

THE ROLE OF RACE ON THE PREVALENCE OF AND PERCEIVED RESPONSE TO  
WORKPLACE SEXUAL HARASSMENT

A Thesis  
by  
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## **Abstract**

### **THE ROLE OF RACE ON THE PREVALENCE OF AND PERCEIVED RESPONSE TO WORKPLACE SEXUAL HARASSMENT**

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Research has shown that minority women experience compounding forms of discrimination as identities intersect, namely sex and race. Though sexual harassment (SH) has been examined, notably in the workplace, the literature routinely fails to capture the full experience of minority women – the prevalence and reporting of, and the perceived response to SH. Further, the intersection between race of the victim and race of the perpetrator appears understudied despite the function of SH being to maintain systems of power and reinforce patterns of discrimination. It was hypothesized that minority women will experience greater rates of SH, specifically perpetrated by White men. Additionally, it was hypothesized that minority women will be less likely to report SH, and if they report, they will be more likely to perceive that their complaint(s) is (are) not taken seriously compared to White female counterparts. The Sexual Experiences Questionnaire (SEQ) was administered to respondents along with a measure of reporting (i.e. ‘yes’ or ‘no’) and of perceived seriousness of complaint handling. There was no support that for any of the hypotheses. Of note, Hypothesis 3 and Hypothesis 4 were marginally significant, highlighting the need for further research. The direction of the relationship between

victim race and perpetrator race in relation to workplace SH reveals that intraracial workplace SH may occur more frequently than interracial workplace SH. Future research should explore the incidence of intraracial workplace SH.

*Keywords:* sexual harassment, intersectionality, racialized sexual harassment, hegemonic masculinity, White privilege

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## **The Role of Race on the Prevalence of and Perceived Response to Workplace Sexual Harassment**

Research and policy on workplace discrimination has consistently addressed race and sex discrimination, yet has done so separately. While race and sex discrimination were outlawed 60 years ago in the United States with the 1964 Civil Rights Act, an intersectional perspective has only begun to develop to understand the compounding effects of racial and sex identities (Williams, 2021). While some studies have explored differential workplace outcomes that arise on the basis of multiple identities, the field generally lacks adequate research (Sawyer et al., 2015). More so, the law does not recognize the intersection of race and sex. For example, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 requires that claimants declare that harassment was either “because of... race” or “because of... sex” (Williams, 2021). Despite being at greater risk to encounter sex- and race-related workplace stressors, minority women<sup>1</sup> and their experiences have been largely unrecognized and unaddressed until recently (Berdahl & Moore, 2006b). With an emerging focus on racial injustices in addition to the prevalence of and inaction in addressing sexual harassment (SH), research has started to examine the intersection of multiple underrepresented identities and their interaction in relation to workplace SH (e.g., Berdahl & Moore, 2006b; Fielden et al., 2010). The body of literature grows, notably examining the consequences of both racial and sexual harassment on minority women. In this study, the experience of minority women will be critically examined, concentrating on the reported prevalence of SH female minorities experience and how their reporting behaviors may differ from White women based on broader patterns of discrimination. Studying the role of race on the prevalence of SH and reporting may illuminate actions that can be undertaken to address the

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<sup>1</sup> For clarification, the term minority refers to people of primarily non-Caucasian ethnic backgrounds (Berdahl & Moore, 2006b).

disproportionate perpetuation of SH against minority women and the causes behind non-reporting and/or perceptions that their complaints would not be handled as seriously compared to White female counterparts.

As women increasingly entered the public sphere in the past century and sought new economic opportunities, they encountered discrimination and harassment on the basis of their sex in the workplace (O'Donohue et al., 1998). Discrimination specifically refers to the differential treatment of an individual(s) based on their race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, marital and parental status, disability, sexual orientation, or genetic information (U.S. Department of Interior, n.d.). Based on the sex of the individual, or race, as well as their other attributes, individuals may be targeted based on their identity. Harassment, any unwelcome conduct based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability or genetic information, may arise with discrimination, SH being a type of harassment (U.S. Department of Interior, n.d.).<sup>2</sup> Notably, discrimination, which arises on the basis of one or many individual or intersecting identities, and harassment, or more specifically SH, will vary based on the unique cumulation of identities (Williams, 2021). No legal definition of SH existed until 1980, when the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) issued its guidelines (Fitzgerald, 1993). Despite more recent efforts to combat discriminatory and/or harassing acts (Williams, 2021), women today continue to experience sexual harassment, a term defined as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical harassment of a sexual nature (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, n.d.). In support, Fitzgerald (1993) cites that approximately one of every two working women will be harassed at some point during their academic or working lives. Two broad classes of SH were outlined: attempts to extort sexual

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<sup>2</sup> Sexual harassment, the focus of the study, encapsulates discrimination and harassment.

cooperation by way of subtle or explicit threats of job-related consequences (quid pro quo harassment) and pervasive sex-related verbal or physical conduct that is unwelcome or offensive (hostile work environment) even absent of tangible job consequences (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 1990).

SH has been situated within a broader context that encompasses discrimination, harassment and power, and privilege (McLaughlin et al., 2012). The theory of hegemonic masculinity refers to the idea that Western society privileges an ideal of male behavior, promoting the following characteristics: male, masculine, cis, White, heterosexual, Christian, and strong (Bergman, 2019). As the ideal, a White male accrues advantages that would otherwise not be awarded if they were characterized differently. Hegemonic masculinity has worked to legitimize masculinities through social institutions and groups which in turn, naturalizes male dominance and female inferiority (Jewkes et al., 2015). The term, which has helped explain men's behaviors and the use of violence, encapsulates the destructive and exaggerated attitudes and practices that perpetuate gender inequality and violence. Namely, hegemonic masculinity supports the ideal of strength and toughness, which can relate to the capacity to use or actual use of violence (Jewkes et al., 2015). Women who oppose their subordinate position in the gender hierarchy may be targeted by men who align closely with hegemonic masculinity and internalize these characteristics and gender roles. McLaughlin et al. (2012) argue that men frequently target vulnerable workers such as women and/or racial minorities or women who threaten male dominance in order to reestablish or re-invoke gender norms and privileges. Thus, sexual harassment, a representation of power and prowess, functions to reinforce social hierarchies as a means to regulate and support appropriate gender roles (McLaughlin et al., 2012).

Though SH has been studied within the context of the workplace, at least preliminarily, the influence of race on SH has yet to be fully recognized (Sawyer et al., 2015). The popularized social movement #MeToo that resurfaced in 2017 revealed the degree and extent of SH and abuse that so many women have experienced in the workplace (Williams, 2021). Despite exposing the prevalence of SH, the movement failed to recognize how minority women experience workplace SH differently and at greater rates than White counterparts. While Black female activist, Tarana Burke, created the movement in 2006 to specifically bring attention to the minority experience, the #MeToo movement became characterized by the victimization of upper-class White women, detracting from the combined racial and sexual trauma that minority women face (Gómez & Gobin, 2020). Over a decade later, White actress Alyssa Milano reinvigorated the movement, substantiating sexual allegations via Twitter against Harvey Weinstein (Williams, 2021). While the hashtag increased awareness and shed light on the gravity of the issue, the “Me Too” phrase came to obscure the original focus of intersectionality and the minority experience. Minority women have been disproportionately affected by workplace SH; specifically, they file 56% of EEOC claims, yet constitute only 37% of working women (Rossie et al., 2018). Further, trends indicate that rates of SH decreased by more than 70% for White women between 1996 and 2016 while the rate for Black women only dropped by 38%, revealing that the racial discrepancy has widened (Cassino & Besen-Cassino, 2019).

The long and violent history of victimization that minority women face in the United States reveals how women experience differential outcomes such as SH because of their racial identity. Racialized sexual harassment refers to the idea that women of color “... may be more prone to experience sexualized forms of sexual harassment at work due to their membership in multiple marginalized groups, combined with sexualized stereotypes” (Buchanan & Ormerod,

2002). Society has historically and culturally sexualized minority women's bodies and undermined their power, resulting in racially motivated SH (Calafell, 2014). In order to understand the unique experiences of minority women, differences in the types and forms of discrimination that a female minority experiences must be examined, specifically sexually objectifying and devaluing stereotypes that encourage sexually harassing behaviors. The impact of multiple intersecting identities is recognized in the theory of intersectionality, proposed by Kimberlé Crenshaw (Crenshaw, 1991). Intersectionality proposes that identity categories like gender, age, race, ethnicity, class, and sexuality are mutually shaped and cannot simply be added together (Simien, 2007). Because race and sex cannot be reduced to individual characteristics and evaluated as independent contributions in explaining differential outcomes, minority women face the concurrence of oppression in a multiplicative fashion. In support of the theory of intersectionality, the notion of double jeopardy<sup>3</sup> suggests that race and sex have a joint effect on discrimination (Berdahl & Moore, 2006b). Minority women have been discriminated against both as women and as minorities, and thus, they disproportionately experience harassment and discrimination. In support of the notion, Berdahl and Moore (2006b) cite that minority women, specifically Black and Latina women, earn the lowest wages, possess the least workplace authority, and are most concentrated in undesirable jobs, underlining the economic and occupational disadvantages that minority women encounter. In the context of SH, their membership in multiple marginalized communities combined with sexualized stereotypes often results in racialized SH in which minority women are more susceptible to SH in the workplace (Buchanan et al., 2008). In a study conducted by Buchanan et al. (2008) that examines double

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<sup>3</sup> The notion of double jeopardy in this context refers to the interaction between race and sex rather than the Double Jeopardy Clause in the Fifth Amendment to the US Constitution which prohibits anyone from being prosecuted twice for substantially the same crime (Legal Information Institute, n.d.).

jeopardy, Black women indicated more unwanted sexual attention and sexual coercion compared to White women, likely indicating that other minority women experience the same harassing behaviors.

