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Predictors of sexual harassment victimization among college students

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PREDICTORS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT VICTIMIZATION AMONG
COLLEGE STUDENTS

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Sociology

San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Helle Susanne Gram

August 2005

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ABSTRACT

PREDICTORS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT VICTIMIZATION AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

by Helle S. Gram

This thesis investigates the effects of gender, childhood abuse, attachment style, and adversarial heterosexual beliefs on sexual harassment victimization in a sample of 426 college students. It also examines the mediation effects of attachment style and adversarial heterosexual beliefs on the relationship between childhood abuse and sexual harassment victimization. Consistent with the Traumagenic Model (Finkelhor & Browne, 1985) and attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969), results indicate that being female, a victim of childhood neglect or sexual abuse, having an insecure attachment style, and holding strong adversarial heterosexual beliefs increase the risk of sexual harassment victimization at the bivariate level. At the multivariate level, being female, a victim of childhood neglect and sexual abuse, and adversarial heterosexual beliefs predicted sexual harassment victimization. Of the insecure attachment styles, only "Discomfort with Relationships" predicted sexual harassment victimization. Additionally, attachment style and adversarial heterosexual beliefs mediated the relationship between childhood abuse and sexual harassment victimization.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables	viii
Chapter 1 – Introduction	1
Chapter 2 – Literature Review	4
Defining Sexual Harassment	4
Prevalence of Sexual Harassment	8
Factors that Increase the Risk of Sexual Harassment Victimization	16
Gender	17
Childhood Abuse	18
Attachment Styles	24
Adversarial Heterosexual Beliefs	28
Chapter 3 – Theoretical Framework	36
The Traumagenic Model	36
Attachment Theory	41
Hypotheses	48
Chapter 4 – Methodology	49
Participants	49
Procedure	49
Measures	50
Chapter 5 – Results	54
Overview of the Analyses	54
Sample Descriptives	56

Correlations	58
T-tests	62
Regression Analyses	64
Chapter 6 – Discussion	68
Chapter 7 – Conclusion	72
Theoretical Implications	72
Methodological Implications	73
Future Research	74
Policy Implications	75
Summary	79
References	80
Appendix A: Demographics	88
Appendix B: Sexual Experience Questionnaire	89
Appendix C: Childhood Environment Questionnaire	90
Appendix D: Attachment Style Questionnaire	92
Appendix E: Sexual Beliefs Scale	94
Appendix F: Human Subjects-Institutional Review Board Approval Letter	95

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics.	58
Table 2. Bivariate Correlations of Sexual Harassment Victimization and the Predictor Variables.	61
Table 3. Mean and Standard Deviation Comparisons of Male and Female Participants.	64
Table 4. Summary of Regression Analysis Predicting Sexual Harassment Victimization using Gender, Childhood Abuse, Attachment Style, and Adversarial Heterosexual Beliefs.	67

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The documentation of sexual harassment against working women has existed ever since women entered the workforce (Fitzgerald, 1993). According to Fitzgerald (1993), “predating at least the Industrial Revolution, the harassment of women – as well as their resistance – is documented in historical accounts as early as colonial times” (p. 1070). However, as William O’Donohue (1997) explains so fittingly, “sexual harassment is a problem that has a long past but a short history” (p. 1). Only recently, has the sexual mistreatment of women been labeled “sexual harassment” and still more recently has it been of interest to academic scholars (O’Donohue, 1997). Sexual harassment, an issue originally thought of only in the work setting, is a phenomenon that today also exists in the academic world (Fitzgerald, 1993).

Sexual harassment is defined as deliberate acts of violence against another person and includes both verbal and non-verbal behaviors, such as sexual remarks, sexist jokes and gestures, or sexual assault (Fitzgerald, Gelfand, & Drasgow, 1995). Today, sexual harassment is a pervasive problem in the life of many women and men, and has tremendous personal and social consequences. According to the U.S. Merit System Protection Board (1995), between 1992 and 1994, sexual harassment cost the Government an estimated \$327 million. This figure, which only included federal jobs, is estimated based on job turnover rate, sick leave, and the cost of the decrease in the individual’s productivity.

On the individual level, victims report both physical and psychological consequences of sexual harassment. Sexually harassed women are likely to suffer from intense psychological distress, posttraumatic stress disorder, anxiety, sexual dysfunction, sleep difficulty, hallucinations, low self-esteem, and other physical symptoms, such as weight gain or weight loss (Fitzgerald, 1993; Gutek & Koss, 1993).

Consequently, an increasing part of research has focused on finding possible predictors of this widespread social phenomenon. Dynamics such as gender, in particular being female (Fitzgerald, 1993; Sanders & Becker-Lausen, 1995), prior childhood abuse whether it is sexual, physical, or emotional maltreatment (Gidycz, Coble, Latham, & Layman, 1993; Gold, Sinclair, & Balge, 1999), insecure attachment styles (Alexander, 1992), and adversarial sexual beliefs have been found to predict sexual harassment.

This thesis will focus on the same group of predictors and how they might affect sexual harassment victimization in a sample of male and female college students (N = 426). Further, two theoretical frameworks, the Traumagenic Model and attachment theory, will be introduced to provide an understanding of why these factors may increase the risk of sexual harassment.

It is hypothesized that being female, a victim of childhood abuse, and classified with a “Need for Approval” and “Preoccupation with Relationships” attachment style increases the risk of sexual victimization. Similarly, it is hypothesized that individuals who hold strong adversarial heterosexual beliefs, are at increased risk of sexual victimization as well. Finally, this thesis investigates whether the relationship between childhood abuse and sexual harassment victimization is mediated by attachment style and

adversarial heterosexual beliefs. Attachment style refers to the way in which an individual attaches himself or herself to another person (e.g., gain closeness and proximity to another person). Attachment styles are especially important in relation to the creation of interpersonal relationships. Adversarial sexual beliefs refer to the beliefs an individual holds about the adversarial nature of relationships (e.g., whether one sex dominates the other or if it is possible for men and women to really understand each other).

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

Defining Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is a significant social problem, but despite its prevalence, a universal definition does not exist. Although the definition of sexual harassment varies greatly in the social science literature, researchers generally agree that sexual harassment is an unwanted and inappropriate behavior that has a sexual dimension to it (O'Donohue, Downs, & Yeater, 1998; Wyatt & Riederle, 1995). It is recognized as a continuum of behaviors, which extend from gender harassment to unwanted sexual attention and sexual assault, such as rape (Fitzgerald et al., 1995; Ménard, Hall, Phung, Ghebrial, & Martin, 2003; O'Donohue et al., 1998; Wyatt & Riederle, 1995). More specifically, gender harassment can be defined as remarks and behaviors that express negative, hostile, or degrading attitudes towards either males or females (Gelfand, Fitzgerald, & Drasgow, 1995). However, these remarks and behaviors are not necessarily aimed at sexual cooperation. Gender harassment also includes sexual gestures or slurs and the distribution of pornographic material (Gelfand et al., 1995).

As sexual harassment can be conceptualized both as a legal concept and as a psychological concept, it is important to distinguish between the two. Failing to differentiate between these definitions can complicate empirical research. In particular, the prevalence rates of sexual harassment (e.g., the proportion of a population that has experienced sexual harassment) are affected by the failure to articulate which type of harassment is being included in the study. It has been suggested that prevalence rates are

inflated when including minor incidents that do not meet legal definitions (Fitzgerald, Swan, & Magley, 1997). Fitzgerald and her colleagues (1997) argue that statements like “Approximately one out of every two women will experience sexual harassment at one point during her educational or working life” undoubtedly include experiences that do not meet legal definitions (p. 7). In other words, such statements are based on a psychological definition, which refer to women’s experiences and not to the legal definition.

The legal definition of sexual harassment distinguishes between “quid pro quo harassment” and “hostile environment harassment” (Fitzgerald et al., 1997). Quid pro quo harassment occurs when a job outcome is directly dependent upon the employee’s submission to unwelcome sexual advances. Hostile environment harassment includes behaviors that create a working environment that is intimidating, offensive, abusive, or hostile.

The fact that researchers cannot agree on what constitutes sexual harassment is a reflection of the disagreement that exists in the general population. People have different perceptions about sexual harassment, and what one person may define as sexual harassment, another may not (Foulis & McCabe, 1997). Several studies have found that men in general have a much narrower definition of sexual harassment than do women (Fitzgerald, 1993; Fitzgerald & Ormerod, 1991; Golden, Johnson, & Lopez, 2001; Shepela & Levesque, 1998). In other words, men are less likely to define behaviors as offensive and sexually harassing than are women. Fitzgerald and Ormerod (1991) explain that the gender gap (in what men and women believe constitutes sexual

harassment) is most noticeable with less explicit situations and gender harassment. This finding means that although the gender gap exists for basically all categories of sexual harassment, it is largest with regard to the less severe types, such as gender harassment. The more extreme the harassment, the more likely men are to also view this behavior as sexual harassment (Fitzgerald & Ormerod, 1991).

The psychological definitions of sexual harassment refer to behavioral characteristics of the sexual experience. Previous studies have attempted to illustrate the psychological definitions of sexual harassment, two of which are described here.

Till (1980) identified five types of sexual harassment based on content analysis of college women's experiences. In an open-ended response format, college women were asked to describe any experience of sexual harassment that they knew about, or had experienced themselves. Till (1980) grouped the experiences, which ranged from sexual comments to rape, into the subsequent five harassment categories: (1) generalized sexist remarks or behaviors, (2) inappropriate and offensive, but essentially sanction-free sexual advances, (3) solicitation of sexual activity or other sex-linked behavior by promise of rewards, (4) coercion of sexual activity by threat of punishment, and (5) sexual assault (p. 7-8). Till argued that these harassment categories operate along a continuum of severity and include both verbal and non-verbal behaviors.

Based on the pioneering work of Till (1980), Fitzgerald, Shullman, Bailey, Richards, Swecker, Gold, Ormerod, and Weitzman (1988) created a measure that aims to assess the prevalence of sexual harassment in work and academic settings. This original self-report inventory, called the Sexual Experiences Questionnaire (SEQ), consists of a

number of behavioral items based on Till's five types of harassment. However, Fitzgerald et al. (1988) referred to these as: (1) gender harassment, (2) seductive behavior, (3) sexual bribery, (4) sexual coercion, and (5) sexual assault (p. 157).

The SEQ (Fitzgerald et al., 1988) has been widely utilized in prevalence studies and is acknowledged as one of the best instruments available (Arvey & Cavanaugh, 1995). According to Arvey and Cavanaugh (1995), "attention to behavioral definitions, terminology, ambiguity, and avoidance of the term sexual harassment until the end" were particularly positive characteristics of the SEQ (p. 49). The original SEQ was developed to assess prevalence rates in workplace settings, while a parallel form has been developed for use in the academic world (SEQ-E).

This thesis uses the psychological definitions of sexual harassment. However, it should be noted that the legal definition of "hostile environment harassment" roughly corresponds to the psychological definitions of the less severe types of harassment, such as gender harassment and inappropriate sexual advances. Furthermore, the legal definition of "quid pro quo" harassment roughly corresponds to the psychological definitions of the severe types of harassment, such as sexual coercion and sexual assault.

Today it is clear that sexual harassment is not exclusively a problem in the workplace. In fact, sexual harassment is also a problem of serious proportions in academic and social settings. The following section reviews studies that have documented the prevalence of sexual harassment.

Prevalence of Sexual Harassment

It is commonly accepted that women constitute the vast majority of victims of sexual harassment (Fitzgerald et al., 1988; Fitzgerald & Shullman, 1993; Gruber, 1997; Gutek, 1985). However, men are also victims of sexual harassment. The following review of empirical studies clearly indicates that sexual harassment of women and men is a widespread problem that can be observed in government, community, and educational settings.

Government samples. The U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board (USMSPB) conducted the first national study of harassment in 1980. Data were collected from a representative sample (men and women) of more than 20,000 federal employees. The USMSPB examined seven harassing behaviors, ranging from unwelcome sexual remarks and gestures to rape and attempted rape. Employees were asked to indicate if they had experienced any of these behaviors in a period of two years (from May 1978 to May 1980). Follow-up studies were conducted in 1987 and 1994, both times with a representative sample of approximately 13,000 federal employees. In the almost fifteen years between the first (1980) and the third (1994) assessment of sexual harassment in the federal workforce, sexual harassment has continued to be a social problem.

In 1980 and 1987, 42% of the surveyed women reported having experienced at least one sexually harassing behavior. Although not a significant increase, this number increased to 44% in 1994. While less common, a considerable percentage of men also reported having experienced sexually harassing behaviors. In 1980, the USMSPB found that 15% of the male respondents had experienced sexual harassment during the two-year

period. This number decreased slightly to 14% in 1987, but increased to 19% by 1994 (USMSPB, 1981, 1988, 1995).

Between December 1988 and June 1989, the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) conducted a large-scale survey among active-duty military personnel enlisted in the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force and Coast Guard (Martindale, 1992). The 1988 DoD survey was the first of its kind, in that it targeted the active military personnel. Self-report questionnaires were mailed to approximately 38,000 men and women in the forces, of which 20,400 (60%) completed and returned the survey.

The DoD survey asked the respondents to indicate whether they had experienced any of ten specific behavioral types of “uninvited and unwanted sexual attention,” such as being pressured for sexual favors, being touched or teased, and rape or attempted rape. While respondents may have experienced several types of harassment, or one type of harassment several times, respondents were asked to “select the one experience that had the greatest effect” (Martindale, 1992, p. 201). Martindale (1992), who summarized the findings, reported that 64% of women and 17% of men experienced some type of sexual harassment, ranging from sexist jokes to sexual assault, while on active duty during the year prior to the survey (in 1988).

Community sample. In a community sample of 827 women and 405 men, Gutek (1985) investigated sexual harassment in the context of organizational behavior. The representative sample of working men and women was obtained in Los Angeles County by random-digit dialing. Telephone interviews included questions about the frequency of experienced sexual harassment (at any point in the respondent’s life), personal attitudes

towards sexual harassment, and the respondent's own definition of sexual harassment. Gutek (1985) investigated both less severe and severe forms of sexual harassment, such as sexual comments, looks, and gestures, sexual and non-sexual touching, and expected socializing and sexual activity as a requirement of the job.

