual orientation, influence bullying and harassment. To do so, I will conduct interviews and administer surveys to students who are diverse in terms of their ethnicity and sexual orientation. To add to the heterogeneity of the sample, I will recruit additional participants through organizations that work with gay and lesbian youth, such as the Ruth Ellis Center near Detroit, MI. Samples such as these will allow me to examine the extent to which racialized sexual harassment occurs within youth groups, incorporate harassment based on sexual orientation, and study the effects of multiple victimization experiences on adolescent health, well-being, and academic achievement.

*Health and well-being among marginalized groups*

I am a co-Investigator on a \$1.9 million grant submitted June of 2008 to the National Institute for Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) examining the roles of discrimination, perceived harassment, and general life stress on the drinking and health behaviors of young Black and White adults. This will be a longitudinal study on the potential risk and protective factors (e.g., racial identity and coping) in alcohol use, and include an examination of the moderating effects of gender and race. In addition to this project, I will continue to collect interview data with Black women with severe mental illness (Sosulski, Buchanan & Donnell, under review, *Qualitative Inquiry*).



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