The broader context of oppression and power points to the deeply embedded historical and cultural beliefs and enactments of discrimination against minority classes. Objectification, a process of subjugation via “psychological oppression of one group of people by another more powerful group,” has developed as a tool to fulfill the needs or interests of the more powerful group (Gruenfeld et al., 2008). More specifically in the context of SH, women have been treated as an object only valued for its use, and thus they have become a physical object of male desire (Szymanski et al., 2011). At the societal level, which translates to the organizational level, power has been constructed within the framework of the patriarchy, a pervasive and ingrained system that structures experiences. If a woman initiates some form of change or resistance to the system, societal members may respond unfavorably in order to uphold the status quo. Within the patriarchal system, women hold less power comparatively (Szymanski et al., 2011). Sexual objectification in combination with racial discrimination, and power underlying both, disposes minority women to experiencing the consequences of multiple forms of discrimination.

Objectification has been molded by systems of power since the introduction of slavery and colonialism to White capitalist patriarchy. Benard (2016) maintains that, in fact, colonialism and patriarchal capitalism differ very little in structure, ideology, and strategy to conquer and oppress given that both rely on “ownership” of racial minorities. Thus, the sexualized narrative of minority women arose from the context of the violent and exploitative practices dating back to the origins of the United States. While all women face sexual objectification, the forms of harassment and discrimination vary based on the sexualization of particular racial identities,

resulting in racialized objectification (Tebbe et al., 2018). Notably, the sexualized objectification of one race will differ from that of another based on the historical context of oppression to which that racial identity was subjected. For example, the popularized image of hypersexual Black women portrays them as animalistic and bestial, dirty, and unintellectual – false and generalized characterizations that developed during slavery in which White men utilized sexual oppression and abuse as a means to control and degrade Black women (Benard, 2016). However, Asian women face an entirely different experience. Asian women have been construed as mysterious, exotic, seductive, and conquerable based on notions of Orientalism and the militaristic violence historically associated with the region (Matsumoto, 2020). Critically, as aforementioned, sexual objectification manifests differently based on racial identity and thus, these examples only demonstrate some of the stereotypes that are associated with Black and Asian women that contribute to racialized SH. These historical systems of oppression, uniquely enacted on the basis of race, inform current thought and norms, upholding the inaccurate stereotypes described, which, in turn, support racialized SH.

From a societal standpoint, these discriminatory outcomes warrant an intense examination in attempt to minimize the discriminatory outcomes that minority women experience. In the context of the workplace, organizational strategies and harassment policies must be tailored to recognize different experiences based on compounding identities and proactively address the issue of SH. Harmful work experiences, specifically SH, have demonstrable effects on occupational outcomes, having a negative association with organizational commitment, job satisfaction, work satisfaction, co-worker satisfaction, and supervision satisfaction, to name a few consequences (Sojo et al., 2016). More so, threats to psychological and physical health and well-being are damaging and far-reaching. These

additional consequences outside occupational well-being include anxiety, depression, headaches, sleep disruptions, gastrointestinal issues, weight loss or gain nausea, and sexual dysfunction (Fitzgerald, 1993). Given that women constitute a large pool of available labor and a sizable portion of the workforce in conjunction with the profound job-related, psychological, and health consequences, the prevalence of workplace SH should be further understood in order to sufficiently address and prevent incidents. Underlying power dynamics of racial discrimination alone constitute a tremendous burden and disadvantage for racial minorities; however, minority women face the multiplicative experience of intersecting minority identities, posing further threats to work outcomes and personal well-being.

### **Victim Race and Sexual Harassment**

The sexual objectification of minority women has functioned to uphold systems of power through the oppression and degradation of minority classes (Cassino & Besen-Cassino, 2019). Stemming from historical systems of power predicated upon the oppression and abuse of racial minorities, current practices continue to perpetuate the racialized sexualization of minority women. The stereotypes that have been ascribed to the female minority body have been molded to exert power over minority women, and ultimately, uphold the status quo (Gruenfeld et al., 2008; Szymanski et al., 2011). For example, Anderson et al. (2018) found that Black women were animalistically dehumanized compared to White counterparts. Construed in the context of privilege and race, in which White women have been positioned as the normative standard of beauty, minority women experience greater dehumanization compared to White women, specifically construed as animal-like (Tebbe et al., 2018). Because hegemonic masculine culture and power perpetuates the objectification of minority women by idealizing White women while devaluing minority women, they experience differential outcomes based on these



hypersexualized and racialized stereotypes that White women have not been subjected to in the context of White privilege and systems of oppression.

Given that power underlies SH, SH in the workplace may consequently be utilized as a tactic to control and dominate minority women. Fitzgerald (1993) argues that acts of SH are perpetrated as a means of social control. Historically, SH has been utilized to communicate contempt and hostility for any woman who strays from the socially prescribed limits of the feminine domain into the masculine jurisdiction of the workplace (Fitzgerald, 1993). These standards of racialized objectification and its integration into the cultural and social fabric of society transfer to organizations' power hierarchies. Regardless of race, SH minimizes women to sexual objects in order to diminish their formal organizational power (McLaughlin et al., 2012). Accounting for race, minority women face greater susceptibility given that White men may utilize SH as a means of racial discrimination and sexual dominance in order to oppress the 'lesser' being and retain their own power. Evidence supports this contention given that minority women have been found to experience more overall harassment compared to majority men, minority men, and majority women (Berdaahl & Moore, 2006b). Consequently, it would be expected that minority women experience more SH relative to White female counterparts. Thus, it would be hypothesized that:

*Hypothesis 1:* Minority women will report that they experience more SH than White women.

### **Perpetrator Race and Sexual Harassment**

Considering SH stems from broader patterns of discrimination, power, and privilege, White men are motivated to maintain notions of gender appropriateness and racial dominance in order to preserve their advantageous position (Hernandez, 2000; McLaughlin et al., 2012). The

term White privilege represents the advantages that White individuals accrue by virtue of being constructed as White (Leonardo, 2004). Critically, White privilege obscures the subject of domination and implies mere passivity and normality in regards to the enactment of discriminatory practices and structures. Thus, White men can create and maintain White spaces, in society and in the workplace, in which they have normalized their power and control over minority groups.

Because aggressors perpetuate SH to attain and accumulate power, it would be expected that less advantaged people such as minorities are especially vulnerable to SH while more advantaged people such as White men would be incentivized to maintain their position within the workplace, or more broadly, societally (Cassino & Besen-Cassino, 2019). Evidence indicates that minority women experience differential rates of harassment due to the compounding effects of intersectional systems of domination of race and sex. However, dominant groups less often experience these forms of discrimination based on the status and position they occupy in society, and their ability to maintain these privileges. When White men, especially those in positions of power, face threatening conditions such as women entering and occupying the workplace, they would be expected to engage in more SH compared to minority men, who have lesser power and motivation to enact the same behaviors (Cassino & Besen-Cassino, 2019).

Ultimately, the dominant group (i.e. White men) will look to reestablish dominance if faced with pressures that endanger their power (Cassino & Besen-Cassino, 2019). If White men perceive an intrusion on any masculine institution, including the workplace, they will be more likely to behave in manners, such as SH, that reinstate dominant structures. More so, according to Mecca and Rubin (1999), men of higher organizational status will more likely perpetrate cross-racial harassment compared to men with less status, who have historically been minority

men. Interestingly, they found that women who report sexually harassing behaviors also cite the role of race-based stereotypes in these SH incidents and their perceived vulnerability to men in search of power. With empirical studies finding that the higher status and power of the perpetrator has been associated with more severe harassment compared to the harassment of lower status perpetrators, White men, who have predominantly occupied managerial and supervisory positions in the workplace, would be more likely to perpetrate SH against all women, but particularly minority women (Woods et al., 2009). Thus, it would be hypothesized that:

*Hypothesis 2:* Respondents will report that White men commit more SH than minority men.

### **Influence of Victim and Perpetrator Race on Sexual Harassment**

Considering the historical origins of racial discrimination, minority women continue to face compounded forms of structural disadvantages in a variety of domains, such as inequalities in housing or employment (Williams, 2021). These structural components further exacerbate the lived experiences of minority women, reinforcing their disadvantaged position in society, which carries into the workplace where they experience additional vulnerabilities. Bergman (2019) argues that organizations reflect the values and systems of broader society and consequently, reproduce discriminatory narratives of minority women and uphold policies and structures that devalue the minority female body. Based on the social psychological approach, research acknowledges that some people will be more likely to be harassed than others based on their group memberships within the hierarchy of power (Bergman, 2019). By degrading and deprecating minority women to mere sexual purpose, White men bolster power hierarchies and support sex- and race-based notions of superiority within the organizational context.