In order to measure the nature and frequency of sexual harassment, Gutek (1985) measured it in different ways. One method was to have an outside rater determine whether the incident was sexual harassment. Using this approach, 39% of women and 14% of men had "definitely" experienced sexual harassment, and 20% of women and 14% of men had "probably" experienced sexual harassment. Utilizing another method, Gutek defined individuals as sexually harassed if they had experienced any one of the before mentioned sexual behaviors and if they themselves considered that behavior to be sexual harassment. This was assessed with the single behavioral item: "Have you ever experienced sexual harassment?" To this question, 53% of the women and 37% of the men reported a positive answer. Although the different methods resulted in different prevalence rates, it is clear that a considerable percentage of male and female workers will experience something they themselves would define as sexual harassment.

In a stratified community sample, Wyatt and Riederle (1995) investigated types, prevalence, and outcomes of sexual harassment among 248 African-American and white American women in a range of work and social settings. Respondents, recruited through multistage stratified probability sampling in Los Angeles County, were interviewed face to face by an interviewer of the same ethnicity as the respondent. Overall, 44% reported that they, at one point in their life, had experienced sexual harassment at work and 45%

had experienced harassment in a social setting (Wyatt & Riederle, 1995). Of the verbal harassment reported by women, 79% took place in a social setting, whereas 53% took place at work. Sexual harassment was defined as “unwanted requests, comments, or actions of a sexual nature that respondents did not welcome” (Wyatt & Riederle, 1995, p. 313). This definition did not include rape or attempted rape.

Gruber and Bjorn (1982) investigated sexual harassment among unskilled female workers in the auto industry, using self-report questionnaires. The sample consisted of 138 women from an auto plant of approximately 5,200 blue-collar workers, of which approximately 10% were women. Gruber and Bjorn reported that 36% of the women had experienced sexual harassment in their current job. The most widely experienced type of harassment was “sexual propositioning,” which was reported by 28% of the women. Gruber and Bjorn explained that the category of sexual propositioning “typically involved a man who would not ‘take no for an answer’ or who would not ‘take a hint’ and badgered a women for a date or for sexual favors” (p. 283).

As seen above, sexual harassment affects the lives of many women and men and exists in both work and social settings. However, as it shall be seen, sexual harassment is not limited to these settings. Indeed, sexual harassment also exists in the academic milieu, as seen in the following review of studies assessing sexual harassment on college campuses.

College samples. As discussed previously, in order to document the nature and frequency of sexual harassment, Fitzgerald et al. (1988) created the Sexual Experiences Questionnaire (SEQ). Using the SEQ, Fitzgerald et al. conducted two large studies to

investigate the dimensions and extent of sexual harassment among both students and employees in the academic milieu. The first study had a college sample of 2,599 students enrolled at either a Midwestern or West Coast University. This sample included 1,746 female (67%) and 853 male (33%) college students. The second study surveyed a sample of 642 university employees. Usable surveys were returned by 307 of the university employees, of which 20% were faculty members, 20% were administrators and 55% were staff members. The remaining five percent reported a combination of these categories.

In both studies, the most frequently reported type of harassment was gender harassment followed by seduction (Fitzgerald et al., 1988). On average, 31% of female students and 34% of working women had experienced some form of gender harassment at one point in their life (Fitzgerald et al., 1988). In addition, 15% of female students and 17% of the working women on average reported having experienced some form of seductive sexual advances from their co-workers, bosses, or professors. Twenty percent of male students reported some form of gender harassment and 17% reported seductive behaviors. Among the female students, approximately 50% at the first university and 76% at the second university answered at least one item in the affirmative direction, indicating that they had experienced some type of harassment.

Utilizing their Four-Factor Model of sexual harassment, O'Hare and O'Donohue (1998) assessed the prevalence rates of sexual harassment at a large Midwestern university. In the Four-Factor Model, it is maintained that sexual harassment occurs due to a combination of individual, organizational, and sociocultural factors. In a sample of female students (N = 131) and faculty members and staff (N = 135), O'Hare and

O'Donohue found that the most common types of sexual harassment reported were gender harassment and unwanted sexual attention. Sixty-nine percent of the participants had experienced at least one incidence of gender harassment (e.g., suggestive stories and offensive remarks) and 53% had experienced one form of unwanted sexual attention (e.g., discussion of personal life and sex life). The SEQ (Fitzgerald et al., 1988) was utilized to assess the women's experiences with sexual harassment in the workplace. O'Hare and O'Donohue asked about sexual harassment experiences at any held job position.

In a study of 369 undergraduate college students, Shepela and Levesque (1998) created and utilized a questionnaire with items adapted from the SEQ (Fitzgerald et al., 1988). Sexual harassment was separated into two parts: (1) behaviors perpetrated by a faculty and (2) behaviors perpetrated by students. Using a five-point Likert scale (ranging from "never" to "always"), students were asked to indicate how often they had observed or experienced these behaviors in their lifetime.

With regard to gender harassment, 56% of the female and 51% of the male respondents reported having experienced some form of gender harassment from another student. In comparison, 46% of the female and 36% of the male respondents reported some form of gender harassment from a faculty member (Shepela & Levesque, 1998). Of the behaviors falling into the unwanted sexual attention category, 38% of the female and 30% of male respondents reported having experienced some form of unwanted sexual attention from another student. Sixteen percent of female and 14% of male

respondents reported unwanted sexual attention from a faculty member (Shepela & Levesque, 1998).

Review of empirical studies. In a review of 18 empirical studies of sexual harassment, Gruber (1990) reported that between 28% and 75% of the women had experienced sexual harassment. The median across the studies was 44%. The studies were all carried out between 1979 and 1986 and included American and Canadian university students and employees in both the private and public sector. Gruber maintained that it was difficult to determine the actual prevalence of sexual harassment from existing literature due to the methodological differences among the studies; especially sample size and diversity, response rate, number of harassment categories, and item wording.

Gruber (1990) analyzed the 18 empirical studies in comparison to the overall median (above, near, or under the median) and found that the methodological differences between these studies affected the prevalence rates. Sample size and reference period were not related to the overall frequency of sexual harassment. That is, the number of above-median studies equaled the number of below-median studies. Response rate, sample diversity, and number of harassment categories did produce statistically significant results. Gruber found that studies with low response rates, a heterogeneous sample, and a high number of harassment categories did produce higher prevalence rates of harassment.

Consistent with Gruber's (1990) review of empirical studies, prevalence rates varied widely across the studies, from a low of 17% in Fitzgerald et al.'s study (1988) to

a high of 69% in O'Hare and O'Donohue's study (1998). For men, prevalence rates ranged from 14% (Gutek, 1985; USMSPB, 1988) to 51% (Shepela & Levesque, 1998). From the above literature review, it should be clear that methodological differences affect the research findings. First, as Gruber found, low response rates are likely to inflate prevalence rates. The response rate among the studies reviewed in this work ranged from 60% (Martindale, 1992) to over 99% (Fitzgerald et al., 1988). Second, data-gathering methods also varied among the studies. Three studies (i.e., Gruber & Bjorn, 1982; Gutek, 1985; Wyatt & Riederle, 1995) employed interview techniques (telephone or face-to-face) and the remaining five studies utilized self-report questionnaires. With other types of sexual victimization, it has been found that the use of confidential, in-person interviews produce higher prevalence rates than studies utilizing self-report measures (Gordon & Riger, 1989, cited in Fitzgerald & Shullman, 1993).

Third, the reference period can also affect prevalence rate. The longer the reference period, the longer the respondent has been at risk of experiencing sexual harassment, thereby possibly increasing prevalence rates. The USMSPB studies (1981, 1988, 1995) operate with a reference period of two years and the Martindale (1992) study with a reference period of one year. Gruber and Bjorn (1982) inquired about harassment that occurred in the respondents' current job, whereas the rest of the studies inquired about any experience over the lifetime.

Finally, the operational definition of sexual harassment largely influences the prevalence rates; if a term is defined broadly, the estimates of harassment are higher than if the term is defined more narrowly (Arvey & Cavanaugh, 1995; Fitzgerald & Shullman,

1993). It should be noted that a broad definition corresponds to a higher number of harassment categories, while a narrow definition corresponds to a lower number of harassment categories. In the studies reviewed above, the number of harassment categories ranged from two (Shepela & Levesque, 1998) to seven (Gruber & Bjorn, 1982; USMSPB, 1981, 1988, 1995).

The use of different methodologies and samples strengthens the argument that sexual harassment is a widespread social problem. By investigating the causes of sexual harassment, including factors that seem to make some individuals more prone to sexual harassment victimization, it is hoped that thousands of women and men can avoid experiencing the negative work related, physical, and psychological consequences of sexual harassment. Furthermore, such investigation can help prevent sexual harassment from growing as a social problem. The following section will investigate factors that increase the risk of sexual harassment victimization.

Factors that Increase the Risk of Sexual Harassment

Past research demonstrates that several factors increase the risk of sexual harassment victimization (Alexander, 1992; Fitzgerald et al., 1995; Hesson-McInnis & Fitzgerald, 1997; Koss & Dinero, 1989). Gender, childhood abuse, attachment styles, and adversarial sexual beliefs are some of the predictors of sexual harassment victimization (Alexander, 1993; Gold et al., 1999; Messman & Long, 1996; Shoss, Ménard, Pincus, & Hall, 2002). These factors will be discussed in the following literature review.

Gender

Because women are more likely than men to experience sexual harassment, existing research has focused on female prevalence rates (Stockdale, O'Connor, Gutek, & Geer, 2002). Although ostensibly less frequently, men do experience sexual victimization (Berdahl, Magley, & Waldo, 1996; Fitzgerald et al., 1988; Gutek, 1985; USMSPB, 1981, 1988, 1995). Recall that the USMSPB surveys from 1980, 1987 and 1994 also examined the prevalence of male sexual harassment. In comparison to women, men reported significantly lower levels of sexual harassment. More than twice as many women (44%) as men (19%) reported sexual harassment in 1994 (USMSPB, 1995).

Fitzgerald et al. (1988) also investigated the prevalence of sexual harassment among men. In a sample of 853 undergraduate male students enrolled at either a Midwestern or West Coast University, it was found that men do experience sexual harassment, although almost exclusively gender harassment. Calculations made by this author, found that on average 20% of the male students had experienced one of the gender harassing behaviors, in comparison to 31% of the female students reporting similar experiences. Seventeen percent of the male students reported seductive sexual advances, which was actually slightly higher than the percentage reported by female students (15%). On the other hand, harassing behaviors other than gender harassment and seductive advances, such as sexual coercion or sexual assault, were almost nonexistent among the male respondents (Fitzgerald et al., 1988). On average, less than 3% of the male respondents reported one of the most severe types of harassment, sexual assault. Depending on the type of sexual assault, between 1% and 14% of the female

respondents reported this type of victimization. Sexual assault included having a professor make “unwanted attempts to have sex” or “forceful attempts to touch or fondle” (Fitzgerald et al., 1988, p. 160).

From the above it is clear that men constitute a considerable proportion of the victims of sexual harassment. In particular, they are victims of the less severe types. As men do experience sexual harassment victimization, the present work inquired about such victimization among both male and female college students.

Childhood Abuse

Researchers have found that childhood abuse is linked to subsequent victimization, and in particular, that childhood sexual abuse increases the risk of adult sexual victimization (Gold et al., 1999; Houston & Hwang, 1996; Koss & Dinero, 1989; Messman & Long, 1996; Stockdale et al., 2002; Wyatt, Guthrie, & Notgrass, 1992). However, most research has focused on adult victimization as sexual assault, including rape and attempted rape, rather than the less severe forms of victimization, like sexual harassment.

Similarly, although research indicates that various forms of childhood abuse likely lead to subsequent sexual victimization (Cloitre, Tardif, Marzuk, Leon, & Portera, 1996; Messman-Moore & Brown, 2004; Schaaf & McCane, 1998), the majority of studies linking childhood abuse to adult victimization have focused on childhood sexual abuse rather than other types of abuse, such as physical and emotional abuse. In line with previous research, this literature review will include studies that look at sexual assault rather than be limited to sexual harassment victimization and will include studies linking

childhood sexual abuse to adult sexual victimization. However, it is expected that all types of child abuse will increase the risk of sexual harassment victimization.

Wyatt and her colleagues (Wyatt, Guthrie, & Notgrass 1992; Wyatt & Riederle, 1994) investigated the relationship between sexual harassment and childhood abuse. A community sample of 248 African-American and white American women was obtained in Los Angeles County through a multi-stage probability sampling.

Wyatt and Riederle (1994) examined the relationship between sexual harassment and sexual abuse in childhood and/or adulthood. Sexual harassment was defined as “unwanted requests, comments, or actions of a sexual nature that respondents did not welcome” (Wyatt & Riederle, 1994, p. 237). This definition did not include rape or attempted rape. Childhood sexual abuse included behaviors ranging from fondling to attempted and completed intercourse, which occurred before the age of 18. Sexual abuse in adulthood included incidents of attempted and completed rape, which occurred after the age of 18. The Wyatt Sexual History Questionnaire (WSHQ), a 478-item structured interview developed by Wyatt (1985), was administered to address the respondent’s sexual experiences.

Forty-four percent of the women reported that they had been sexually harassed at work, 4% reported harassment in the academic setting, and 45% had experienced harassment in a social setting (Wyatt & Riederle, 1994). Of the 44% who reported sexual harassment on the job, 76% reported sexual victimization in either childhood or adulthood. This rate is in comparison to 47% found among the non-harassed cohort (Wyatt & Riederle, 1994). Similarly, a significant relationship was found between sexual

harassment in social settings and prior sexual abuse. Of those harassed in a social setting, 71% reported prior sexual abuse. The percentage for the non-harassed cohort was 52%. No significant relationship was found between prior childhood abuse and sexual harassment in an educational setting (Wyatt & Riederle, 1994). In conclusion, Wyatt and Riederle's (1994) study found that those mostly at risk of being sexually harassed were those women reporting previous child and/or adult sexual abuse.

Similarly, Wyatt, Guthrie, & Notgrass (1992) reported a significant relationship between childhood sexual abuse and adult sexual victimization. Among those women who reported sexual abuse as a child, 44% also reported sexual victimization in adulthood. Adult sexual victimization covered behaviors such as observing masturbation or somebody exposing their genitals, and attempted and completed rape. Wyatt et al. (1992) found that childhood sexual abuse victims were 2.4 times more likely to be revictimized in adulthood than their non-harassed cohort. This finding also points to the relationship between childhood abuse and subsequent sexual victimization.