Because organizational systems have been devised to protect and augment power for the already powerful, specifically White men, minority women face tremendous barriers to achieving career progression and recognition, and fundamentally, feeling safe and valued in the workplace (Bergman, 2019; Sojo et al., 2016). As organizations aim to broaden power, their superstar performers, ideal workers who have predominantly accumulated privileges over time based on their majority racial identity, in turn create systems and spaces that tolerate their harassment (Bergman, 2019). Considering the systematic objectification of minority women, they would be at greater risk to be sexually harassed by White men who operate and uphold the hegemonic masculine framework in which organizations operate.

Critically, SH functions as a disciplinary practice that creates, maintains and regulates the identities of the harasser and victim based on gender norms (Franke, 1997). Race has been strategically deployed in the regulation of gender as demonstrated by racial differences in SH prevalence (Hernandez, 2000). Considering the role of race in constructing gender, race-based motivations underlie the differential rates of SH. Hernandez (2000) refers to the term racial patriarchy to explain “the social, political, economic, legal, and conceptual system that entrenched the ideology of white supremacy and white male control over women's reproduction and sexuality.” The construction of minority womanhood as hyper-sexual and sexually inferior relative to White women has bolstered the patriarchy and reinforced White male power. Based on these societal stereotypes that imply their sexual value and accessibility, which were created to institutionalize racial oppression in conjunction with upholding gender norms, minority women are disproportionately at risk of SH in the service of White male privilege (Hernandez, 2000).

By utilizing White male power to inscribe appropriate notions of femininity and penalize manifestations of inappropriate feminine behavior while simultaneously reinforcing racial inferiority, White men can regulate gender norms and maintain White dominance, underscoring the race-based motivation behind perpetuating SH against minority women (Hernandez, 2000). However, minority men, who face differential outcomes that stem from racial discrimination, do not hold the same privileges and power afforded to White men on the basis of institutionalized racism and patriarchy. Thus, minority men would not act on these same race-based motivations to sexually harass. Workplace SH within the framework of White privilege and hegemonic masculinity highlights that minority women would be more susceptible to more frequent forms of harassment. The racial disparity in the prevalence of SH highlights the need to examine the use of SH as a mechanism to institutionalize societal oppression. Racialized SH, which functions to establish and maintain power and domination as a means to sexually and racially oppress, is historically grounded in systems of White privilege. Thus, it would be hypothesized that:

*Hypothesis 3a:* The highest levels of SH will be reported to occur between White men and minority women.

*Hypothesis 3b:* The level of SH between minority men and minority women will be reported to occur less than the level of SH between White men and minority women.

*Hypothesis 3c:* The level of SH between White men and White women will be reported to occur less than the level of SH between White men and minority women.

*Hypothesis 3d:* The lowest levels of SH will be reported to occur between minority men and White women.

### **Non-Reporting of Sexual Harassment**

Organizational culture influences how discrimination, and subsequently harassment, is defined, challenged, and redressed in the workplace, suggesting which behaviors will be accepted and those that will be punished (Hirsh & Kornrich, 2008) and signaling to employees which behaviors should or should not be reported. Workplace conditions, including institutionalized policies that reinforce systems of power, shape organizational interpretations of discrimination (Hirsh & Kornrich, 2008), which in turn, may impact reporting behaviors of minority women. Organizational factors that impede reporting such as stigmatization or barriers to reporting and inadequate training tend to be prevalent in organizations (Atwater et al., 2019). Thus, women, particularly minority women who experience compounding forms of discrimination, across all organizations will be likely to not report incidents of SH. While organizations themselves often deter reporting, other considerations related to the victim and their experiences will impact non-reporting.

The hesitancy or decision to not report reflects underlying factors of sexism and/or racial discrimination that influence minority women and their perceptions of the reporting process. Ceelen et al. (2019) explored the post-decision attitudes of SH victims generally, finding women often did not report due to fears of a “lack of evidence” and “feelings of shame, guilt, and other emotions.” More so, women may not acknowledge SH initially, but later consider and accept their experience(s) as negative, recognizing it as harassment but fearing lack of evidence or the damaging emotions. While Ceelen et al. (2019) outlined some of the reasons behind non-reporting of all women, minority women are likely to experience even greater apprehensions to report based on the understanding of intersectionality and the compounding effects of discrimination.

Rooted in a past of racial discrimination, minority women likely experience harassment more often than White women who do not share the same history of racial and sexual objectification and violence (Buchanan & Ormerod, 2002). Nonetheless, minority women are less often perceived as victims of SH based on ascribed values relating to their racial identity, discouraging reporting. In support, the accounts of various women of different racial backgrounds reveal that they often perceive that their organization has assigned a value to them that is sexual in nature, as opposed to job-related, based on their racial identity (Richardson & Taylor, 2009). Because minority women perceive that their organizations use race and gender to define them, often as less credible or hyper-sexualized, they may opt to not report. Ultimately, the history of racial trauma and the minority experience coupled with the inaccurate and demeaning perpetuation of their image and worth leads minority women to be reluctant or hesitant to report SH.

Furthermore, Fielden et al. (2010) determined that approximately 75% of Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) women did not report incidents of SH due to fear of job loss, reprisals from male family, and adverse organizational reactions. These findings indicate that these few identified considerations that are based on the racial identity of the victim will influence, or discourage, reporting. They also found that the racial/ethnic background of the victim and the perpetrator influences SH experiences, impacting how women respond and their reporting decision.

Considering reporting within the context of White privilege, Whites as a racial group inherently hold privileges in most all areas of social, and thus work, life (Leonardo, 2004). As race cuts across sex as well as other social identities, White women accrue privileges that minority women do not, potentially shaping the perception that they would not receive the same

affordances that White women would throughout the reporting process. Further, perpetrators tend to be more senior and powerful, manifesting in the abuse of their position of power (Fielden et al., 2010). As previously discussed, White men have historically occupied positions of power with the institutionalization of hegemonic masculinity, and thus, it is inferred that White men with status have the desire and ability to perpetrate SH in order to maintain racial and sexist norms and practices. These underlying systems of power predicated upon the valuation of hegemonic masculinity would likely dissuade minority women from reporting incidents as they fear not being believed, related emotional effects, job loss or other organizational consequences, or interpersonal ramifications, to name a few reasons. Thus, it is hypothesized that:

*Hypothesis 4:* Minority women will be less likely to indicate that they reported incidents of SH compared to White women.

### **Perceived Seriousness of Complaint Handling**

Though the #MeToo Movement brought attention to the issue, which some presumed would encourage more women to speak out about their experiences of SH, reporting nonetheless decreases if reports are not assessed seriously and sufficiently investigated, if negative consequences ensue, or if the harassment is not stopped (Atwater et al., 2019). Thus, simply acknowledging the issue will not decrease the prevalence of SH if organizations do not consider reports seriously. Minority women who have reported SH contend that reporting barriers stem from inadequate organizational policies and culture as they witnessed management remain unresponsive or violate confidential information (Fielden et al., 2010). Because minority women have seen the claims of their counterparts scrutinized or dismissed, they may perceive that their own claims would be evaluated in the same manner. In support, Fielden et al. (2010) reported that a number of minority women disclosed that male employees had been harassing and after



those incidents were reported, no action had been undertaken. Working within an organizational culture of inaction, distrust, and hegemonic masculine structures of power, minority women are not only more likely to experience SH, but their claims will likely be discredited.

Specifically, the hyper-sexualized stereotypes ascribed to specific racial groups function to devalue their bodies and word, which in turn, may condition minority women to assume that their experiences will be handled less seriously. Considering the concept of victim blaming, the dismissal of racism and the social environment as determinants of racial disparities results in individuals or groups of individuals being blamed for their misfortunes or the injustices they experience (Johnson et al., 2021). Thus, a victim's credibility may be undermined by preconceived notions based on negative stereotypes, such as those ascribed to minority women. Johnson et al. (2021) underscores the fact that individuals with intersecting marginalized identities are especially vulnerable to victim blaming whereby popular stereotypes including gender-based myths and generalizations of behavior based on race converge to ultimately discredit the minority experience and their voice. Consequently, minority women who experience SH may perceive that, as members of marginalized groups, if they speak out they will be discredited and/or assigned fault for that situation. Overall, the inaction minority women experience, or witness, as well as patterns of victim blaming those who hold marginalized identities will likely lead minority women to feel that their reports of SH will not be appropriately handled compared to White female counterparts. Thus, it is hypothesized that:

*Hypothesis 5:* Minority women will perceive that their complaints of SH will be taken less seriously than those of White women.

## Method

### Participants

The sample for the present study included a sample of women employed across the United States, ranging in age, race, years of work experience, level of education, and the industry they worked in at the time of harassment. Given this study pertains to SH directed toward women by men, only individuals identifying as women were surveyed. Of note, in this study, ‘woman’ refers to biological sex as opposed to gender identity. While it is recognized that any sex can experience SH, the focus of this study is to assess SH perpetuated by men towards women to critically examine sex-specific SH and underlying systems of power. Additionally, the sample was limited to women with at least two years of full-time work experience in order to capture the current state of workplace SH. A total of 306 respondents were collected. However, 61 respondents were not included in the study because they either did not meet the criteria of the study (i.e. they indicated that they identified as a male or they resided outside of the United States) or their responses indicated a lack of attention. Thus, a total of 245 respondents were included in analyses.

To determine the desired sample size, the computer program G\*Power was used. A meta-analysis of 49 primary studies with a total sample size of 89,382 examining SH was analyzed to determine an average effect size. Chan et al. (2008) reported estimates of the population mean effect size of the association between SH and job-related, psychological and physical outcomes. The uncorrected correlations between SH and the various outcomes, including job satisfaction, job commitment, job performance, job and work withdrawal, job stress, psychological well-being, psychological distress, physical health and physical symptoms, ranged between  $r = -.27$  and  $r = .24$ , indicating an effect size between  $d = .56$  and  $d = .49$ , respectively. Based on the

conventional classification of Cohen's  $d$ , the magnitude of the effect size has been estimated to be medium (Chan et al., 2008). Using that effect size as a general reference point, with an  $\alpha$  error probability of .05 and a  $1-\beta$  error probability of .90, the results of the power analysis suggested that a sample size of 172 would be needed to detect the desired effect. A post-hoc power analysis indicated a power of .05 was achieved for Hypothesis 1, Hypothesis 3, Hypothesis 4 and Hypothesis 5. A power of .07 was achieved for Hypothesis 2. Thus, sufficient power was not achieved to test the proposed relationships.

### Measures

*Race and Sex.* Respondents indicated their race, and the race of any perpetrator(s), from the following options: Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, Asian or Pacific Islander, Native American or Alaskan Native, Middle Eastern or North African, White or Caucasian, or two or more races. To indicate sex, they were asked to choose "male," "female," "non-binary/third gender," or "prefer not to say." All respondents indicated "female."

*Experienced Sexual Harassment.* Respondents were asked to complete a modified 14-item version of the Sexual Experiences Questionnaire (SEQ) to measure the experience of SH in the workplace. Developed by Fitzgerald and colleagues in 1988, the SEQ is considered one of the most conceptually grounded and psychometrically valid questionnaires for gauging the incidence and extent of SH (Berdahl & Moore, 2006a; Fitzgerald et al., 1988; Fitzgerald et al., 1995). Specifically, the original SEQ demonstrates an internal consistency coefficient of .92 with test-retest stability analyses indicating a coefficient of .86 over a 2-week period. Over the years, the SEQ has been tested in a range of studies in various educational, occupational, and organizational settings and across cultures. Based on a three-dimensional model of SH, the SEQ assesses gender harassment, unwanted sexual attention, and sexual coercion, behaviors respectively ranging from least severe to most severe. Gender harassment pertains to "verbal or

nonverbal behaviors not aimed at sexual cooperation but that convey insulting, hostile, and degrading attitudes about women.” Unwanted sexual attention refers to “verbal and nonverbal behavior that is offensive, unwanted, and unreciprocated.” Lastly, sexual coercion involves “the extortion of sexual cooperation in return for job-related considerations,” constituting quid pro quo, while hostile working environment encompasses gender harassment and unwanted sexual attention (Fitzgerald et al., 1995).

The SEQ items were phrased in behavioral terms, and respondents indicated the degree to which they have experienced any of the behaviors on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (most of the time). Respondents were asked to report workplace situations they have experienced in the past 2 years given that the focus of the study is to assess current trends (Fitzgerald et al., 1995). In the present study, Cronbach’s alpha for SEQ items was .98. For analyses, the 14 items of the SEQ were averaged to create a composite scale score.

*Reporting.* To assess reporting, respondents were first asked, “If you experienced any of these behaviors, were all of the behaviors perpetrated by the same individual?” The respondent could indicate “yes,” “no,” or “not applicable” if they did not experience any of the behaviors. Respondents who experienced any of these behaviors by one perpetrator only responded once to the next questions. If it was indicated that more than one harasser perpetrated any of the behaviors, the respondent was prompted to answer questions for each of the perpetrators. If they indicated “not applicable,” the survey routed them to the demographic section.

The outcome of whether they told anyone at all about the behavior(s) was measured via one yes-no item for each reported perpetrator: “Did you tell anyone about the behavior?” If the respondent answered “no” that they did not tell anyone about the behavior(s), the survey navigated them to the next section. If the respondent answered “yes,” they were then asked to indicate whether they reported the behavior(s) to someone within the organization. The outcome

of whether they chose to report versus not report was measured via one yes-no item for each reported perpetrator: “Did you report the behavior to anyone in your workplace?” If the respondent answered “no” to reporting the behavior(s), the survey navigated them to the next section. If they indicated “yes,” they were asked to provide a response to the item: “To whom did you report the incident?” The respondent chose from the following options: supervisor, HR, friend/coworker, or other.

*Perceived seriousness.* If respondents indicated that they reported the behavior(s), they were asked to respond to a single item for each reported perpetrator, “To what extent do you believe that your report was taken seriously?” on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (not at all seriously) to 5 (extremely seriously).

*Demographic and control variables.* Control variables relating to demographics, including the role/position of the perpetrator, age of the respondent, years of work experience of the respondent, level of education the respondent has completed, and the industry they worked in at the time of harassment, were accounted for at the end of the questionnaire. Respondents reported the role (supervisor, coworker, or other) of each perpetrator. They indicated a numeric value for their age and years of work experience. They indicated the highest degree or level of education they have completed by selecting one of the following options: less than high school diploma, high school diploma or equivalent, some college but no degree, associate’s degree, bachelor’s degree, master’s degree, professional degree, or doctoral degree. They chose from the industries identified by O\*NET, the primary source of occupational information in the United States, including: Accommodation and Food Services, Administrative and Support Services, Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting, Arts, Entertainment and Recreation, Construction, Education, Finance and Insurance, Government or Public Administration, Health Care and Social Assistance, Information, Management of Companies and Enterprises, Manufacturing, Other

Services, Professional, Scientific and Technical Services, Real Estate and Rental and Leasing, Retail or Wholesale Trade, Transportation and Warehousing, and Utilities (National Center for O\*NET Development, n.d.).

### **Procedure**

Survey participants were recruited via Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk), a crowdsourcing marketplace that outsources processes such as survey collection to a distributed workforce who can complete tasks virtually (Amazon Mechanical Turk, n.d.). The survey (refer to Appendix A) was administered online via Qualtrics through the MTurk research platform and respondents completed the survey on their own time at their own computer. Respondents first indicated whether they consented to participate in the study. Participation in this research was completely voluntary and respondents were compensated for their participation. Then, they responded to the 14-item SEQ, after which they indicated the number of perpetrators who demonstrated these behaviors, if any. If applicable, respondents answered the questions pertaining to perpetrator demographics, reporting, and if applicable, perceived seriousness of complaint handling. Lastly, respondents answered several questions pertaining to their demographic information.

In order to pay respondents a fair rate based on the federal minimum wage, participants received \$4 for the 20-minute survey (or \$0.20 per minute). This research project strictly adhered to the ethical standards of Appalachian State University and fully considered the possible demands on the respondents.

This project has been approved, as required, by the Institutional Review Board of Appalachian State University (February 3, 2022; IRB Reference # 110176). See Appendix B for IRB approval.

## Results

### Sample Descriptives for the Present Study

Of the respondent sample size ( $N = 245$ ), 53 respondents (21.6%) indicated that they have not experienced any of the behaviors. Of those who experienced some level of SH ( $n = 192$ ), the number of perpetrators was specified by each respondent that indicated they experienced sexually harassing behaviors, resulting in a total of 286 instances of SH. Consequently, 286 perpetrators were indicated. Of the respondents who experienced these behaviors ( $n = 192$ ) and who indicated that they had told someone at all ( $n = 136$ ), 93 incidents of SH (32.5%) of the total 286 reported incidents of SH were reported within their organization.

The present sample included respondents from all racial categories except for Middle Eastern or North African (Black or African American = 6.9%, Hispanic or Latino = 4.9%, Asian or Pacific Islander = 4.1%, Native American or Alaskan Native = 0.8%, White or Caucasian = 82%, two or more races = 1.2%) (refer to Table 1). In terms of minority racial identification, minority women accounted for 44 respondents (18%). Though the sample predominately accounted for the experiences of White women, the survey nonetheless was representative of the composition of the United States labor force. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) (2021), in 2020 Whites constituted the majority of the labor force (77%) while Blacks (13%), Asians (6%), two or more races (2%), American Indians and Alaska Natives (1%), and Native Hawaiians and Other Pacific Islanders (< 1%) made up an additional labor force. Of those who experienced SH, Black or African American respondents accounted for 7.8% of victims, Hispanic or Latino respondents accounted for 4.7% of victims, Asian or Pacific Islander respondents accounted for 3.6% of victims, Native American or Alaskan Native respondents 1.0% of victims, White or Caucasian respondents accounted for 82.3% of victims, and

respondents of two or more races accounted less than 1% of victims (refer to Table 2). All perpetrator racial identities were represented (Black or African American = 9.8%, Hispanic or Latino = 5.9%, Asian or Pacific Islander = 1.7%, Native American or Alaskan Islander = 1.4%, Middle Eastern or North African = 1.4%, White or Caucasian = 79%, two or more races < 1%) (refer to Table 3). In terms of minority racial identification, minority perpetrators constituted 21% of the indicated perpetrator sample. The average age at the time respondents experienced this conduct is 36.3 years old, ranging from 18 to 69. The average years of respondent work experience is 14.6 years, ranging from 2 to 50 years. The highest degree or level of education of respondents ranged from high school diploma or equivalent to doctoral degree. Of note, 56.6% indicated bachelor's degree while only 2.1% indicated doctoral degree for highest degree or level of education. The means, standard deviations, and Pearson correlations for victim and perpetrator demographics (i.e. victim race, perpetrator race, victim age, victim years of work experience, and highest level of education completed by the victim) and SEQ score and reporting outcomes are presented in Table 4.