Gidycz et al. (1993) conducted a study on 857 college women and investigated whether early childhood sexual experiences were risk factors for sexual assault victimization later in life. Sexual assault victimization included sexual contact and sexual coercion behaviors, as well as rape and attempted rape. Finkelhor's (1979) questionnaire measured the subject's childhood sexual abuse experiences, and Koss and Oros' (1982) Sexual Experiences Survey (SES) measured adolescent and adult victimization experiences. Any sexual victimization experience that occurred between age 14 and the first assessment time was defined "adolescent victimization." Sexual

victimization that occurred before the age of 14 was defined as “childhood victimization.” “Adult victimization” included any experience that occurred between the first and second assessment time (a nine-week interval) (Gidycz et al., 1993).

Gidycz and her colleagues (1993) ran path analyses to determine the relationship between early and later victimization experiences, and found that childhood victimization was indeed a risk factor for adult revictimization. The first analysis sought to determine whether adolescent victimization was dependent upon childhood sexual abuse. A significant relationship was found; 70% of childhood rape victims and 79% of childhood attempted rape victims reported adolescent revictimization. In contrast, 39% of the non-childhood victims were victimized during adolescence. Revictimization occurred if the respondent experienced either sexual contact behaviors, sexual coercion, rape, or attempted rape in both childhood and adulthood, although not necessarily the same offense both times (Gidycz et al., 1993). A second analysis was carried out to determine whether adult victimization was dependent upon childhood sexual abuse. Again, a significant relationship was demonstrated; 30% of the childhood rape victims and 32% of childhood attempted rape victims were found to be revictimized in adulthood. In comparison, 14% of women with no history of childhood abuse reported victimization in adulthood (Gidycz et al., 1993).

Koss and Dinero (1989) conducted a national survey of 2,723 female university students to assess the predictability of 14 risk factors (e.g., sexual abuse, adversarial beliefs, rape myths, sexual activity, and alcohol use) of sexual assault victimization, including rape. Koss and Dinero collected information about the respondent’s childhood

sexual experiences using Finkelhor's (1979) questionnaire. Adult sexual victimization was measured using the Sexual Experiences Survey (SES) (Koss & Oros; 1982). Although Koss and Dinero did not indicate whether the results were statistically significant, they found that 66% of those who reported completed or attempted rape as adults also reported childhood sexual experiences. In comparison, only 20% of the non-victimized women (N = 1,181) reported childhood sexual experiences. Hence, Koss and Dinero's results also point to a link between childhood sexual abuse and subsequent sexual victimization.

Gold et al. (1999) reviewed 10 studies, each linking child sexual abuse to later victimization. Based on the review, Gold et al. concluded that women, who were abused as children, were at least twice as likely to be sexually victimized in adulthood, than were women who were not abused in childhood. The percentages of women who had been abused as children and who reported later victimization ranged from 26% to 72% across the studies.

In a sample of 944 college women, Messman-Moore and Brown (2004) investigated the link between child physical abuse and subsequent adult sexual victimization. They found that childhood physical abuse was only a strong predictor of adult victimization (rape) when it occurred in combinations with other forms of abuse, such as sexual abuse. Similarly, Cloitre et al. (1996) also found that women who had experienced physical abuse (or a combination of physical and sexual abuse) were more likely to report adult sexual victimization than were women who reported sexual abuse

only or non-abused women. This finding was obtained in a clinical sample of 409 female inpatients.

Schaaf and McCanne (1998) surveyed 475 female college students about their abuse experiences in childhood and adulthood. They defined adult victimization as both physical and sexual victimization. Schaaf and McCanne found that childhood sexual abuse alone did not increase the risk of adult victimization. However, when physical and sexual abuse co-existed in childhood, the risk of adult victimization more than doubled. This also points to the link between childhood physical abuse and subsequent adult sexual victimization.

From the above literature review, two pervasive relationships were demonstrated. First, it was shown that childhood victimization is a predictor of subsequent sexual victimization. That is, individuals who were abused as children are more likely to experience subsequent sexual victimization than are individuals with no history of childhood abuse.

Second, it was demonstrated that child physical abuse is also a predictor of later sexual victimization, in particular in combination with another type of abuse. In conclusion, childhood abuse increases the risk of sexual victimization in adulthood. Although the literature and empirical research has generally focused on the relationship between childhood sexual abuse and the more severe types of adult sexual victimization, such as rape, there is also support for the association between childhood abuse and later sexual harassment victimization.

Attachment Styles

In addition to gender and childhood abuse, this thesis also examines the role of attachment styles on sexual harassment victimization. As previously mentioned, attachment style refers to the particular way in which an individual attaches (becomes emotionally attached) to another person. Different attachment styles are proposed in the literature, and in general, a distinction is made between secure and insecure attachment styles (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978; Howe, Brandon, Hinings, & Schofield, 1999). The secure attachment style refers to what is considered a healthy and normal way of attaching oneself to another person. This type of attachment style is characterized by trust, love, and interdependency (Howe et al., 1999). The insecure attachment styles however, refer to unhealthy and destructive ways of attaching oneself to someone else. Insecure attachment is characterized by distrust, rejection, and pain (Howe et al., 1999). In this work, the concept of secure and insecure attachment styles is used to predict sexual harassment victimization.

Few empirical studies have examined the relationship between sexual harassment victimization and attachment styles per se. Thus, many important questions remain unanswered. However, some information about this relationship can be extrapolated from research concerned with attachment styles and other negative outcomes, including other forms of victimization, such as partner and dating violence, stalking, and childhood abuse.

In a study of 744 undergraduate students, Van Patten and Parker (2004) examined the relationship between attachment styles, partner violence, and stalking behaviors,

using the Experiences in Close Relationship (ECR) questionnaire developed by Brennan, Clark, and Shaver (1998).

Van Patten and Parker (2004) theorized that individuals classified with an insecure attachment style would report greater problems with non-stranger stalking behaviors following a break-up. Based on post hoc Tukey's test, they found that the stalked group scored significantly higher on avoidance than did the control group. In other words, those individuals who had experienced being stalked were significantly more likely to be characterized by the avoidance attachment style, than were those individuals who had not been stalked. This finding points to the importance of attachment style on victimization. In particular, this finding indicates that insecure attachment increases the risk of victimization, in this case, in the form of being stalked (Van Patten & Parker, 2004).

Flanagan and Furman (2000) examined the relationship between sexual victimization (not including instances of incest) and perceptions of close relationships in a sample of high school seniors (N = 48) and undergraduate college women (N = 154). They hypothesized that sexual victimization would be associated with insecure views of relationships with their partners (Flanagan & Furman, 2000). Data were obtained by the use of several measures, including the Sexual Experiences Survey (Koss & Oros, 1982) and the Behavioral System Questionnaire (Wehner & Furman, 1999).

Comparisons were made between sexually victimized (56%) and non-victimized women (44%) with regard to the type of relationship style they had with their partners. Flanagan and Furman (2000) found that those who had been victimized held significantly

more “preoccupied views” of their relationship with their partners than did those who were not victimized. Having preoccupied views indicates that the person “may find it difficult to feel comforted by their partners when distressed, may be overly concerned about their partners’ problems, may overly invest in relationships in a self-sacrificing manner, and may be dissatisfied with their sexual experiences” (Flanagan & Furman, 2000, p. 352).

Being overly interested in the relationship and the partner’s needs, might lead to an imbalance in the relationship, where the women sacrifices her own needs to maintain the closeness she has with her partner. However, this likely leads to the woman being unable to maintain clear and appropriate boundaries within the relationship. According to Flanagan and Furman (2000), “such preoccupied behavior could elicit victimization if the romantic partner misreads the woman’s needs or takes advantage of her dependence on him” (p. 357).

“Preoccupied views” is a form of insecure attachment, which therefore also points to the relationship between insecure attachment and victimization. Not only does research support a relationship between insecure attachment and increased victimization, research also suggests a link between childhood abuse and attachment styles (Alexander, 1992). Insecure attachment is often observed in families where abuse exists and the relationship between childhood abuse and attachment styles is well documented in the literature (Alexander, 1992, 1993; Carlson, Cicchetti, Barnett, & Braunwald, 1989; Finzi, Ram, Har-Even, Shnit, & Weizman, 2001; Page, 1999).

In a study that examined the long-term effects of sexual abuse, Alexander (1993) found that victims of incest were often classified with insecure attachment patterns, especially the fearful/disorganized type. Fourteen percent of the respondents were classified as Secure, 13% as Preoccupied, 16% as Dismissing, and 58% as Fearful. This finding is significantly different from Bartholomew and Horowitz's (1991) normative and original sample, wherein 49% of the participants were classified as Secure, 12% as Preoccupied, 18% as Dismissing, and 21% as Fearful (Alexander, 1993). This difference indicates that the experience of sexual abuse is associated with insecure attachment. The fact that poor attachment is associated with an increased risk of victimization and that childhood abuse leads to insecure attachment, suggests that attachment style mediates the relationship between child abuse and victimization. However, only one study has explored this mediating effect.

Irwin (1999) examined this mediation relationship in a study of violent and non-violent revictimization among women abused in their childhood. Several measures were presented to the Australian female participants (N = 155), including the Sexual Experiences Survey (Koss & Oros, 1982), the Childhood Trauma Questionnaire (Bernstein, Fink, Handelsman, Foote, Lovejoy, Wenzel, Sapareto, & Ruggiero, 1994) and the Relationship Scales Questionnaire (Griffen & Bartholomew, 1994). These measures assessed the respondents' sexual victimization experiences, childhood abuse experiences, and personal attachment style. Multiple regression analyses were used to determine whether attachment style functioned as a mediating variable in the relationship between childhood abuse and adult victimization. Results were not significant. However, Irwin

did find that the “dismissing relational style,” which is an insecure attachment style, approached standard levels of statistical significance ($p = 0.062$). Given the small sample size, this finding suggests that the dismissing relational style is a possible mediating variable in the relationship between childhood abuse and sexual victimization. In other words, the dismissing relational style mediates the relationship between childhood abuse and sexual victimization.

In sum, the above research studies demonstrated that insecure attachment leads to various types of victimization, including adolescent sexual aggression victimization, being stalked, and childhood abuse. Although the above studies did not investigate sexual harassment victimization per se, it is reasonable to argue that a similar relationship exists with sexual harassment. Further, research (Alexander, 1993) also suggests that insecure attachment is a consequence of child abuse, which indicates the possible mediating effects of attachment style on the relationship between childhood abuse and sexual harassment victimization.

Adversarial Heterosexual Beliefs

In addition to gender, childhood abuse, and attachment styles, adversarial sexual beliefs have also been investigated as a possible predictor of sexual victimization. The following section will review existing research on the relationship between adversarial sexual beliefs and sexual victimization.

Adversarial sexual beliefs were first defined by Burt (1980) and described as “the expectation that sexual relationships are fundamentally exploitative, that each party to them is manipulative, sly, cheating, opaque to the other’s understanding, and not to be

trusted” (p. 218). It was in her famous work on rape myths and rape myths acceptance that Burt first discussed the concept of adversarial sexual beliefs. Adversarial sexual beliefs refer to personal beliefs about male-female relations within interpersonal relationships, sexual as well as platonic. Specifically, it covers beliefs about whether relationships between men and women are antagonistic. If a person holds strong adversarial beliefs, he or she believes that the relationship between men and women is indeed unequal, manipulative, and exploitative.

Attitudinal variables, such as adversarial sexual beliefs, acceptance of violence, rape myths, and hostility towards women, have been found to distinguish sexually aggressive men from non-aggressive men (Burt, 1980; Malamuth, 1986). However, research on whether attitudinal variables also differentiate victimized women from non-victimized women is limited.

Spence, Losoff and Robbins (1991) examined the relationship between the experience of sexually aggressive tactics and personality and attitudinal variables in a sample of female college students (N = 205). Respondents were asked to indicate how often they had been targets of sexually aggressive tactics and behaviors, such as being pressured to consume alcohol, take part in sexual activities, and being physically forced to have sex. This was assessed by five items adapted from the Sexual Aggression Scale (Koss, 1985). Personal attitudes and beliefs were assessed by the use of the Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (Burt, 1980), Adversarial Sexual Beliefs Scale (Burt, 1980), and the Male-Female Relations Questionnaire (Spence, Helmreich, & Sawin, 1980).

Spence et al. (1991) found that women who held strong adversarial sexual beliefs and traditional views of male-female relations reported higher frequency of having experienced sexually aggressive behaviors. However, when controlling for personality, attitudinal variables did not predict victimization above and beyond the effects of personality (Spence et al., 1991).

Koss and Dinero (1989) investigated risk factors of sexual assault victimization including attitudinal variables, such as adversarial sexual beliefs, in a sample of college women (N = 2,723). Sexual assault victimization included behaviors such as rape and attempted rape. Koss and Dinero presented several rape vulnerability hypotheses, including a social-psychological vulnerability hypothesis, which posits that cultural or biological differences in personal values, beliefs, and attitudes exist between men and women. According to Koss and Dinero, this hypothesis is related to the social control theory, which suggests that women who adhere to traditional gender-roles and accept rape myths are more vulnerable to victimization.

The social-psychological rape vulnerability hypothesis was operationalized through several attitudinal variables, including adversarial sexual beliefs. The degree to which the respondents had been sexually victimized was assessed by the use of the Sexual Experiences Survey (Koss & Oros, 1982). Adversarial sexual beliefs were assessed using Burt's (1980) Adversarial Sexual Beliefs Scale. Using stepwise discriminant function analysis, Koss and Dinero (1989) examined the explanatory power of the vulnerability hypotheses. The social-psychological rape vulnerability hypothesis did not improve the predictability of rape victims. Koss and Dinero concluded that when

sexual victimization could be predicted, the explanation was not found in attitudes or behaviors alone. Instead, rape vulnerability could be predicted “by these variables in the context of a sexualized childhood” (Koss & Dinero, 1989, p. 249). This result suggests that adversarial sexual beliefs could be mediating the relationship between child abuse and sexual victimization. However, Koss and Dinero did not test for this mediation effect.

Although the results of these studies indicated that adversarial sexual beliefs were not significantly related to sexual victimization, some methodological issues should be addressed. First, both studies (Koss & Dinero, 1989; Spence et al., 1991) investigated adversarial sexual beliefs using Burt’s (1980) Adversarial Sexual Beliefs Scale. However, this scale has been criticized by Lonsway and Fitzgerald (1995) for not being gender neutral. Lonsway and Fitzgerald (1995) argued that Burt’s (1980) original scale was “almost exclusively concerned with the notion that women are deceitful and manipulative” (p. 705). Their examination of Burt’s (1980) scale indicated that most items assessed “negative beliefs about women, rather than adversarial sexual beliefs per se” (p. 705). Only two items assessed hostility towards men, but six items assessed hostility towards women. The fact that Burt’s (1980) original scale did not investigate the adversarial nature of relationships, but rather negative attitudes and hostility towards women, may help explain why results were not significant. In other words, it could explain why attitudinal variables did not differentiate sexual victimized women from non-victimized women in the studies utilizing Burt’s (1980) scale.

As a result of their criticism, Lonsway and Fitzgerald (1995) created the Adversarial Heterosexual Beliefs Scale as an alternative measure to Burt's (1980) original scale. This new scale included statements concerning the adversarial nature of "male-female working relationships, platonic friendships, and the relationships between the sexes in the greater society" (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1995, p. 706). These types of interpersonal relationships were not specifically included in Burt's original scale. However, when examining the effects of adversarial sexual beliefs on sexual harassment victimization, it might be of particular importance to include such types of relationships. That is, as sexual harassment occurs in work, academic, and social settings, it makes sense to include questions about the adversarial nature of male-female relationships in such settings. Thus, it is possible that by utilizing Lonsway and Fitzgerald's (1995) scale, results will be different. Indeed, it may be found that adversarial heterosexual beliefs can differentiate between victimized and non-victimized women and men. Although both Burt's Adversarial Sexual Beliefs Scale and Lonsway and Fitzgerald's Adversarial Heterosexual Beliefs Scale had high reliability (Cronbach's alpha of 0.80 and 0.78 respectively), it is valid to further address Lonsway and Fitzgerald's concerns.

Second, both studies (Koss & Dinero, 1989; Spence et al., 1991) looked at vulnerability to severe types of sexual victimization. Neither of these studies (and few in general) examined this relationship with less severe types of victimization, such as sexual harassment victimization. Due to the paucity of research in this area, it is not only appropriate, but also necessary to further develop and investigate the role of adversarial heterosexual beliefs on sexual victimization. Specifically, it is appropriate to examine

attitudinal variables in relation to sexual harassment victimization. It is plausible that attitudinal variables reveal greater influence on victimization status when dealing with less severe types of victimization, such as sexual harassment. It seems reasonable to argue that women who hold strong adversarial sexual beliefs are more tolerant of sexual harassment than are women who hold mild adversarial sexual beliefs. This possibility, however, seems unlikely when it comes to the severe types of sexual victimization, such as rape. That is, most women will never accept sexual assault or coercion. However, some women might accept the occasional verbal, sexual, or physical harassment, if they believe in traditional gender roles or hold strong adversarial sexual beliefs. That is, they may accept such harassing behaviors as a “man’s right,” as they believe men are the dominant gender. Thus, they believe that relationships between men and women are adversarial in nature, which they accept as the norm.

Based on Lonsway and Fitzgerald’s (1995) work, it can be argued that a person who holds strong adversarial beliefs accepts notions that one gender is dominant over the other, that men and women are only out to take advantage of each other, and that men and women cannot truly understand each other. Moreover, they support the belief that in intimate relationships one person is just using the other and that people are deceitful and manipulative when initiating a relationship. With regard to intimate relationships, a person who adheres to these beliefs might be of the understanding that sex is a game with winners and losers. Acceptance of such adversarial sexual beliefs may lead to a sense of inferiority, which can lead to an acceptance of, and a vulnerability to, harassing behaviors from partners, co-workers, or friends.

These feelings of inferiority may be especially prevalent among victims of child abuse. Victims of child abuse have already experienced, or been subject to, adversarial beliefs. For example, if children have been forced to do things they did not want to do, they have already learned that they are not in control in interpersonal situations and that interpersonal relationships are adversarial in nature. That is, the child internalizes the experienced adversarial relationships as the norm. In other words, they come to believe that there is nothing unnatural or wrong about one person being in control over another. Based on this, it seems possible that holding strong adversarial beliefs could be an outcome of child abuse. In other words, child abuse could potentially lead to strong adversarial sexual beliefs.

As a final point, Koss and Dinero (1989) did not investigate whether adversarial sexual beliefs mediated the relationship between childhood abuse and sexual victimization. They concluded that rape victimization could be predicted by attitudinal variables, including adversarial sexual beliefs, in the context of a sexualized childhood. However, they did not investigate this further. Nonetheless, this mediation effect could be of significance. Thus, it is important to investigate whether adversarial sexual beliefs account for the relationship between childhood abuse and sexual victimization. Consequently, this mediation effect will be investigated in the current work.

In sum, it was argued that individuals who hold strong adversarial sexual beliefs are more likely to experience sexual harassment than are individuals who hold moderate or mild adversarial sexual beliefs. Furthermore, adversarial sexual beliefs were discussed as a mediating variable in the relationship between child abuse and sexual harassment

victimization. That is, it was argued that childhood abuse could lead to stronger adversarial sexual beliefs, which in turn could increase the risk of sexual harassment victimization.

Empirical studies have pointed to the relationship between these factors and sexual harassment victimization. In particular, it was shown that being female, a victim of childhood abuse, characterized by an insecure attachment style, as well as holding strong adversarial sexual beliefs, increases the risk of sexual harassment victimization. Further, it was proposed that attachment styles and adversarial sexual beliefs mediate the relationship between childhood abuse and sexual harassment victimization.

The following section will provide theoretical explanations as to why childhood abuse, attachment styles, and adversarial sexual beliefs are associated with higher risk of sexual harassment victimization.

CHAPTER 3

Theoretical Framework

The risk of sexual harassment victimization is likely to be increased by factors such as being a female, being a victim of childhood abuse, having an insecure attachment style, or holding strong adversarial heterosexual beliefs. Further, it is suggested that the effects of child abuse may also have an indirect effect on sexual harassment victimization through an individual's attachment style and adversarial heterosexual belief.

Specifically, those who experience childhood abuse may be more insecurely attached and may hold stronger adversarial beliefs, which in turn may increase their risk of sexual harassment victimization. The relationship between these factors and sexual harassment victimization, including the mediating effects of attachment style and adversarial heterosexual beliefs on the relationship between child abuse and sexual harassment, is best explained by using the Traumagenic Model and attachment theory.

Traumagenic Model

The Traumagenic Model (Finkelhor & Browne, 1985) is particularly helpful in explaining how child abuse increases the risk of victimization, including sexual harassment. Finkelhor and Browne (1985), who studied the impact of childhood sexual abuse, created the Traumagenic Model to understand the outcomes of this type of abuse. However, they maintain that the four traumagenic dynamics “are generalized dynamics, not necessarily unique to sexual abuse; they occur in other kinds of trauma” (Finkelhor & Browne, 1985, p. 530). In the Traumagenic Model, Finkelhor and Browne (1985) postulate that the experience of abuse can be conceptualized in four trauma-causing

factors or dynamics: (1) traumatic sexualization, (2) betrayal, (3) powerlessness, and (4) stigmatization (p. 531-532). Further, they explain how personal traumas, like sexual abuse, result in low self-esteem, depression, and sexual dysfunction. According to Finkelhor and Browne (1985), “these dynamics alter children’s cognitive and emotional orientation to the world, and create trauma by distorting children’s self-concept, world view, and affective capacities” (p. 531).

Direct effects. Traumatic sexualization is defined as “a process in which the child’s sexualization (including both sexual feelings and sexual attitudes) is shaped in a developmentally inappropriate and interpersonally dysfunctional fashion as a result of sexual abuse” (Finkelhor & Browne, 1985, p. 531). Traumatic sexualization can occur when the offender rewards the child for participating in behaviors that goes beyond the child’s age or development. Affection, attention, and gifts can work as potential rewards for engaging in sexual behaviors. As a result, the victim learns to exchange sexual behaviors for attention and affection; essentially, sexual behaviors become a tactic used by the victim to satisfy personal developmental needs. This learned behavior could potentially influence later experiences, possibly leading to subsequent victimization.

Victims of child abuse, who have come to suffer from traumatic sexualization, may be at greater risk of experiencing sexual harassment victimization. That is, these victims have learned inappropriately to exchange sexual favors for personal, developmental, or satisfactory needs. For example, a college student, who suffers from traumatic sexualization due to the abuse she experienced as a child, might exchange sexual favors for a better grade in one of her classes. She might approach the professor

with an attitude of “I will do *anything* for an A.” The professor might agree to give her the A if she is willing to partake in a sexual activity with him, resulting in sexual harassment victimization. Moreover, because of her feelings of traumatic sexualization, the student will not see this behavior as inappropriate. After all, she has learned to exchange sexual favors as a way to gain personal satisfaction, in this case in the form of a better grade in her class. This type of behavior, although extremely unfortunate is how she has learned to behave within interpersonal relationships. Interpersonal relationships become a medium to gain personal satisfaction by engaging in sexual activities. Thus, traumatic sexualization can increase the risk of sexual harassment victimization.

Betrayal, the second traumagenic dynamic, occurs when someone whom the child has previously trusted and depended upon, abuses them. During or after the abuse experience, the victim may realize that “a trusted person has manipulated them through lies or misrepresentation about moral standards” (Finkelhor & Browne, 1985, p. 532). Sexual abuse committed by a family member is likely to generate higher levels of betrayal than abuse committed by strangers (Finkelhor & Browne, 1985).

This emotional betrayal often results in the victim becoming suspicious and apprehensive towards other people. Further, having experienced betrayal by people they loved and trusted, victims may actually come to expect that people will take advantage of them (victimize them). As the betrayed victim expects that she will again be abused, she becomes less defensive and self-protective towards potential perpetrators. As a result, the victim becomes more vulnerable to sexual harassment victimization.

The third traumagenic dynamic, powerlessness, is believed to occur when the victim is unable to control the abusive situation. Finkelhor and Browne (1985) refer to powerlessness as a “process in which the child’s will, desires, and sense of efficacy are continually contravened” (p. 532). The victim feels powerless and unable to exercise his or her own will. The sense of powerlessness is intensified as the child cannot stop the abuse or is unable to make adults understand or believe what is taking place. Sexual abuse, which is an exploitation of the child’s body against his or her own will, is in itself a form of powerlessness (Finkelhor & Browne, 1985).

Victims of child abuse may also be at greater risk of sexual victimization, including harassment, due to their sense of powerlessness. That is, victims of child abuse have come to feel powerless within personal relationships with others. Thus, they may not be able to stop intimidating or frightening behaviors from others. This could essentially cause a potential perpetrator to escalate inappropriate behaviors, resulting in the perpetrator becoming sexually harassing toward the victim.

The final traumagenic dynamic, stigmatization, refers to the “negative connotations – e.g. badness, shame, and guilt – that are communicated to the child around the experiences and that then become incorporated into the child’s self-image” (Finkelhor & Browne, 1985, p. 532). The victim internalizes the experience in such a way that the child will blame himself or herself, and feel guilty, shameful, and accountable. Furthermore, the child can also feel this stigma due to the cultural taboos in society. In most societies, sexual abuse is not discussed. If the abused child is repeatedly told this, and hence keeps the abuse a secret, he or she might feel even more stigmatized as not

being able to talk about it reinforces the sense of being different (Finkelhor & Browne, 1985). These negative self-images often result in low self-esteem, which places victimized children at a greater risk of subsequent victimization (Messman & Long, 1996). Consequently, child abuse victims become easier targets for sexual perpetrators, including sexual harassment perpetrators.

Indirect effects. In addition to child abuse having direct effects on later victimization, child abuse may also have indirect effects on victimization through adversarial heterosexual beliefs about interpersonal relationships. Having suffered the experience of betrayal, powerlessness, and stigmatization, affects how an individual thinks and makes sense of the world and people around them. Specifically, victims of child abuse, through the effects of betrayal, powerlessness, and stigmatization, may come to hold strong adversarial heterosexual beliefs. Adversarial heterosexual beliefs reflect an individual's attitudes and beliefs about sexual (and non-sexual) interpersonal relationships. The child abuse victim has come to expect others to be hurtful, deceiving, and untrustworthy, as that has been their experience in the past. Hence, they come to believe that interpersonal relationships are adversarial in nature. That is, one person is always out to hurt or take advantage of the other. Further, accepting such beliefs may put the child abuse victim at greater risk of sexual harassment victimization.

In sum, in the above discussion, it is argued that the four trauma-causing factors, separately or combined, leaves the child abuse victim more vulnerable to later victimization. In other words, being a victim of childhood abuse increases the risk of subsequent sexual victimization through the effects of these dynamics. Specifically,

traumatic sexualization could lead to inappropriate sexual activity, including sexual harassment, by exchanging sexual favors for alternative goals. Betrayal and stigmatization increases the risk of sexual harassment victimization through low self-esteem, low self-worth, and the expectation of being harassed. Further, being powerless within relationships also increases the risk of experiencing sexual harassment. That is, powerless individuals are less able to stop others from harassing them, whether this harassment is from a co-worker, boss, or romantic partner. Finally, it was argued that trauma-causing factors may lead one to hold strong adversarial sexual beliefs about relationships, which in turn increases the risk of sexual harassment victimization.

Attachment Theory

Another negative outcome of child abuse is insecure attachment. Alexander (1992) who applied attachment theory to the study of sexual abuse argued that “the abuse itself (and the betrayal of trust that it represents) as well as the responses of significant others to the disclosure of abuse may cause a sudden erosion of trust in a previously securely attached child” (p. 189). It is this erosion of trust that can lead to insecure attachment behaviors in the abused child.

Insecure attachment is a specific concept taken from attachment theory, and reflects the pattern of how an individual forms relationships with other people. In other words, how an individual attaches himself or herself to other individuals. Likewise, secure attachment reflects a way of attaching oneself to another person. However, secure attachment reflects what is generally considered the healthy and proper way of becoming close to another person. In fact, the majority of people are characterized by the secure

attachment pattern, which has come to represent the modal style (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Howe et al., 1999).

Attachment theory was developed by Bowlby (1969, 1973, 1980) on the notion that the quality of the parent-child relationship, in the child's first years, influences the child's later emotional development, interpersonal style, and social behavior (Howe et al., 1999). According to Bowlby (1977), attachment theory conceptualizes "the propensity of human beings to make strong affectional bonds to particular others" (p. 201). Children gain knowledge about appropriate behaviors, the importance of trusting others as well as how to manage intense emotions through attachment relationships (Page, 1999). This knowledge is contained in what are referred to as "internal working models" (Howe et al., 1999). These internal working models form the basis of one's personality (Bowlby, 1973) and are important since they influence how each individual learns appropriate and inappropriate behavior, how to interact with others, as well as how to create and maintain close relationships. According to Bowlby (1980), children internalize whatever early experiences they have had with their attachment figure, and these internalizations become the prototype for later relationships.