All industries in which respondents worked at the time of the conduct were represented except for "Real Estate and Rental and Leasing" and "Utilities". The Information, Arts, Entertainment and Recreation industry had the highest number of SH incidents (19.6%) while the Professional, Scientific and Technical Services industry had the highest average level of SH ( $M = 2.71$ ,  $SD = 1.17$ ) (refer to Table 5). In regards to the role of the perpetrator, 92 supervisors perpetrated SH (32.2%), 172 co-workers or friends perpetrated SH (60.1%), and 22 other individuals perpetrated SH (7.7%). Interestingly, supervisors perpetrated SH at greater rates ( $M = 2.77$ ,  $SD = 1.11$ ) compared to co-workers or friends ( $M = 1.95$ ,  $SD = 0.92$ ) and other individuals ( $M = 1.52$ ,  $SD = 0.61$ ).



### **Hypothesis Testing**

In order to test Hypothesis 1, an independent samples t-test was conducted. The sample for this included the total number of incidents indicated by respondents who reported experiencing SH ( $n = 286$ ). An independent samples t-test was necessary to evaluate whether the outcome of SH varied based on respondent race, specifically minority respondent versus White respondent. This analysis tested whether minority women reported more SH overall relative to White women. There was not significant difference between the levels of SH indicated by minority women ( $M = 2.18, SD = 1.03$ ) and the levels of SH indicated by White women ( $M = 2.18, SD = 1.06$ );  $t(284) = -0.021, p = .492, d = -0.003$ . Results did not indicate that minority women report experiencing greater rates of SH compared to White women. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 was not supported.

In order to test Hypothesis 2, an independent samples t-test was conducted. The sample for this included the total number of incidents indicated by respondents who reported experiencing SH ( $n = 286$ ). An independent samples t-test was necessary to compare perpetrator race (i.e., minority perpetrator versus White perpetrator) to determine whether the two variables demonstrate a statistically significant difference from one another in regards to the outcome of SH perpetration. This analysis tested whether White men were reported to perpetrate more SH overall compared to minority men. There was not significant difference between the levels of SH perpetrated by White men ( $M = 2.20, SD = 1.08$ ) and the levels of SH perpetrated by minority men ( $M = 2.13, SD = 0.94$ );  $t(284) = 0.404, p = .343, d = 0.059$ . Results did not indicate that White men were reported to commit greater rates of SH relative to minority men. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 was not supported.

In order to test Hypothesis 3, a factorial Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted. The sample for this included the total number of incidents indicated by respondents who reported experiencing SH ( $n = 286$ ). A factorial ANOVA was necessary to test the combined effects of the independent variables, race of victim and race of perpetrator, on the outcome of SH prevalence. The overall interaction F ratio was not significant,  $F(1, 282) = 3.366, p = .068, \eta^2 = 0.012$ . Victim race and perpetrator race did not interact in relation to the outcome of SH prevalence. Four sub-hypotheses were tested in order to further examine the relationships based on the race of the victim and the race of the perpetrator. Planned comparisons revealed the results were not significant, nor in the predicted direction. Hypothesis 3a was tested to determine whether the highest levels of SH were reported to occur between White men and minority women. The t statistic was not significant,  $t(282) = -0.104, p = 1.000, d = 0.032$ . Results indicated that White men were not reported to perpetrate more SH against minority women overall. Hypothesis 3b was tested to examine whether levels of SH between minority men and minority women were reported to occur less than the levels of SH between White men and minority women. The t statistic was not significant,  $t(282) = -1.230, p = .609, d = -0.360$ . Results indicated that levels of SH between minority men and minority women were not statistically different from levels of SH between White men and minority women. Hypothesis 3c was tested to assess whether levels of SH between White men and White women were reported to occur less than the level of SH between White men and minority women. The t statistic was not significant,  $t(282) = 1.074, p = .706, d = 0.264$ . Results indicated that levels of SH between White men and White women were not statistically different from levels of SH between White men and minority women. Hypothesis 3d was tested to determine whether the lowest levels of SH were reported to occur between minority men and White women. The t statistic was not

significant,  $t(282) = 1.444, p = .473; d = 0.295$ . Results indicated that minority men were not reported to perpetrate less SH against White women compared to White men. Therefore, Hypothesis 3 was not supported.

In order to test Hypothesis 4, a chi-square test was conducted. The sample for this included the total number of SH incidents that respondents indicated ( $n = 286$ ). A chi-square test was necessary to test whether the variable, race of victim (i.e., white victim versus minority victim), predicted reporting behavior (i.e., yes versus no). This analysis tested whether minority women indicated being less likely to report incidents of SH compared to White women. There was not a significant difference between victim race and reporting,  $X^2(1, n = 286) = 3.39, p = .066, \phi = .109$ . Overall, 93 incidents (32.5%) were reported while 193 incidents (67.5%) were not reported. Comparatively, 82 incidents in which White women (28.7%) reported were indicated and 153 incidents in which White women (53.5%) did not report were indicated while 11 incidents in which minority women (3.8%) reported were indicated and 40 incidents in which minority women (14%) did not report were indicated. However, results did not indicate that minority women report less often ( $M = 1.78, SD = 0.42$ ) than White women ( $M = 1.65, SD = 0.48$ ). Thereby, Hypothesis 4 was not supported.

In order to test Hypothesis 5, a one-way ANOVA was conducted. The sample for this included only those respondents who indicated that they reported the SH to someone in their organization ( $n = 93$ ). A one-way ANOVA was necessary to compare victim race (i.e., minority victim versus White victim) to determine whether a statistically significant difference exists between the two groups in regards to perceived seriousness of the handling of the complaint(s), the outcome. This analysis tested whether minority women perceived that their complaints of SH were taken less seriously than those of White women. There was not a significant difference

between victim race and perceived seriousness of SH complaint handling,  $F(1, 91) = 1.41, p = .238, \eta^2 = 0.015$ . Results did not indicate that minority women perceive that their complaints of SH were handled less seriously ( $M = 3.36, SD = 0.81$ ) than those of White women ( $M = 3.78, SD = 1.12$ ). Thereby, Hypothesis 5 was not supported.

### Discussion

This study examined the incidence of and perceived response to SH in the workplace, and the relative influence of victim race and perpetrator race. Respondents identifying as a woman were asked to complete an online questionnaire assessing their experiences relating to sexually harassing behaviors committed in the workplace. Using Amazon MTurk, respondents who had at least two years of full-time work experience completed the questionnaire in order to examine the relationship between victim race and perpetrator race and the outcomes of SH and reporting of SH.

Most of the proposed hypotheses were not supported. The analysis for Hypothesis 1 showed that minority victims and White victims were not statistically different in regards to experiencing SH. It was surprising that minority racial identity did not demonstrate any observable correlation with SH as proposed in Hypothesis 1. In a study conducted by Roscigno (2019), it was found that African Americans and other nonwhite respondents are, respectively, about 6 and 4 times more likely than White counterparts to experience workplace racial discrimination. Women are more than 2.5 times more likely than men to report being sexually harassed on the job over the past 12 months. Roscigno (2019) posits that these racial and gender biases were related not only to a singular status but multiple statuses, as outlined by intersectional theory. However, the results of this study did not align with previous research. While minority women are more likely to experience workplace racial discrimination and

women disproportionately experience workplace SH overall compared to men, these forms of discrimination are broad phenomenon that may not translate to greater rates of SH specifically targeted against minority women. It may be possible that minority women do not experience more SH specifically compared to White women. The results of this study support this explanation. Specifically, minority women experienced SH ( $M = 2.18$ ,  $SD = 1.03$ ) at similar rates as White women ( $M = 2.18$ ,  $SD = 1.06$ ).

Further, considering the SEQ scale includes three conceptually distinct but related dimensions of SH (i.e. sexual coercion, unwanted sexual attention, and gender harassment), results may differ upon examination of each dimension (Fitzgerald et al., 1995). Specifically, rates of gender harassment and unwanted sexual attention, which constitutes hostile work environment, may differ from rates of sexual coercion, which constitutes quid pro quo harassment. In a study conducted by Pinto et al. (2019), 10.9% of respondents experienced quid pro quo workplace SH while 21.9% of respondents experienced workplace SH that created a hostile work environment. Further, they found that 13.9% of minority respondents experienced quid pro quo workplace SH, as opposed to 8.5% of non-Hispanic Whites. It may be that because hostile work environment occurs more frequently while minorities disproportionately experience quid pro quo harassment, average SEQ scores may have been skewed by items measuring hostile work environment SH, minimizing potential differences between minority women and White women. Additionally, the nonsignificant relationship between victim race and SH prevalence may be attributable to range restriction. The distribution of average SEQ scores indicates scores were skewed left with a skewness of .76 and a median of 1.82 ( $M = 2.18$ ,  $SD = 1.05$ ). Given that the results demonstrate most women did not experience high levels of these behaviors, SH may occur at a low base rate phenomenon, and consequently, differences between minority women

and White women in relation to the outcome of SH were not detected. Finally, because insufficient power was achieved ( $1 - \beta = .05$ ), the proposed relationship could not be tested, thus, statistical significance could not be detected. Future research should explore this relationship with a larger sample size in order to ensure sufficient power.