A way to assess the quality of the attachment relationship is to determine, through the internal working models, how the individual experiences and perceives themselves and others. Individuals who are classified as secure are generally well adapted and capable of making sense of both themselves and others, which increases their social competence and their ability to deal with strong emotional situations (Howe et al., 1999). On the other hand, individuals who show insecure attachment patterns have trouble

making sense of themselves as well as others, thereby lacking social competence. They cannot handle situations involving strong emotions efficiently or competently.

Based on this assessment, different types of attachment patterns emerge.

Although researchers have proposed different names for these patterns, (e.g., secure, avoidant, ambivalent, disorganized, preoccupied, unresolved, or fearful), consensus exists on the notion of secure and insecure attachment patterns. These attachment patterns are of great importance when assessing victimization status. It is especially important to assess whether insecure attachment patterns, as compared to secure attachment patterns, are more often associated with sexual victimization. In spite of the logic of this proposition, the empirical literature has been somewhat inconsistent. However, this association has mostly been tested on the more severe types of sexual victimization, like rape. In this work, this association will be tested on the less severe forms of sexual victimization, like harassment.

Attachment researchers (e.g., Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Feeney & Noller, 1990; George, Kaplan, & Main, 1985; Hazan & Shaver, 1987) have also demonstrated the importance of attachment relationships in adulthood. Feeney, Noller, and Hanrahan (1994) created a measure of adult attachment styles called the Attachment Style Questionnaire (ASQ). They argued that adult attachment could be divided into five factors, each representing a different attachment style. Their study gave rise to the following categorization of adult romantic relationship styles: (1) Preoccupation with Relationships, (2) Confidence, (3) Discomfort with Closeness, (4) Relationships as Secondary, and (5) Need for Approval (Feeney et al., 1994, p. 134). Based on this five-

factor model, “Confidence” represents the secure attachment style, whereas the other four are characteristics of insecure attachment styles.

Each of these adult attachment styles reflects different beliefs about relationships. Feeney and her colleagues (1994) argued that individuals hold certain beliefs about relationships and that these beliefs are influenced by their personal attachment style. Specifically, they indicated that “Confident” individuals are comfortable with intimacy, and have high levels of self-esteem and confidence in their relationships. Individuals with the “Preoccupation with Relationships” attachment style stress the importance of relationships tremendously and need constant attention from others. However, these individuals have low self-esteem and often experience anxiety over their relationships, in particular over whether others love them (Feeney et al., 1994).

The “Discomfort with Closeness” attachment style is characterized by an internal struggle over intimacy. On one hand, these individuals stress the importance of close relationships and want to be close to others. On the other hand, they have trouble getting close to others as they feel they cannot trust them or depend on them (Feeney et al., 1994). Individuals with a “Relationships as Secondary” attachment style, tend to focus on being independent and self-sufficient. Personal achievement is more important than interpersonal relationships. They are comfortable without close relationships and prefer not to depend on others or have others depend on them. Finally, Feeney et al. (1994) argued that individuals with a “Need for Approval” attachment style are overly concerned with being liked and approved of by others. Individuals with this attachment style also stress the importance of relationships, as this is a way to gain others’ approval.

It is crucial to recognize the impact of these attachment styles in order to understand why some individuals are more prone to being sexually victimized than are others. For example, a person who is uncomfortable with closeness, suffers from low self-esteem, and further distrusts others (e.g., the “Need for Approval” individual), will have difficulty forming interpersonal relationships. Similarly, a person who is concerned about obtaining approval from others (e.g., the “Need for Approval” individual) and constantly stresses about their relationships (e.g., the “Preoccupation with Relationships” and “Need for Approval” individuals), will likewise have trouble forming healthy interpersonal relationships, whether these are with a partner, a peer, or a superior. The “Need for Approval” person, who constantly seeks others approval and respect, is likely to alter his or her behavior to gain such approval. Ultimately, they begin to change their response strategies as a way to achieve personal happiness. The “Preoccupation with Relationships” individual also behaves in ways that can assure their personal satisfaction through close relationships. These individuals will go out of their way to become close to another person; this is their ultimate goal. However, it is their desperate need for a relationship that may cause them to accept inappropriate behaviors, possibly leading to sexual harassment victimization. Furthermore, potential offenders may also sense this desperation and take advantage of their vulnerability.

However, even among the insecure attachment styles, specific styles may increase the risk of sexual harassment victimization more so than others. Specifically, the “Need for Approval” and “Preoccupation with Relationships” attached individual is more likely to experience sexual harassment than is the “Discomfort with Closeness” or

“Relationships as Secondary” individual. Generally, people who have a low self-worth seek a sense of “belonging,” be it within a group relationship or an intimate relationship. The “Need for Approval” and “Preoccupation with Relationships” individual often suffer from low self-worth and low self-esteem, and consequently will go to great lengths to obtain a sense of belonging and approval. With regard to sexual harassment victimization, this could mean that the “Need for Approval” and “Preoccupation with Relationships” individuals allow for their peers, bosses, or partners to verbally or physically abuse them. The need for belonging and approval from others is so strong, that they consciously or unconsciously “allow” these behaviors to happen.

Usually insecure individuals, including “Need for Approval” and “Preoccupation with Relationships” individuals, lack social competence, which can influence how well functioning they are within interpersonal relationships. Not knowing how to deal with or interact with people, or recognize appropriate relational behavior, increases the risk of sexual victimization. A person who stresses about their relationship (“Need for Approval” and “Preoccupation with Relationships”), but feels unworthy of other’s love, might try to overcompensate for their own insecurity by focusing entirely on the other person’s needs. This creates an imbalance in the relationship with one person setting aside his or her own needs. It is this lack of social competence, and the need for approval and belonging, that potentially can increase the risk of sexual harassment victimization. Keeping in mind, that each different style reflects a response strategy, these groups have not learned appropriate response strategies. In situations where the danger of sexual harassment victimization exists, insecurely attached individuals have not learned the

appropriate defensive strategies. Hence, insecure attachment patterns, in particular the “Need for Approval” and “Preoccupation with Relationships” styles, can lead to severe outcomes, including sexual harassment victimization.

In conclusion, both the Traumagenic Model and attachment theory aid in the understanding of sexual harassment victimization. In the first framework, the Traumagenic Model, it was shown how the effects of traumatic sexualization, betrayal, powerlessness, and stigmatization, increases the risk of sexual harassment victimization. That is, each of these four dynamics could influence the behaviors of the individual who experienced abuse, resulting in a greater vulnerability and thereby increasing the risk of sexual harassment. Furthermore, this theoretical framework, explains how betrayal, powerlessness, and stigmatization could lead to strong adversarial sexual beliefs, which may in turn increase the risk of sexual harassment victimization. In particular, adversarial sexual beliefs may have a mediating effect on the relationship between child abuse and sexual harassment victimization.

From attachment theory, an association between attachment styles and sexual harassment victimization was proposed. Specifically, it was argued that individuals characterized by the “Need for Approval” and “Preoccupation with Relationships” attachment pattern, are more likely to be sexually harassed than are others. That is, these individuals are more likely to be harassed as a result of their insecure attachment pattern. The “Need for Approval” and “Preoccupation with Relationships” attached individuals lack behavioral skills that can ensure their own safety and further protect them against menacing and intimidating behaviors, such as sexual harassment.

Hypotheses

Guided by the Traumagenic model and attachment theory, this thesis investigates predictors of sexual harassment, including gender, childhood abuse, attachment styles, and adversarial heterosexual beliefs.

The following direct hypotheses are tested in the current study:

1. *Women are more likely to be victims of sexual harassment than are men.*
2. *Respondents, who report having been victims of child abuse, are more likely to experience sexually harassing behaviors than are respondents who were not abused as children.*
3. *Respondents characterized by the “Need for Approval” and “Preoccupation with Relationships” attachment pattern, are more likely to be sexually harassed than are securely attached respondents.*
4. *Respondents who hold strong adversarial heterosexual beliefs are more likely to be sexually harassed than are individuals holding moderate or mild adversarial beliefs.*

The following indirect hypotheses are tested in this thesis:

1. *Childhood sexual abuse leads to insecure attachment patterns, in particular the “Need for Approval” and “Preoccupation with Relationships”, which in turn increases the risk of sexual harassment victimization.*
2. *Childhood abuse leads to adversarial heterosexual beliefs, which in turn increases the risk of sexual harassment victimization.*

CHAPTER 4

Methodology

Participants

The participants were 426 undergraduate students (148 men and 278 women) enrolled at a large public university in the Northeastern United States. The mean age of the participants was 20.3 years ($SD = 2.2$), and most participants were single (93.7%), heterosexual (98.4%), and Caucasians (88.3%), which mirrored the undergraduate population at this institution.

Procedure

Participants were recruited from sociology and psychology classes, and each participant signed a consent form indicating that they understood that their participation was voluntary, anonymous, and could be discontinued at any point. Extra credit was given for participation.

A series of measures were presented to the participants and the participants were informed that participation meant completing questionnaires about their sexual experiences and attitudes. The battery of self-report measures included measures chosen to investigate the respondent's childhood environment, attachment style, sexual beliefs, and sexual harassment victimization.

The respondents completed the questionnaires in groups of 13 to 74 people. In order to assure that respondents had privacy to complete the survey, large testing rooms (seating capacity approximately 180) were utilized.

Measures

This thesis uses data collected in the fall of 1999 and spring of 2000 (Ménard et al., 2003). To test the hypotheses, a number of the original measures were chosen for this work. Consequently, sexual harassment victimization served as the dependent variable, and gender, childhood abuse, attachment styles, and adversarial heterosexual beliefs served as independent variables.

Sexual Victimization. Sexual harassment victimization was measured using the Sexual Experiences Questionnaire (SEQ) (Fitzgerald et al., 1988). The SEQ consists of 18 behavioral statements (e.g., “How often has someone treated you poorly because of your sex?” and “How often has someone given you unwanted sexual attention?”). Participants rated each statement using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “never” to “most of the time” (Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.92$).

Childhood Abuse. The Childhood Abuse Trauma (CAT) scale consists of 38 questions addressing sexual, physical, and emotional maltreatment during childhood. Sanders and Becker-Lausen (1995) created the CAT measure to test hypotheses about the outcomes of childhood maltreatment. Three subscales were created from the CAT: (1) The Sexual Abuse subscale, (2) The Punishment subscale, and (3) The Neglect/Negative Home Atmosphere subscale (Sanders & Becker-Lausen, 1995, p. 318).

Sexual Abuse Subscale. The Child Sexual Abuse subscale consists of six behavioral statements (e.g., “Before the age of 14, did you engage in any sexual activity with an adult?” and “Did your relationship with your parents ever involve a sexual

experience?"). Participants answered each statement using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "never" to "always" (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.77$).

The Neglect/Negative Home Atmosphere Subscale. The Neglect/Negative Home Atmosphere subscale consists of 14 behavioral statements (e.g., "Did your parents verbally abuse each other" and "Did you ever think seriously about running away from home?") and investigates the general atmosphere of the respondent's childhood (or teenage) home. Participants rated each statement using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "never" to "always" (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.88$).

The Punishment Subscale. The Punishment subscale consists of six behavioral statements (e.g., "Did your parents ever hit or beat you when you did not expect it?" and "When you didn't follow the rules of the house, how often were you severely punished?"). The Punishment subscale allows for the determination of the respondent's attitudes and personal experience of being punished as a child or teenager. Participants rated each statement using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "never" to "always" (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.40$).

Attachment Style Measures. Feeney et al.'s (1994) Attachment Style Questionnaire (ASQ) was utilized to assess the participant's attachment style. The ASQ is based on their five-factor attachment style model and consists of 40 behavioral statements. Participants were asked to rate the 40 behavioral statements using a 6-point Likert scale ranging from "totally disagree" to "totally agree." The five factors relating to personal feelings and attitudes in adult relationships are: (1) "Confidence," (2) "Discomfort with Closeness," (3) "Need for Approval," (4) "Preoccupation with

Relationships,” and (5) “Relationships as Secondary” (Feeney et al., 1994, p. 134).

These five factors represent the respondents’ personal attachment style. “Confidence” is the only secure attachment style; the other four factors are examples of insecure attachment styles.

Confidence Attachment Subscale: The “Confidence” attachment subscale consists of eight items from the ASQ (e.g., “I am confident that other people will like and respect me”). Individuals characterized by this attachment style are confident, have high levels of self-esteem, and are comfortable with intimacy and interpersonal relationships (Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.61$).

Discomfort with Closeness Attachment Subscale: The “Discomfort with Closeness” subscale was comprised of 10 items from the ASQ (e.g., “I prefer to keep to myself”). This attachment style characterizes those individuals who are uncomfortable being close to others and have difficulty depending and trusting anyone but themselves (Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.62$).

Relationships as Secondary Attachment Subscale: Seven items from the ASQ made up the “Relationships as Secondary” subscale (e.g., “Doing your best is more important than getting along with others”). This type of individual is more concerned about achieving things than building interpersonal relationships. Hence, they prefer not to depend on others or have others depend on them (Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.77$).

Need for Approval Attachment Subscale: This subscale was made up of seven items from the ASQ (e.g., “It is important to me that others like me”) and characterizes

those individuals who seek constant approval and confirmation from others (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.73$).

Preoccupation with Relationships Attachment Subscale: The final eight items from the ASQ made up the "Preoccupation with Relationships" subscale (e.g., "I get frustrated when others are not available when I need them"). This attachment style characterizes individuals who tend to stress about their relationships and whether they are liked by others (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.77$).

Adversarial Sexual Beliefs. The participants' sexual beliefs were measured using Lonsway and Fitzgerald's (1995) Adversarial Heterosexual Belief Scale (AHBS). The AHBS consists of 15 statements about intimate relationships and platonic friendships (e.g., "Men and women cannot really be friends" and "When it comes to sex, most people are just trying to use the other person"). In particular, the AHBS, as the name implies, investigates the adversarial nature of these relationships. Participants were asked to rate each statement using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.70$).

CHAPTER 5

Results

Overview of Analyses

The purpose of this work was to investigate individual-level differences that might increase the risk of sexual harassment. Specifically, it looks at the effects of gender, childhood abuse, attachment styles, and adversarial heterosexual beliefs on sexual harassment victimization. Further, the mediating effects of attachment styles and adversarial heterosexual beliefs on the relationships between childhood abuse and sexual harassment victimization were also investigated.

First, univariate analyses were conducted to assess the distribution of the variables, including central tendency, variability, and shape. Specifically, the univariate analyses included obtaining mean, standard deviation, and range for each variable.