The analysis for Hypothesis 2 showed that White perpetrators and minority perpetrators were not statistically different in regards to the perpetration of SH. This result does not align with prior research. According to the nonprofit organization Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN) who reported statistics based on 2013 data, White perpetrators account for 57% sexual violence cases, followed by Black (27%), unknown ethnicity (8%), other (6%), and lastly, mixed group (1%) perpetrators. Despite the lack of empirical research examining the role of race in regards to SH perpetration, it may be inferred that if White men constitute the majority of sexual violence perpetrators and the majority of the workforce, they would be more likely to disproportionately commit workplace SH (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network, n.d.; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021). However, these findings were not obtained in the current study possibly due to differences between societal and workplace norms. In the workplace, given increased surveillance and awareness of SH and diversity generally as well as additional deterrents (i.e. consequences) to commit SH in the workplace, White men may be deterred from committing SH. White men may not commit SH at greater rates than minority men in the workplace, but perhaps the two groups commit at similar rates, and thus no differences were detected. The results of this study support this explanation. Specifically, White men were reported to perpetrate SH ( $M = 2.20$ ,  $SD = 1.08$ ) at similar rates as minority men ( $M = 2.13$ ,  $SD = 0.94$ ). Additionally, because insufficient power was achieved ( $1 - \beta = .07$ ), the proposed relationship could not be tested, thus, statistical significance could not be detected. Future

research should explore this relationship with a larger sample size in order to ensure sufficient power.

Hypothesis 3 was not supported in the analyses conducted. A factorial ANOVA indicated that victim race and perpetrator race did not significantly predict SH outcomes. Despite a lack of significance, the relationship between victim race and perpetrator race in relation to the outcome of SH was marginally significant ( $p = .068$ ). Further, the number of reported incidents based on victim race and perpetrator race yielded interesting findings. Notably, 208 incidents of SH experienced by White women were perpetrated by White men; 27 incidents experienced by White women were perpetrated by minority men; 18 incidents experienced by minority women were perpetrated by White men; and 33 incidents experienced by minority women were perpetrated by minority men. Thus, results indicate that intraracial SH (i.e. victim and perpetrator race are the same) is more prevalent than interracial SH, countering the direction of the proposed relationships in Hypothesis 3. Previous research has found that intraracial SH may occur more frequently than interracial SH. Based on the percentage distribution of single-offender victimizations, by type of crime, race of victim, and perceived race of offender, White individuals commit crimes of violence against White individuals at greater rates (67.4%) than Black individuals (15.4%), “other” (5.1%) or “not known” (12%) races who perpetrate against White individuals (U.S. Department of Justice, 2010). Correspondingly, Black victims experience greater rates of violence when perpetrated by Black individuals (64.7%) compared to when perpetrated by White individuals (15.9%), “other” (7.3%) or “not known” (12.2%) races. Though these rates pertain to general crimes of violence, rates of rape/sexual assault, which falls under SH, follow these comparative victim race and perpetrator race rates. Specifically, in regards to rates of rape/sexual assault, White individuals perpetrate more against White

individuals (74.9%) than other racial minorities and Black individuals perpetrate more against Black individuals (74.8%) than White individuals or other racial groups. While crimes of violence nor rape/sexual assault do not directly translate to rates of SH, specifically in the workplace, these statistics suggest that perpetrators typically commit crimes within their own race. In other contexts such as workplace SH these same patterns may be observed, of which the data collected for the current study suggests. Ultimately, the proposed direction of the relationships in Hypothesis 3 may not have been supported given that individuals have been observed to perpetrate more crime within their own race. Perpetrators likely perpetrate SH in the workplace more often within their own race. Finally, because insufficient power was achieved ( $1 - \beta = .05$ ), the proposed relationship could not be tested, and thus, statistical significance could not be detected. Future research should explore this relationship with a larger sample size in order to ensure sufficient power.

In order to further examine any possible interaction between victim race and perpetrator race, an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted to control for potential covariates. The variables victim age, years of work experience, and highest degree or level of education completed by the victim were selected based on their significant correlation with the outcome of SH (refer to Table 4). Victim age and years of work experience were coded continuously (i.e. number of years) for all analyses. For all analyses, a numeric value was assigned to the highest degree or level of education: 1 indicated less than high school diploma, 2 indicated high school diploma or equivalent, 3 indicated some college but no degree, 4 indicated associate's degree, 5 indicated bachelor's degree, 6 indicated master's degree, 7 indicated professional degree, and 8 indicated doctoral degree. Additionally, the categorical variables perpetrator role and industry at the time of the conduct were selected in order to determine if SH varies based on the role that the



perpetrator occupies, which may pertain to power differentials, and the industry, which may pertain to industry specific norms around diversity and SH. Perpetrator role and industry at the time of the conduct were coded categorically for all analyses. In regards to the perpetrator role, 1 indicated the perpetrator was a supervisor, 2 indicated the perpetrator was a co-worker/friend, and 3 indicated the perpetrator was someone else (i.e. “other”). For industry at the time of the conduct, the 17 industries that respondents indicated were binned into nine categories based on similarities between jobs classified within those industries. The final nine categories were “Administrative and Support Services and Management of Companies and Enterprises,” “Education, Government or Public Administration,” “Finance and Insurance,” “Health Care and Social Assistance,” “Information, Arts, Entertainment and Recreation,” “Manufacturing, Transportation and Warehousing,” “Other Services, Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting, and Construction,” “Professional, Scientific and Technical Services,” and “Retail or Wholesale Trade and Accommodation and Food Services.”

When controlling for victim age, years of work experience, highest degree or level of education, perpetrator role, and industry at the time of the conduct, the overall model was significant,  $F(16, 269) = 9.164, p < .001$  (refer to Table 6). Notably, three variables, years of work experience,  $F(1, 269) = 5.599, p = .019, \eta_p^2 = 0.020$ , perpetrator role,  $F(2, 269) = 16.563, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = 0.110$ , and industry at the time of the conduct,  $F(8, 269) = 3.879, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = 0.103$ , significantly varied with the outcome of SH while controlling for all other variables (refer to Table 2). Respondents with fewer years of work experience were more likely to indicate sexually harassing behaviors. This may be explained by the possibility that perpetrators target individuals they perceive to be less familiar with workplace policies and procedures, and consequently, perpetrate against those with fewer years of work experience perceiving that they

may be hesitant to report. Respondents indicated that 172 perpetrators (60%) were coworkers/friends ( $M = 1.89$ , 95% CI [1.71, 2.07]) compared to 92 perpetrators (32%) who were supervisors ( $M = 2.56$ , 95% CI [2.32, 2.79]) and 22 perpetrators (8%) who were classified as other ( $M = 1.68$ , 95% CI [1.29, 2.08]). Thus, SH occurred more frequently when power differentials were lesser compared to when power differentials were greater as characterized by a superior-subordinate relationship (i.e. perpetrator who was supervisor). Lastly, those who experienced these behaviors in the “Professional, Scientific and Technical Services” industry had the highest average of SH ( $M = 2.71$ , 95% CI [2.34, 3.08]) while “Education, Government or Public Administration” had the lowest average of SH ( $M = 1.69$ , 95% CI [1.27, 2.11]), suggesting that workplace SH prevalence varies based on the industry and the industry specific norms surrounding SH.

Prior to indicating whether they reported the behaviors to someone within the organization, respondents answered whether they told anyone. The question of whether they told someone pertains to if they told anyone at all of the incident(s), which could be persons outside of their organization as well as within their organization. The question of whether they reported the incident(s) specifically pertains to if they directly told someone within their organization of the incident(s). If they did inform someone within their organization, they either indicated that they told a supervisor or the HR Department, which indicated that they formally reported the incident(s), or a co-worker/friend or other, which may or may not have resulted in formal reporting proceedings. A chi-square test indicated that victim race does not significantly relate to whether they told someone,  $X^2(1, n = 286) = .485, p = .486, \phi = .041$ . Minority women indicated that they told someone at similar rates ( $M = 1.57, SD = 0.50$ ) as White women ( $M = 1.51, SD = 0.50$ ). Interestingly, the majority of both White women and minority women did not tell anyone

(52.4%). Thus, rates of SH are likely largely underestimated in the workplace as the majority of victims did not even tell anyone, even outside their organization.

Hypothesis 4, which stated that minority women would indicate that they reported incidents of SH less frequently relative to White female counterparts, was not supported. The results obtained from the current study do not align with previous research. According to Richardson (2009), the decision to report SH is influenced by the effects of intersectionality, with minority women citing that speaking out was compromised by concerns of fulfilling racialized stereotypes. Despite a lack of significance, the relationship between victim race and reporting was marginally significant ( $p = .066$ ). White women were 195% more likely to report incidents of SH compared to minority women. Thus, the relationship was in the expected relationship. Because insufficient power was achieved ( $1 - \beta = .05$ ), the proposed relationship could not be tested, and thus, statistical significance could not be detected. Future research should explore this relationship with a larger sample size in order to ensure sufficient power.