Next, bivariate correlations (Pearson product correlations) between the variables were obtained. Pearson correlation is a measure of association between quantitative variables and allows for determination of the strength, direction, and significance between the variables (Agresti & Finlay, 1997). Here, correlations were used to determine whether an association exists between sexual harassment victimization, gender, childhood abuse, attachment styles, and adversarial heterosexual beliefs and further, whether these associations were statistically significant. Subsequently, t-tests were used to investigate whether men and women differed on the dependent variable, sexual harassment victimization, as well as on the independent variables.

Following the bivariate analyses, a regression analysis was conducted.

Regression analyses are utilized to examine the relationship between the dependent variable and the chosen independent variables. Regression analyses provide information on three aspects of the relationship between two quantitative variables: (a) whether a relationship (association) exists, (b) the strength of the association, and (c) the direction of the association (Agresti & Finlay, 1997). Regression analyses describe how the mean of the dependent variable changes according to the value of the independent variable controlling for the other variables in the model (Agresti & Finlay, 1997). The multiple regression analysis was conducted with gender entered in the first step, childhood abuse in the second, attachment style in the third, and adversarial heterosexual beliefs in the final step. The regression analysis was utilized to ascertain the effect of each predictive factor.

In addition to the direct effects of the independent variables, the mediating effects of attachment style and adversarial heterosexual beliefs on the relationships between childhood abuse and sexual harassment victimization were also examined. A variable is said to function as a mediator when it accounts for the relationship between the response and explanatory variables (Baron & Kenny, 1986). If removed, there would be no relationship between the explanatory and the response variable. Three conditions must exist for a variable to have a mediating effect: (1) variations in the levels of the independent variable account significantly for variation in the hypothesized mediator, (2) variation in the mediator account for variations in the response variable, and (3) when the first two are controlled for, a previously significant relationship between the response and

explanatory variable is no longer significant (Baron & Kenny, 1986, p. 1176). The regression analysis allowed for the assessment of whether attachment style and adversarial heterosexual beliefs mediates the relationship between childhood abuse and sexual harassment victimization.

Sample Descriptives

All variables presented to the respondents were scales, allowing for the assessment of mean scores of the scales. Table 1 contains the descriptive statistics, and includes means, standard deviations, and highest and lowest observed value for the distribution of the scales. As seen in Table 1, the sexual harassment victimization scale had a mean of 19.89 and a standard deviation of 10.66. The mean is low relative to the scale (0 – 59), indicating most participants did not experience severe sexual harassment. The standard deviation is fairly large relative to the mean, which indicates that a large variation exists in the respondents' scores on sexual harassment victimization. In other words, some respondents reported high levels of sexual harassment victimization, while others reported no such victimization.

With regard to childhood abuse, the mean for the different subscales were: 0.73 for childhood sexual abuse (range = 0 to 25, standard deviation = 2.11), 10.85 for childhood physical abuse (range = 0 to 25, standard deviation = 3.64), and 12.17 for childhood neglect (range = 0 to 56, and standard deviation 9.37). From these numbers it is clear that the majority of respondents never experienced sexual abuse in their childhood. Although most respondents did not report any severe childhood neglect or physical abuse, levels for these types of abuse were higher than for childhood sexual

abuse. In other words, more respondents reported having experienced childhood neglect and physical abuse than childhood sexual abuse.

Means for the five attachment styles were also obtained. “Preoccupation with Relationships” had a mean of 27.80 and the “Confidence” and “Discomfort with Closeness” attachment styles had a mean of 34.05 and 33.93, respectively. The “Relationships as Secondary” attachment style had a mean of 33.93 and the “Need for Approval” attachment style a mean of 23.19. From these numbers, it was found that most respondents were characterized by the secure attachment style. Specifically, it was found that the “Confidence” attachment style had the highest mean (a mean score of 34.05), which together with the relatively small standard deviation (a score of 5.90) indicates that this is the most common attachment style in this sample. A high mean with a low standard deviation implies that the distribution is centered relatively narrowly around the mean and is hence less skewed. The attachment scores taken together, indicates that all respondents showed characteristics of more than one attachment style, but most respondents were securely attached. The range and standard deviation for the insecure attachment styles were: “Preoccupation with Relationships” (range = 14 to 47, standard deviation = 6.30), “Discomfort with Relationships” (range = 5 to 59, standard deviation = 8.16), “Relationships as Secondary” (range = 6 to 38, standard deviation = 5.24), and “Need for Approval” (range = 8 to 38, standard deviation = 5.33).

Finally, the mean of the adversarial heterosexual beliefs scale equaled 26.93. This means that, on average, the respondents held moderate adversarial heterosexual beliefs (range = 12 to 57, standard deviation = 7.26).

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics.

Variables	Mean	SD	Min	Max	N
Sexual Harassment Victimization	19.89	10.66	0	59	426
Childhood Sexual Abuse	0.73	2.11	0	25	426
Childhood Physical Abuse	10.85	3.64	0	25	426
Childhood Neglect	12.17	9.37	0	56	426
*Preoccupation with Relationships	27.80	6.30	14	47	419
*Confidence	34.05	5.90	7	48	420
*Discomfort with Closeness	33.93	8.16	5	59	420
*Relationships as Secondary	17.67	5.24	6	38	420
*Need for Approval	23.19	5.33	8	38	419
Adversarial Heterosexual Beliefs	26.93	7.26	12	57	426

Note: * = attachment style.

Correlations

In addition to obtaining sample descriptives, correlations between the variables were also conducted. At the bivariate level, a number of variables were significantly and positively related to sexual harassment victimization. As seen in Table 2, a weak positive significant relationship was found between sexual harassment victimization and childhood sexual abuse ($r = 0.256, p < 0.01$). Similarly, a moderate positive significant relationship was found between childhood neglect and sexual harassment victimization ($r = 0.321, p < 0.01$). That is, as childhood sexual abuse and childhood neglect increased, so did sexual harassment victimization.

Positive significant relationships were also found between sexual harassment victimization and adult attachment style. Specifically, weak significant relationships were found between sexual harassment victimization and the “Preoccupation with Relationships” ($r = 0.131, p < 0.01$), “Discomfort with Closeness” ($r = 0.266, p < 0.01$), and “Need for Approval” ($r = 0.125, p < 0.05$) attachment styles. In other words, individuals characterized by one of these attachment styles were significantly more likely

to report sexual harassment victimization than were individuals characterized by one of the remaining attachment styles (i.e., “Relationships as Secondary” and “Confidence”). The “Relationships as Secondary” and “Confidence” attachment style did not predict sexual harassment victimization.

Finally, a weak positive significant relationship was found between sexual harassment victimization and adversarial heterosexual beliefs ($r = 0.250$, $p < 0.01$). That is, as adversarial heterosexual beliefs increased (got stronger), so did the risk of sexual harassment victimization. The remaining relationships between sexual harassment victimization and the predictor variables were not statistically significant.

With regard to significant relationships between the individual predictor variables, both negative and positive relationships were found. As seen in Table 2, a moderate positive significant relationship was found between childhood sexual abuse and childhood neglect ($r = 0.348$, $p < 0.01$). Furthermore, childhood sexual abuse was positively and significantly related to the “Preoccupation with Relationships” ($r = 0.106$, $p < 0.05$), “Discomfort with Closeness” ($r = 0.239$, $p < 0.01$), and “Need for Approval” ($r = 0.142$, $p < 0.01$) attachment styles. That is, respondents who were neglected in childhood and respondents characterized by one of these insecure attachment styles were significantly more likely to also be victims of childhood sexual abuse.

Weak negative and significant relationships were found between childhood physical abuse and the “Relationships as Secondary” ($r = -0.104$, $p < 0.05$) attachment style and adversarial heterosexual beliefs ($r = -0.105$, $p < 0.05$). This indicates that respondents characterized by the “Relationships as Secondary” attachment style were less

likely to report childhood physical abuse. Similarly, respondents who scored high on the childhood physical abuse scale were found to score low on adversarial heterosexual beliefs scale.

Childhood neglect was significantly related to all five attachment styles. Specifically, childhood neglect was positively related to the four insecure attachment styles, but negatively related to the secure attachment style. All relationships were of weak strength, with the exception of “Discomfort with Closeness,” which was of moderate strength. This finding indicates that childhood neglect increases the likelihood of having an insecure attachment style. And conversely, that childhood neglect decreases the chance of being characterized by the secure attachment style. This means that respondents who were characterized by an insecure attachment style were found to be victims of childhood neglect significantly more often than were respondents characterized by the secure attachment style. Additionally, a weak positive significant relationship was found between childhood neglect and adversarial heterosexual beliefs ($r = 0.237$, $p < 0.01$), such as being neglected as a child increases the risk of holding strong adversarial heterosexual beliefs.

Significant relationships were also found between the five attachment styles. The four insecure attachment styles were positively and significantly related to each other, but negatively related to the secure attachment style. Finally, significant relationships were found between adversarial heterosexual beliefs and the other individual predictor variables.

Table 2. Bivariate Correlations of Sexual Harassment Victimization and the Predictor Variables (N = 426).

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.
1. Sexual Harassment Victimization	--									
2. Childhood Sexual Abuse	0.256**	--								
3. Childhood Physical Abuse	0.021	0.042	--							
4. Childhood Neglect Abuse	0.321**	0.348**	0.036	--						
5. Preoccupation with Relationships Attachment Style	0.131**	0.106*	-0.011	0.278**	--					
6. Confidence Attachment Style	-0.080	-0.053	-0.008	-0.256**	-0.272**	--				
7. Discomfort with Closeness Attachment Style	0.266**	0.239**	0.023	0.410**	0.452**	-0.496**	--			
8. Relationships as Secondary Attachment Style	0.072	0.073	-0.104*	0.197**	0.233**	-0.354**	0.426**	--		
9. Need for Approval Attachment Style	0.125*	0.142**	-0.041	0.248**	0.611**	-0.474**	0.440**	0.333**	--	
10. Adversarial Heterosexual Beliefs	0.250**	0.074	-0.105*	0.237**	0.329**	-0.321**	0.376**	0.479**	0.310**	--

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

In addition to being significantly related to sexual harassment victimization, childhood physical abuse, and childhood neglect, adversarial heterosexual beliefs were also significantly related to attachment styles. In particular, moderate positive significant relationships were found between all insecure attachment styles and adversarial heterosexual beliefs ($r = 0.329$, $p < 0.01$ for “Preoccupied with Relationships;” $r = 0.376$, $p < 0.01$ for “Discomfort with Relationships;” $r = 0.479$, $p < 0.01$ for “Relationships as Secondary;” $r = 0.310$, $p < 0.01$ for “Need for Approval”).

Moreover, a moderate negative significant relationship was found between the secure attachment style and adversarial heterosexual beliefs ($r = -0.321$, $p < 0.01$). In other words, respondents characterized by the secure attachment style are unlikely to hold strong adversarial heterosexual beliefs. The remaining relationships were not statistically significant.

T-tests

As part of the bivariate analyses, *t*-tests were conducted to assess the male and female mean responses. Conducting *t*-tests allows for determination of whether the means of the two sample distributions differ significantly from each other. This was assessed for both the dependent and independent variables.

As seen in Table 3 and consistent with prior research, mean comparison between men and women indicated that the female respondents reported sexual harassment victimization significantly more often than did male respondents (men = 16.57, women = 21.43). As for childhood abuse, significant gender differences were found only on one of the three CAT subscales. Female respondents scored significantly higher on the

childhood physical abuse scale than did the male respondents (men = 10.37, women = 11.10). In other words, women were more likely to report having been a victim of childhood physical abuse than were men. No significant gender differences were found on childhood sexual abuse or childhood neglect.

With regard to personal attachment style, male respondents were significantly more likely to be characterized by insecure attachment styles than were women. In particular, men scored significantly higher on the “Preoccupation with Relationships” (men = 29.28, women = 26.92), “Discomfort with Closeness” (men = 34.89, women = 33.28), “Relationships as Secondary” (men = 19.86, women = 16.48), and “Need for Approval” attachment style (men = 24.26, women = 22.57) than did women.

On the other hand, women scored significantly higher on the secure (“Confidence”) attachment style than did men (men = 32.75, women = 34.80). This means that men were more preoccupied with their relationships, viewed their relationships as secondary, and were less comfortable with closeness than were women. Women, on the other hand, were more confident about their relationships than were men.

Finally, gender differences were also found with regard to adversarial heterosexual beliefs, in that men scored significantly higher on the Adversarial Heterosexual Belief Scale than did women (men = 30.09, women = 25.12). In other words, men held stronger adversarial heterosexual beliefs than did women.

Table 3. Mean and Standard Deviation Comparisons of Male and Female Participants.

Variables	Males (n = 148)	Females (n = 274)	t-tests
<i>Dependent Variable</i>			
Sexual Harassment Victimization	16.57 (10.44)	21.43 (10.23)	-4.62***
<i>Independent Variables</i>			
Childhood sexual abuse	0.64 (1.88)	0.75 (2.18)	-0.52
Childhood physical abuse	10.37 (3.57)	11.10 (3.67)	-1.97*
Childhood neglect	12.11 (8.00)	11.95 (9.81)	0.18
Preoccupation with Relationships	29.28 (6.07)	26.92 (6.27)	3.69***
<i>Attachment Style</i>			
Confidence Attachment Style	32.75 (5.46)	34.80 (6.02)	-3.42***
Discomfort with Closeness Attachment Style	34.89 (7.31)	33.28 (8.48)	2.03*
Relationships as Secondary Attachment Style	19.89 (5.15)	16.48 (4.95)	6.54***
Need for Approval Attachment Style	24.26 (4.82)	22.57 (5.50)	3.23***
Adversarial heterosexual beliefs	30.09 (7.72)	25.12 (6.34)	6.71***

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Regression analyses

Following the bivariate analyses, a regression analysis was conducted to assess the relationship between sexual harassment victimization and the predictor variables.

The multiple regression analysis was conducted to predict sexual harassment victimization with gender, childhood abuse, attachment style, and adversarial heterosexual beliefs as the predictor variables. In the regression analysis, gender was entered in the first step, childhood abuse in the second step, and attachment style and adversarial heterosexual beliefs in the third and fourth step, respectively.

The *R*-square value indicated that 24.4% of the variance in sexual harassment victimization was explained by the independent variables (see Table 4). The *R*-square change value indicates how much predictive power each variable adds to the model. Gender, which was entered first, accounted for 6.7% of the variance ($F = 30.16$, $p = 0.000$). Including childhood abuse in the second step, explained an additional 10.5% of

the variance ($F = 21.62, p = 0.000$). In the third step, attachment style was added. This explained an additional 2.6% of the variance ($F = 11.30, p = 0.000$). Finally, adding adversarial heterosexual beliefs, explained an additional 4.5% of the variance. Thus, all variables significantly added to the predictive power of the model and based on an AVONA test, the overall model was significant ($F = 13.182, p = 0.000$).