In order to examine the possible effects of potential covariates on the relationship between victim race and reporting, a binomial logistic regression was conducted. The variables victim age, years of work experience and highest degree or level of education completed by the victim were selected based on their significant correlation with the outcome of reporting (refer to Table 4). Additionally, the categorical variables perpetrator role and industry at the time of the conduct were selected in order to determine if reporting varies based on the role that the perpetrator occupies and the industry. When controlling for victim age, years of work experience, highest degree or level of education, the industry at the time of the conduct, and perpetrator role, the overall model was significant,  $X^2(15, n = 286) = 93.7, p < .001$  (refer to Table 7). Notably, while controlling for all other variables, victim age, years of work experience

and perpetrator role significantly varied with the outcome of reporting. Holding all other variables constant, the odds of victims reporting increased by 7.1% (95% CI [1.01, 1.13]) as the age of the victim increased. Those of older age may be more comfortable reporting incidents of SH as with more life experience, they may have encountered similar behaviors and can readily recognize the behaviors that constitute SH. Further, holding all other variables constant, the odds of victims reporting decreased by 11.9% (95% CI [.83, .94]) with greater years of work experience. Because respondents with fewer years of work experience experienced more workplace SH as indicated by the covariate analyses for Hypothesis 3, reporting rates would theoretically be greater for those who experience more sexually harassing behaviors. Further, it may be that with fewer years of work experience, victims have not encountered as many workplace experiences compared to those with greater years of work experience. Thus, they may be less acclimatized to sexually harassing behaviors in the workplace, and ultimately, less willing to tolerate these behaviors. Additionally, it was found that, holding all other variables constant, the odds of victims reporting decreased by 63.8% (95% CI [.18, .71]) if the perpetrator was a co-worker/friend compared to a supervisor. However, no differences were found between supervisor and “other” or co-worker/friend and “other” in regards to reporting outcomes. This finding that supervisors are more often reported (50.5%) compared to co-workers/friends (45.2%) or someone other (4.3%) may indicate that because subordinates likely work with supervisors more frequently (e.g., directly report to their supervisor) in addition to the likelihood that supervisors have the authority to make tangible employment decisions, the victim may be more likely to report given the potential consequences of non-reporting.

Interestingly, of the incidents perpetrated by a supervisor, 47 incidents (81%) of SH were reported while 11 incidents (19%) were not reported. Of the incidents perpetrated by a co-

worker/friend, 42 incidents (61.8%) of SH were reported while 26 incidents (38.2%) were not reported. Of the incidents perpetrated by someone else, 4 incidents (40%) of SH were reported while 6 incidents (60%) were not reported. While specific training may be administered to supervisors or other specific roles based on their responsibilities (i.e. frequent interaction with subordinates) and their status within the organization, every organizational member should receive some type of SH training on what constitutes sexually harassing behaviors and the consequences of engaging in this conduct given that the greatest number of incidents overall were perpetrated by a co-worker or friend.

In regards to whom the victim reported to, of the 93 incidents reported, 36 incidents (38.7%) were reported to a supervisor, 29 incidents (31.2%) were reported to a co-worker/friend, 26 incidents (28%) were reported to the HR department, and 2 incidents (2.1%) were reported to someone else. Given that incidents were most often reported to supervisors, the development of supervisor-subordinate relationships should be prioritized as a means to prevent and address SH.

The analysis for Hypothesis 5 showed that White victims and minority victims were not statistically different in regards to perceived seriousness of SH complaints. Despite a lack of significance, the relationship between victim race and perceived seriousness of complaint handling was in the expected direction. Minority women perceived that their organization handled their complaints less seriously ( $M = 3.36$ ,  $SD = 0.81$ ) compared to White women who perceived that their organization handled complaints more seriously ( $M = 3.78$ ,  $SD = 1.12$ ). White women reported 23 incidents that they perceived to be handled “extremely seriously” (i.e. the highest possible score) while no minority women indicated that they perceived their report(s) was handled “extremely seriously.” The non-significant relationship may be attributable to the small sample size of 93 reported incidents. Further, the minority sample size was

disproportionately smaller with only 11 of those incidents (12%) being reported by minority women. Ultimately, the sample size decreased for this analysis to a point where there was a lack of power ( $1 - \beta = .05$ ). Future research should explore this relationship with a larger sample size in order to ensure sufficient power.

It was surprising that minority women did not perceive that their reports of SH were handled less seriously compared to those of White women as proposed in Hypothesis 5. Previous research has found that minority women are likely to encounter gender and racial inequity within their organization (Fielden et al., 2010). There may be a cyclical effect in regards to perceived seriousness of complaint handling, where in the past minority women have reported incidents of SH but did not perceive that they had been handled seriously. Over time, minority women who experience or witness these insufficient responses will become less likely to report as they presume procedures will be inadequate and potentially harmful if they do report (i.e. retaliation). Perceiving a lack of organizational support and sensitivity to the intersectional experience, minority women would theoretically consider the organizational response to their SH complaints to be insufficient. Thus, they may become less likely to report after either reporting previous incidents that they perceived to be insufficiently addressed or after witnessing other complaints of SH being insufficiently addressed, particularly complaints reported by other minority women.

In order to examine the possible effects of potential covariates on the relationship between victim race and perceived seriousness of complaint handling, an ANCOVA was conducted. The variables victim age, years of work experience, and highest degree or level of education completed by the victim were selected based on their significant correlation with the outcome of perceived seriousness (refer to Table 4). Additionally, the categorical variables perpetrator role and industry at the time of the conduct were selected in order to determine if

perceived seriousness varied based on the role that the perpetrator occupies and the industry. When controlling for victim age, years of work experience, highest degree or level of education, perpetrator role, and industry at the time of the conduct, the overall model was significant,  $F(16, 76) = 4.179, p < .001$  (refer to Table 8). Notably, years of work experience significantly varied with the outcome of perceived seriousness while controlling for all other variables,  $F(1, 76) = 8.941, p = .004, \eta_p^2 = 0.105$ . As indicated in the covariate analysis for Hypothesis 4, victims with fewer years of work experience were more likely to report incidents of SH compared to those with greater years of work experience. Thus, victims with fewer years of work experience may have decided to report because they initially perceived that their organization would handle their complaint(s) seriously. The decision to ultimately not report may reflect an individual's distrust in the reporting process, and consequently, that they perceived their complaint(s) would not have been handled seriously if they did report.

### **Contributions**

This study offers several contributions regarding research in the areas of victim and perpetrator demographics and the prevalence of and perceived response to SH in the workplace. While there is a growing body of literature examining the organizational implications of SH, there have been very few studies which have investigated how victim race and perpetrator race interact in regards to outcomes of SH. Despite the interaction between victim race and perpetrator race being non-significant, the direction of the interaction reveals an interesting finding. In this study, the results suggest that intraracial SH occurs more frequently than interracial SH in the workplace. White perpetrators disproportionately committed SH against White women while minority perpetrators committed greater rates of SH against minority women. This study extends intraracial and interracial SH by providing a preliminary examination

of the comparative differences between White women and minority women who personally experienced workplace SH. The results indicated that perpetrator race may play a role in SH prevalence. To fully understand the dynamics of intraracial and interracial relations, specifically in the workplace, further research is needed.

Another contribution of this research is the practical implications that it will have for organizations. Based on the significant findings, specifically that minority women tend to report incidents of SH less often than White women, as well as nonsignificant but informative findings such as the dynamics behind intraracial versus interracial SH, organizations can tailor their strategy, policies and procedures, and generally, organizational culture to best account for the experiences of all underrepresented groups, specifically racial minorities. Of note, given that years of work experience, perpetrator role, and the industry significantly related to the outcome of SH while controlling for all other variables (refer to Table 6), organizations must consider how specific factors may increase or mitigate SH. For example, because individuals with fewer years of work experience may be more susceptible to workplace SH, the relative power dynamics which influence the ability and motivation to sexually harass may differ based on perpetrator position, and the norms about SH and diversity may differ between industries, training should specifically address what behaviors constitute SH in specific relationships (i.e. superior-subordinate versus co-worker/friend) and contexts (i.e. based on the industry) as well as how to address these advances and report these behaviors. Additionally, given that victim age, years of work experience, and perpetrator role significantly related to the outcome of reporting while controlling for all other variables (refer to Table 7), organizations must consider how specific factors may deter reporting. Specifically, because older respondents were more likely to report while controlling for all other variables and respondents with fewer years of work



experience were more likely to report while controlling for all other variables, organizations must ensure that younger employees and employees with fewer years of work experience sufficiently understand SH policies and procedures in the case they need to file a complaint. Further, because supervisors were more likely to be reported while controlling for all other variables, reporting and grievance procedures should underscore their commitment to investigating all claims of SH, specifically incidents between co-workers or friends as opposed to just incidents in which the perpetrator holds formal authority such as supervisors. Finally, years of work experience significantly related to perceived seriousness of complaint handling while controlling for all other variables (refer to Table 8). This finding suggests that organizations must ensure they sufficiently address each complaint to the fullest extent, following up with all complainants and working with them to assess the situation and respond accordingly.

These recommendations align with previous research. Buchanan et al. (2014) suggested that a clear and consistent anti-harassment message from organizational leaders is essential, including it being communicated via a written, broadly disseminated policy on SH, regular educational training for all organizational members, and formal and informal reporting, investigation and remediation procedures. This research underscores the importance of examining intersectional experiences in the workplace, especially for such significant issues like SH.

### **Limitations**

There are a number of limitations in the present study that must be considered. The study aimed to capture the extent of SH as it pertains to power within the workplace, specifically power dynamics that pertain to gender norms. Because the sample only included respondents who identified as a woman, male workplace experiences were excluded. While men also

experience SH and women perpetrate SH, men experience SH at lower rates than women and women perpetrate less often than men (Burn, 2018). Thus, the generalizations that can be made from this study are limited to the female workforce. Future studies should concentrate on capturing workplace experiences of SH for men and women, examining the intersection between race and sex of both the victim and the perpetrator.