As seen in Table 4, gender ($\beta = 0.26$) and adversarial heterosexual beliefs ($\beta = 0.26$) were found to have the greatest influence on sexual harassment victimization, followed by childhood neglect ($\beta = 0.24$). For all three variables, the direction of influence was positive. Specifically, compared to men, and controlling for the other variables in the model, being female and a one standard deviation increase in adversarial beliefs results in a 0.26 increase in mean sexual harassment victimization. Similarly, a one standard deviation increase in childhood neglect results in a 0.24 increase in mean sexual harassment victimization. Further, a positive significant relationship was found between childhood sexual abuse and sexual harassment victimization. In addition, a positive significant relationship was found between childhood neglect and sexual harassment victimization, indicating that childhood sexual abuse and childhood neglect increases the likelihood of sexual harassment victimization.

With regard to the five adult attachment styles, significant relationships were only found between the “Discomfort with Closeness” and sexual harassment victimization. This finding indicates that those who score high on the “Discomfort with Closeness” are more likely to experience sexual harassment victimization. In other words, individuals characterized by the “Discomfort with Closeness” attachment style were more likely to

experience sexual harassment than individuals characterized by one of the other insecure styles.

The mediating effects of attachment style and adversarial heterosexual beliefs on the relationship between childhood abuse and sexual harassment victimization can also be seen in Table 4. Specifically, it can be seen that after adding the attachment variables to the model, the β -weight for childhood sexual abuse dropped from 0.16 to 0.13, while the β -weight for childhood neglect dropped from 0.24 to 0.18. These drops suggest that attachment styles are mediating the relationship between childhood abuse and sexual harassment victimization. That is, childhood sexual abuse and childhood neglect increase the risk of insecure attachment, which in turn increases the risk of sexual harassment victimization.

Similarly, it can be seen that after adding adversarial heterosexual beliefs to the model, the β -weight for childhood sexual abuse remains the same at 0.13. However, the β -weight for childhood neglect drops from 0.18 to 0.16, suggesting that the relationship between childhood neglect and sexual harassment victimization is mediated by adversarial heterosexual beliefs. However, this mediation effect only applies to childhood neglect and not childhood sexual abuse, as the β -weight for childhood sexual abuse remained the same after adding adversarial heterosexual beliefs. Thus, childhood neglect increases the risk of insecure attachment, and insecure attachment increases the risk of sexual harassment victimization.

Table 4. Summary of Regression Analysis Predicting Sexual Harassment Victimization using Gender, Childhood Abuse, Attachment Style, and Adversarial Heterosexual Beliefs.

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
Step 1			
Gender	4.86	0.89	0.26***
Step 2			
Gender	4.14	0.84	0.22***
<i>Childhood Abuse</i>			
Childhood Sexual Abuse	0.78	0.24	0.16***
Childhood Physical Abuse	-0.03	0.13	-0.01
Childhood Neglect	0.27	0.05	0.24***
Step 3			
Gender	4.35	0.88	0.23***
<i>Childhood Abuse</i>			
Childhood Sexual Abuse	0.66	0.24	0.13**
Childhood Physical Abuse	-0.04	0.13	-0.01
Childhood Neglect	0.20	0.06	0.18***
<i>Attachment Style</i>			
Preoccupation with Relationships Attachment Style	0.02	0.10	0.01
Confidence Attachment Style	0.13	0.11	0.07
Discomfort with Closeness Attachment Style	0.24	0.08	0.18**
Relationships as Secondary Attachment Style	0.05	0.11	0.03
Need for Approval Attachment Style	0.03	0.12	0.02
Step 4			
Gender	4.92	0.86	0.26***
<i>Childhood Abuse</i>			
Childhood Sexual Abuse	0.66	0.24	0.13**
Childhood Physical Abuse	0.02	0.13	0.01
Childhood Neglect	0.18	0.06	0.16**
<i>Attachment Style</i>			
Preoccupation with Relationships Attachment Style	-0.05	0.10	-0.03
Confidence Attachment Style	0.16	0.11	0.09
Discomfort with Closeness Attachment Style	0.21	0.08	0.16**
Relationships as Secondary Attachment Style	-0.11	0.11	-0.06
Need for Approval Attachment Style	0.04	0.12	0.02
<i>Adversarial Heterosexual Beliefs</i>			
Adversarial Heterosexual Beliefs	0.38	0.08	0.26***

Note: $R^2 = 17.3\%$; $\Delta R^2 = 0.105$ for Model 2; $R^2 = 19.9\%$; $\Delta R^2 = 0.026$ for Model 3; $R^2 = 24.4\%$; $\Delta R^2 = 0.045$ for Model 4. * $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$. *** $p < 0.001$.

CHAPTER 6

Discussion

The assertion that sexual harassment is a widespread social problem can hardly be denied. It is a problem that many women and men will encounter at some point in their lives. The consequences are often costly and severe, both for the individual and for the society. Victims report various negative outcomes relating to their physical health, mental health, and satisfaction with their working and educational environment. Consequently, research has focused on identifying and measuring risk factors of sexual harassment. This type of research is useful as it can aid in the understanding and prevention of sexual harassment. This study aimed at examining risk factors of sexual harassment, and in particular, it focused on the effects of gender, childhood abuse, attachment style, and adversarial heterosexual beliefs on sexual harassment victimization.

Consistent with previous literature (Gruber, 1997; Gutek, 1985), the first hypothesis was supported. That is, gender was a predictor of sexual harassment victimization at the bivariate and multivariate level. Specifically, it was found that women are more likely to be victims of sexual harassment than are men.

The second hypothesis, which predicted that victims of childhood abuse were at increased risk of experiencing sexual harassment victimization, received only partial support. It was anticipated that all three types of childhood abuse (i.e., neglect, sexual, and physical child abuse) would predict sexual harassment victimization, but this was not the case. At the bivariate level, only victims of childhood neglect and childhood sexual abuse were found to be at increased risk of such victimization. This is in line with

previous research (Alexander & Lupfer, 1987; Cloitre et al., 1996; Koss & Dinero, 1989; Wyatt et al., 1992). Individuals who had been physically abused in their childhood were not at increased risk of sexual harassment victimization. However, failing to find support for physical abuse as a predictor of sexual harassment victimization is likely due to a measurement problem. As previously mentioned, the alpha level of the Punishment subscale was only 0.40, indicating that the internal consistency of this measure is low.

Gender differences on childhood abuse experiences were also examined. However, significant gender differences were only found with regard to childhood physical abuse. This study found that victims of childhood physical abuse were most likely to be women.

At the bivariate level, it was also found that individuals characterized with the “Preoccupation with Relationships” or “Need for Approval” attachment styles were at higher risk of experiencing sexual harassment victimization than were securely attached individuals. This finding supports the third hypothesis. Previous researchers (Alexander, 1993; Flanagan & Furman, 2000; Van Patten & Parker, 2004) have found similar associations, although mostly with regard to other types of victimization (i.e., childhood sexual abuse, adolescent sexual victimization, and personal stalking). Additionally, individuals characterized with the “Discomfort with Closeness” attachment style were also found to be at higher risk of victimization than were securely attached individuals at the bivariate level. In general, it was found that women were most likely to be characterized by the secure attachment style, whereas men were most likely to be insecurely attached.

At the multivariate level, only the “Discomfort with Closeness” attachment style was significantly related to sexual harassment victimization. The “Preoccupation with Relationships” and “Relationships as Secondary” attachment styles were negatively (but not significantly) related to sexual harassment victimization in the final step, although positively related in the previous steps. This finding is interesting as the “Preoccupation with Relationships” attachment style was a significant predictor at the bivariate level. This lack of significance is likely due to its strong positive relationship with the other attachment measures and with adversarial heterosexual beliefs at the bivariate level.

It was also hypothesized that individuals who hold strong adversarial heterosexual beliefs are also at increased risk of sexual harassment victimization. Support for this fourth hypothesis was found at both the bivariate and multivariate level. This association is intriguing as previous research has found little or no support for such relationship (Koss & Dinero, 1989; Spence et al., 1991). However, it should be noted that previous research has focused on severe types of sexual victimization. Thus, it may be the case that adversarial heterosexual beliefs play a greater role in lesser forms of sexual victimization, like harassment, whereas other factors play a greater role in more severe forms of victimization.

Additionally, as previously discussed, earlier researchers utilized Burt’s (1980) Adversarial Sexual Beliefs Scale, which has been criticized by Lonsway and Fitzgerald, (1995) for not assessing the adversarial nature of relationships. Thus, prior research might not have found a relationship between victimization status and adversarial sexual beliefs due to the utilization of Burt’s (1980) scale. This thesis, however, utilized

Lonsway and Fitzgerald's (1995) Adversarial Heterosexual Beliefs Scale and did find support for this relationship. Concerning adversarial heterosexual beliefs, this study found that men, more so than women, were likely to hold strong adversarial beliefs.

Finally, it was predicted that the relationship between childhood sexual abuse and sexual harassment victimization was mediated by insecure attachment styles. The statistical analyses also supported this hypothesis, indicating that childhood sexual abuse leads to insecure attachment patterns, which in turn increases the risk of sexual harassment victimization. Similarly, it was hypothesized that adversarial heterosexual beliefs mediated the relationships between childhood sexual abuse and sexual harassment victimization. Support was also found for this final hypothesis. In both instances, the bivariate relationships of these variables to sexual harassment victimization was fairly strong, yet when child abuse is added as in the multivariate model, the accounted for variance of these mediator variables drops and is relatively low as reflected by their R^2 change values (R^2 change was 2.6% with the addition of the attachment measures and 4.5% with the addition of adversarial beliefs).

The findings from this study are quite clear in documenting the effects of the hypothesized predictors of sexual harassment. In the next chapter, some methodological considerations and limitations will be discussed. The next chapter also introduces policy implication and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 7

Conclusion

Theoretical Implications

The findings from this study are consistent with the two theoretical frameworks used. The fact that childhood sexual abuse and childhood neglect increased the risk of victimization is congruent with the Traumagenic Model (Finkelhor & Browne, 1985). This framework posits that four trauma-causing factors can explain how childhood abuse increases the risk of subsequent victimization. In this study, childhood physical abuse was not found to be a significant predictor of sexual harassment victimization. However, as mentioned previously, this is most likely due to a measurement problem and the fact that few respondents answered the item “Did your parents ever hit or beat you when you did not expect it?” in an affirmative direction. This item was the most direct question regarding physical abuse victimization. Future researchers should address this issue by utilizing a better measure of childhood physical abuse.

However, it is also possible that childhood physical abuse exert a lesser pervasive influence on sexual harassment victimization than childhood sexual abuse and childhood neglect. This could be explained – at least theoretically – in that victims of physical abuse, unlike victims of sexual abuse, recognize appropriate from inappropriate sexual behaviors (although not necessarily physically aggressive behaviors). Due to the traumatic sexualization experienced by many victims of sexual abuse, these individuals cannot make such a distinction, thereby increasing the risk of subsequent sexual victimization. Similarly, victims of childhood neglect may not recognize appropriate

relational behavior, due to the internalized feelings of previous neglect, also increasing the risk of subsequent sexual victimization.

The findings regarding attachment style as a predictor of sexual harassment victimization, is consistent with attachment theory. It was found that individuals who were classified with an insecure attachment style (with the exception of “Relationships as Secondary”) were at increased risk of experiencing sexual harassment. Phenomena like childhood abuse and sexual harassment occurs in the context of relationships (George, 1996), which is why attachment theory is useful in understanding why such a relationship exists. Attachment theory can be seen as a theory of close relationships and is particularly useful in classifying and identifying the behaviors observed within interpersonal relationships (Howe et al., 1999).

Methodological Implications

With regard to methodological considerations, one of the weaknesses of this study was that it was cross-sectional, making inferences regarding sexual harassment victimization difficult. The data were gathered at one point in time, making the findings difficult to generalize to another point in time. Another weakness concerns the limitations of the sample. The sample ($N = 426$) is limited in size, which affects the power and the generalizability of the study. A large sample size increases the odds of obtaining significant findings when an effect truly does exist.

The generalizability of this study was limited in three important ways. First, the sample comprised college students drawn from a single academic institution, indicating that the findings are not generalizable outside this particular college environment.

Second, a college sample may not be representative for the general population. Consequently, the sample may not represent a just picture of the general population with regard to sexual harassment victimization and childhood abuse victimization. Generally, only the most well adapted and well functioning individuals make it to the college level, thereby possibly excluding some victims of childhood abuse and sexual harassment from the sample. Due to the trauma experienced by some victims of sexual harassment and childhood abuse, these individuals may not be functioning well enough to get into college. This is of great importance as childhood abuse was investigated as a predictor of sexual harassment victimization. The third weakness concerning the generalizability of this sample is the homogeneity of the respondents' ethnicity (88% of the respondents were Caucasians). This limits the generalizability of this study to other ethnic groups found in the U.S. population.

Future Research

These methodological weaknesses have implications for future studies. Future researchers should try to replicate the current findings in a longitudinal study with a national representative sample of men and women. Using a longitudinal research design can provide stronger inferences about the effects of childhood abuse on sexual harassment victimization. This type of research design can also help clarify if the predictability of the variables changes over time.

Furthermore, by using a national representative sample the composition of the respondents would be more diverse with regard to ethnicity, socio-economic status, variations in rural/urban residency, and previous abuse and sexual harassment

victimization experiences. A heterogeneous sample would also allow researchers to investigate the effects, if any, of ethnicity, socio-economic status, and geographical residency on sexual harassment victimization.

Finally, future research should address some concerns regarding the choice of measures. In particular, the concerns regarding the validity of the Punishment subscale of the Childhood Abuse Trauma scale should be addressed. This measure had a low Cronbach's alpha reliability, making it hard to come to any conclusive finding regarding the effects of physical abuse on sexual harassment victimization.

Policy Implications

Regardless of the limitations of this study, the results suggest a need for awareness and prevention programs aimed at reducing sexual harassment victimization. This form of victimization is far too common (Gruber, 1990). Indeed, the American Association of University Women (AAUW) has found that in today's schools, eight out of ten students (grade eight to eleven) report having experienced some form of sexual harassment during their schooling (AAUW, 2001). Therefore, it is not only important to implement national awareness and prevention programs, but they need to begin at the elementary school level.

Awareness about sexual harassment has increased as is evident by introduction of the policies against it in schools. For example, the AAUW report (2001) found that 69% of the students (grade eight to eleven) in 2001, compared to 26% in 1993, reported that their schools had policies dealing with sexual harassment. This increased awareness is much welcomed, but also worrisome, given that the harassment level in schools did not

decline during the same time frame. In fact, the number of boys who reported experiencing sexual harassment “often or occasionally” increased by 7% (from 49% in 1993, to 56% in 2001). The question remains, why are rates not declining?

Despite the prevalence of sexual harassment in school settings, few intervention programs exist and few evaluations of these programs have been completed. Two programs that have been implemented and evaluated are the “Expect Respect Elementary School Project” and the Michigan State Board of Education Program. The “Expect Respect Elementary School Project,” funded by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, is a model for preventing dating violence, bullying, and sexual harassment in public schools. With a “whole school” approach, this program offers staff training, classroom education, and parent education based on the principle that without intervention, unchecked and unregulated sexual harassment behaviors would lay the foundation for future abusive practices. After one year of implementation, results indicated that students were better at identifying sexually harassing behaviors, more aware of the existing school policies, and more willing to intervene to stop the harassment of another student (Sanchez, Robertson, Lewis, Rosenbluth, Bohman, & Casey, 2001).

Another way of combating sexual harassment in schools was devised by one middle school in Michigan. There, a group of eighth-grade students took action after being discouraged that a group of harassers (after being suspended from school) had not learned what actions qualified as harassment. Under the tutelage of their teacher, they were advised to identify the scope of the problem, review policies to combat harassment,

and determine the efficacy of these policies. The students determined that the policies were not effective and took it upon themselves to rewrite the schools sexual harassment policy. The result of this project, which also culminated in the video entitled "*Straight Talk About Sexual Harassment*," was that the number of complaints of sexual harassment decreased significantly, from 40 in 1998, to five in 2001-2002 (AAUW, 2004). This model was later adopted by the Michigan State Board of Education and now serves as a national model of sexual harassment prevention in schools (AAUW, 2004).

Because this study found a strong positive direct effect and a moderate positive indirect effect of child abuse on sexual harassment victimization, reducing child abuse and providing treatment to child abuse victims are additional ways to reduce sexual harassment victimization. Thus, programs designed to reduce child abuse or to aid victims post-abuse are needed. However, evaluative research dealing with the efficacy of both types of programs has been insufficient. Generally, child abuse prevention programs are based on the assumption that by targeting potential victims, child abuse rates can be reduced (Bolen, 2003). However, statistics indicate that these prevention programs have not been successful at reducing child abuse, likely because they are aimed at victims rather than the abusers (Bolen, 2003). What these programs have managed to do is to educate children about sexual abuse, teach self-protective skills, and encourage them to disclose any abuse they may experience (Finkelhor & Strapko, 1992).

As previously indicated, child abuse victims are at increased risk of experiencing subsequent sexual victimization. Therefore, sexual assault prevention programs have also focused on reducing sexual revictimization. However, only a few studies have

assessed the effectiveness of these programs (e.g., Breitenbecher & Gidycz, 1998; Hanson & Gidycz, 1993; Marx, Calhoun, Wilson, & Meyerson, 2001). As part of their prevention model, Breitenbecher and Gidycz (1998) provided female participants with information about the prevalence of sexual assault, the psychological effects of victimization, risk factors, and self-protective behaviors, at a single educational session. They found that this model was successful in preventing sexual assault among women with no prior victimization, but the model was unsuccessful at preventing previously abused women from experiencing subsequent victimization.

Similar findings were reported by Hanson & Gidycz (1993), who educated participating college students about rape myths, prevention strategies, and dating behaviors that were associated with date rape. This model was also more successful in reducing the incidence of sexual assault among women with no sexual victimization history, than it was for women who had previously been victimized. As these findings indicate that the cycle of revictimization is particularly difficult to break, it is essential that future prevention programs target women with a history of sexual victimization. Further, because this thesis found that child abuse led to insecure attachment styles and adversarial heterosexual beliefs, which in turn increased the risk of sexual harassment victimization, prevention programs might be more successful if they incorporate elements aimed at improving attachment and relational beliefs systems. It is likely that prevention programs, which aim only to change risk-related behaviors and responses to unwanted sexual attention, are simply not adequate with this population.

Summary

The purpose of this thesis was to investigate factors that increase the risk of sexual harassment victimization among male and female college students. Justification for this work is found in the ever increasing problem of sexual harassment. As demonstrated in this work, there are behavioral and psychological factors that can increase the risk of sexual harassment victimization. This knowledge may be particularly useful for the improvement of sexual harassment awareness and prevention programs. Likewise, it is important to continue research on the link between childhood abuse and subsequent sexual victimization to gain a better understanding of revictimization. Finally, this thesis offers recommendations for future research regarding sexual harassment victimization.

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Appendix A
Demographics

ID# _____

Age: _____

Sex:

Male _____

Female _____

Race:

White _____

African-American _____

Asian _____

Latino _____

Other: _____

Relationship Status:

Single _____

Married _____

Divorced/Separated _____

Widowed _____

Co-habiting _____

Sexual orientation:

Primarily heterosexual female _____

Primarily heterosexual male _____

Primarily homosexual female _____

Primarily homosexual male _____

Bi-sexual _____

Parental income:

\$0-10,000 _____

\$11,000-20,000 _____

\$21,000-30,000 _____

\$31,000-40,000 _____

\$41,000-50,000 _____

\$50,000+ _____

Appendix B

Sexual Experience Questionnaire

Using the attached scantron, fill-in the appropriate letter to indicate how often someone has:

A	B	C	D	E
Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Most of the time

1. Told you suggestive stories or offensive jokes?
2. Been condescending toward you because of your sex?
3. Treated you poorly because of your sex?
4. Displayed, used, or distributed sexist or suggestive materials (e.g., pictures, stories, or pornography)?
5. Frequently made sexist remarks (e.g., suggesting that men are too aggressive and violent to be trusted)?
6. Made crude and offensive remarks, either publicly (e.g., in the office or the classroom), or privately?
7. Stared, leered, or ogled you in a way that made you feel uncomfortable?
8. Made unwanted attempts to stroke or fondle you (e.g., stroking your leg or neck, pinching your butt)?
9. Attempted to establish a romantic or sexual relationship despite your effort to discourage them?
10. Touched you (e.g., laid a hand on your bare arm, put an arm around your shoulders) in a way that made you feel uncomfortable?
11. Made unwanted attempts to draw you into a discussion of personal or sexual matters (e.g., attempted to discuss or comment on your sex life)?
12. Continued to ask you for dates, drinks, dinner, etc., even though you have said "no"?
13. Gave you unwanted sexual attention?
14. Implied better treatment if you were sexually cooperative?
15. Made it necessary for you to respond positively to sexual or social invitations in order to be well treated?
16. Made you feel afraid that you would be treated poorly if you didn't cooperate sexually?
17. Made you feel subtly threatened with some sort of retaliation for not being sexually cooperative?
18. Made you feel like you were being subtly bribed with some sort of reward or preferential treatment to engage in sexual behavior?

Appendix C

Childhood Environment Questionnaire

This questionnaire seeks to determine the general atmosphere of your home when you were a child or teenager and how you felt you were treated by your parents or principal caretaker. (If you were not raised by one or both of your biological parents, please respond to the questions below in terms of the person or persons who had the primary responsibility for your upbringing as a child.) Where a question inquires about the behavior of both your parents and your parents differed in their behavior, please respond in terms of the parent whose behavior was the more severe or worse.

In responding to these questions, simply fill-in the appropriate letter according to the following definitions:

A	B	C	D	E
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Very Often	Always

To illustrate, here is a hypothetical question:

Did your parents criticize you when you were young?

If you were rarely criticized, you should fill-in the letter B.

Please answer all the questions.

1. Did your parents ridicule you?
2. Did you ever seek outside help or guidance because of problems in your home?
3. Did your parents verbally abuse each other?
4. Were you expected to follow a strict code of behavior in your home?
5. When you were punished as a child or teenager, did you understand the reason you were punished?
6. When you didn't follow the rules of the house, how often were you severely punished?
7. As a child did you feel unwanted or emotionally neglected?
8. Did your parents insult you or call you names?
9. Before you were 14, did you engage in any sexual activity with an adult?
10. Were your parents unhappy with each other?
11. Were your parents unwilling to attend any of your school-related activities?
12. As a child were you punished in unusual ways (e.g., being locked in a closet for a long time or being tied up)?
13. Were there traumatic or upsetting sexual experiences when you were a child or teenager that you couldn't speak to adults about?
14. Did you ever think you wanted to leave your family and live with another family?
15. Did you ever witness the sexual mistreatment of another family member?
16. Did you ever think seriously about running away from home?

17. Did you witness the physical mistreatment of another family member?
18. When you were punished as a child or teenager, did you feel the punishment was deserved?
19. As a child or teenager, did you feel disliked by either of your parents?
20. How often did your parents get really angry with you?
21. As a child did you feel that your home was charged with the possibility of unpredictable physical violence?
22. Did you feel comfortable bringing friends home to visit?
23. Did you have traumatic sexual experiences as a child or teenager?
24. When you were punished as a child or teenager, did you feel "the punishment fit the crime?"
25. Did your parents ever verbally lash out at you when you did not expect it?
26. Did you have traumatic sexual experiences as a child or teenager?
27. Were you lonely as a child?
28. Did your parents yell at you?
29. When either of your parents was intoxicated, were you ever afraid of being sexually mistreated?
30. Did you ever wish for a friend to share you life?
31. How often were you left at home alone as a child?
32. Did your parents blame you for things you didn't do?
33. To what extent did either of your parents drink heavily or abuse drugs?
34. Did your parents ever hit or beat you when you did not expect it?
35. Did your relationship with your parents ever involve a sexual experience?
36. As a child, did you have to take care of yourself before you were old enough?
37. Were you physically mistreated as a child or teenager?
38. Was your childhood stressful?

Appendix D

Attachment Style Questionnaire

Using the attached scantron, show how much you agree with each of the following items by rating them (filling-in the corresponding letter) using this scale:

A	B	C	D	E	F
Totally Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree	Totally Agree

Please answer all questions.

1. Overall, I am a worthwhile person.
2. I am easier to get to know than most people.
3. I feel confident that other people will be there for me when I need them.
4. I prefer to depend on myself rather than other people.
5. I prefer to keep to myself.
6. To ask for help is to admit that you're a failure.
7. People's worth should be judged by what they achieve.
8. Achieving things is more important than building relationships.
9. Doing your best is more important than getting along with others.
10. If you've got a job to do, you should do it no matter who gets hurt.
11. It's important to me that others like me.
12. It's important to me to avoid doing things that others won't like.
13. I find it hard to make a decision unless I know what other people think.
14. My relationships with others are generally superficial.
15. Sometimes I think I am no good at all.
16. I find it hard to trust other people.
17. I find it difficult to depend on others.
18. I find that others are reluctant to get as close as I would like.
19. I find it relatively easy to get close to other people.
20. I find it easy to trust others.
21. I feel comfortable depending on other people.
22. I worry that others won't care about me as much as I care about them.
23. I worry about people getting too close.
24. I worry that I won't measure up to other people.
25. I have mixed feelings about being close to others.
26. While I want to get close to others, I feel uneasy about it.
27. I wonder why people would want to be involved with me.
28. It's very important to me to have a close relationship.
29. I worry a lot about my relationships.
30. I wonder how I would cope without someone to love me.
31. I feel confident about relating to others.

- 32. I often feel left out or alone.
- 33. I often worry that I do not really fit in with other people.
- 34. Other people have their own problems, so I don't bother them with mine.
- 35. When I talk over my problems with others, I generally feel ashamed or foolish.
- 36. I am too busy with other activities to put much time into relationships.
- 37. If something is bothering me, others are generally aware and concerned.
- 38. I am confident that other people will like and respect me.
- 39. I get frustrated when others are not available when I need them.
- 40. Other people often disappoint me.

Appendix E

Sexual Beliefs Scale

Please rate these descriptors (fill-in the letter on the scantron sheet) using the following scale:

A	B	C	D	E
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree

Please answer all questions.

1. In dating relationships, people are mostly out to take advantage of each other.
2. If you don't show who is boss in the beginning of a relationship you will be taken advantage of later.
3. Most people are pretty devious and manipulative when they are trying to attract someone of the opposite sex.
4. Men and women are generally out to use each other.
5. It's impossible for men and women to truly understand each other.
6. In the work force any gain by one sex necessitates a loss for the other.
7. When women enter the work force they are taking jobs away from men.
8. Men and women cannot really be friends.
9. Sex is like a game where one person "wins" and the other "loses."
10. In all societies it is inevitable that one sex is dominant.
11. It is natural for one spouse to be in control of the other.
12. When it comes to sex, most people are just trying to use the other person.
13. It is possible for the sexes to be equal in society.
14. Men and women share more similarities than differences.
15. It is possible for a man and a woman to be "just friends."

Appendix F

Human Subjects-Institutional Review Board Approval Letter

San José State
UNIVERSITY

**Office of the Academic
Vice President**
Academic Vice President
Graduate Studies and Research

One Washington Square
San José, CA 95192-0025
Voice: 408-283-7500
Fax: 408-924-2477
E-mail: gradstudies@sjsu.edu
<http://www.sjsu.edu>

To: Helle Gram
Skovbrynet 4,
DK-2880 Bagsvaerd
Denmark

From: Pam Stacks,
Interim AVP, Graduate Studies & Research

Date: January 27, 2005

The Human Subjects-Institutional Review Board has approved your request for exemption from human subjects review under category "A" in the study entitled:

"Predictors of sexual harassment victimization among college students."

This approval is contingent upon the subjects participating in your research project or the subject's data collected for the research project being appropriately protected from risk. This includes the protection of the anonymity of the subjects' identity when they participate in your research project and concerning all data that may be collected from the subjects. The Board's approval includes continued monitoring of your research to assure that the subjects are being adequately and properly protected from such risks. If at any time a subject becomes injured or complains of injury, you must immediately notify Pam Stacks, Ph.D. Injury includes but is not limited to bodily harm, psychological trauma, and release of potentially damaging personal information.

Please also be advised that all subjects need to be fully informed and aware that their participation in your research project is voluntary, and that he or she may withdraw from the project at any time. Further, a subject's participation, refusal to participate, or withdrawal will not affect any services that the subject is receiving or will receive at the institution in which the research is being conducted. This approval is granted for a one-year period and data collection beyond January 27, 2006 requires an extension request.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (408) 924-2480.

Cc: Kimberly Menard