Furthermore, though the study specified a criteria of identifying as a woman in order to participate, the sex of the perpetrator was not captured. In the current study, the sex of the perpetrator was assumed to be male. Though previously mentioned that men have been shown to commit more sexually harassing behaviors compared to women, it is possible, though unlikely, that some of the perpetrators in this study were women.

A final limitation of the study is that the role of the victim at the time of harassment was not collected. In order to fully assess the power dynamics behind the experience and perpetuation of SH as well as reporting behaviors, the role of both the victim and the perpetrator may indicate to some extent the motivation behind the sexually harassing behaviors. Previous research examining the function of power (i.e. workplace authority) in regards to SH suggests that SH serves as an equalizer against women in power. Based on power-threat theories suggesting that women in authority may be more frequent targets, McLaughlin et al. (2012) found that relative to non-supervisors, female supervisors are more likely to report sexually harassing behaviors. Considering why and how supervisory authority moderates the relationship between victim selection and SH, future research should examine the impact of workplace authority.

## **Conclusion**

Victim and perpetrator demographics were examined to determine the role of race in regards to workplace SH, including the frequency of sexually harassing behaviors and reporting

outcomes. Notably, results indicated that minority women were less likely to report incidents of SH compared to White women. However, results demonstrated that minority women did not indicate SH more often than White women; White men were not reported to perpetrate SH more often than minority men; victim race and perpetrator race did not interact in the proposed directions that would result in differential SH outcomes; and minority women did not indicate that their complaints of SH were handled less seriously by organizations than those of White women.

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**Table 1***Race of Respondents*

	Respondent Race	SEQ Score
<i>N</i>	Black or African American	17
	Hispanic or Latino	12
	Asian or Pacific Islander	10
	Native American or Alaskan Islander	2
	Middle Eastern or North African	0
	White or Caucasian	201
	Two or more races	3
<i>Mean</i>	Black or African American	2.39
	Hispanic or Latino	2.01
	Asian or Pacific Islander	1.51
	Native American or Alaskan Islander	2.64
	Middle Eastern or North African	--
	White or Caucasian	2.03
	Two or more races	1.36
<i>SD</i>	Black or African American	1.26
	Hispanic or Latino	1.23
	Asian or Pacific Islander	0.771
	Middle Eastern or North African	--
	White or Caucasian	1.11
	Two or more races	0.619

**Table 2***Race of Respondents who Experienced Sexual Harassment*

	Respondent Race	SEQ Score
<i>N</i>	Black or African American	15
	Hispanic or Latino	9
	Asian or Pacific Islander	7
	Native American or Alaskan Islander	2
	Middle Eastern or North African	0
	White or Caucasian	158
	Two or more races	1
<i>Mean</i>	Black or African American	2.58
	Hispanic or Latino	2.35
	Asian or Pacific Islander	1.72
	Native American or Alaskan Islander	2.64
	Middle Eastern or North African	--
	White or Caucasian	2.29
	Two or more races	2.07
<i>SD</i>	Black or African American	1.22
	Hispanic or Latino	1.25
	Asian or Pacific Islander	0.842
	Native American or Alaskan Islander	1.01
	Middle Eastern or North African	--
	White or Caucasian	1.10
	Two or more races	--

**Table 3***Race of Perpetrators*

	Respondent Race	SEQ Score
<i>N</i>	Black or African American	28
	Hispanic or Latino	17
	Asian or Pacific Islander	5
	Native American or Alaskan Islander	4
	Middle Eastern or North African	4
	White or Caucasian	226
	Two or more races	2
<i>Mean</i>	Black or African American	2.21
	Hispanic or Latino	2.14
	Asian or Pacific Islander	1.74
	Native American or Alaskan Islander	2.50
	Middle Eastern or North African	1.86
	White or Caucasian	2.20
	Two or more races	1.71
<i>SD</i>	Black or African American	0.959
	Hispanic or Latino	0.920
	Asian or Pacific Islander	0.899
	Native American or Alaskan Islander	1.43
	Middle Eastern or North African	0.735
	White or Caucasian	1.08
	Two or more races	0.505

**Table 4**  
*Variable Descriptive Statistics and Correlations*

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. SEQ Score <sup>a</sup>	2.18	1.05	—						
2. Report <sup>a</sup>	1.67	0.469	-.523 ***	—					
3. Perceived Seriousness <sup>b</sup>	3.73	1.09	.316 **	—	—				
4. Victim Race <sup>c</sup>	1.18	0.383	.001	.109	-.124	—			
5. Perpetrator Race <sup>c</sup>	1.21	0.408	-.024	.101	-.145	.500 ***	—		
6. Victim Age	36.3	11.1	-.302 ***	.167 **	-.455 ***	-.106	-.114	—	
7. Victim Work Experience	14.6	11.4	-.390 ***	.338 ***	-.564 ***	-.157 **	-.148 *	.833 ***	—
8. Education	4.78	1.09	.303 ***	-.228 ***	.228 *	-.033	-.111	-.146 *	-.244 ***

Note: \* p < .05, \*\* p < .01, \*\*\* p < .001

<sup>a</sup> Any correlation calculated with the outcome variable of SEQ Score or Report has a sample of n = 286.

<sup>b</sup> Any correlation calculated with the outcome variable of Perceived Seriousness has a sample of n = 136.

<sup>c</sup> Victim and perpetrator race was coded as 1 = White and 2 = minority.

**Table 5***SEQ Score by Industry*

	Industry	SEQ Score
<i>N</i>	Administrative and Support Services and Management of Companies and Enterprises	17
	Education, Government or Public Administration	22
	Finance and Insurance	39
	Health Care and Social Assistance	26
	Information, Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	56
	Manufacturing, Transportation and Warehousing	47
	Other Services, Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting, and Construction	13
	Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	31
	Retail or Wholesale Trade, Accommodation and Food Services	35
<i>Mean</i>	Administrative and Support Services and Management of Companies and Enterprises	2.42
	Education, Government or Public Administration	1.40
	Finance and Insurance	2.17
	Health Care and Social Assistance	1.76
	Information, Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	2.43
	Manufacturing, Transportation and Warehousing	2.39
	Other Services, Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting, and Construction	2.30
	Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	2.71
	Retail or Wholesale Trade, Accommodation and Food Services	1.69
<i>SD</i>	Administrative and Support Services and Management of Companies and Enterprises	1.04
	Education, Government or Public Administration	0.575
	Finance and Insurance	1.02
	Health Care and Social Assistance	0.776
	Information, Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	1.15
	Manufacturing, Transportation and Warehousing	1.09
	Other Services, Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting, and Construction	0.823
	Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	1.17
	Retail or Wholesale Trade, Accommodation and Food Services	0.706

**Table 6**  
*Covariate Analysis for Hypothesis 3*

	Estimate	Stand. Estimate	95% CI		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p	$\eta^2$	$\eta_p^2$
			Lower	Upper							
Overall Model					55.669	16	3.479	9.164	<.001		
Victim Race * Perpetrator Race	0.452	0.431	-0.170	1.032	1.504	1	1.504	1.992	.159	.006	.007
Victim Race	-0.216	-0.206	-0.615	0.203	0.003	1	0.003	0.004	.950	0	0
Perpetrator Race	-0.224	-0.214	-0.555	0.128	1.19e-4	1	1.19e-4	1.58e-4	.990	0	0
Victim Age	-0.003	-0.036	-0.219	0.148	0.110	1	0.110	0.146	.703	0	.001
Victim Work Experience	-0.022	-0.237	-0.434	-0.040	4.228	1	4.228	5.599	.019	.016	.020
Education	0.075	0.077	-0.036	0.191	1.369	1	1.369	1.813	.179	.005	.007
Perpetrator Role	--	--	--	--	25.017	2	12.509	16.563	<.001	.097	.110
Industry	--	--	--	--	23.437	8	2.930	3.879	<.001	.091	.103
Residuals					203.156	269	0.755				



**Table 7***Model Coefficients of Covariate Analysis for Hypothesis 4*

Predictor	Estimate	SE	Z	p	Odds ratio	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower	Upper
Intercept	-1.33	1.229	-1.079	.281	0.266	0.024	2.954
Victim Age	0.069	0.028	2.470	.013	1.071	1.014	1.131
Victim Work Experience	-0.127	0.031	-4.132	< .001	0.881	0.830	0.936
Education	0.048	0.168	0.286	.775	1.049	0.755	1.457
Victim Race:							
2 - 1	-0.664	0.493	-1.347	.178	0.515	0.196	1.353
Perpetrator Race:							
2 - 1	-0.408	0.460	-0.887	.375	0.665	0.270	1.637
Perpetrator Role:							
2 - 1	-1.016	0.345	-2.942	.003	0.362	0.184	0.712
3 - 1	-0.905	0.702	-1.290	.197	0.405	0.102	1.600
Industry:							
2 - 1	0.433	0.855	0.506	.613	1.541	0.289	8.229
3 - 1	-0.127	0.687	-0.185	.853	0.881	0.229	3.383
4 - 1	-0.809	0.874	-0.926	.354	0.445	0.080	2.468
5 - 1	1.106	0.657	1.683	.092	3.021	0.833	10.953
6 - 1	1.080	0.663	1.629	.103	2.943	0.803	10.786
7 - 1	0.169	1.009	0.168	.867	1.184	0.164	8.552
8 - 1	0.748	0.747	1.001	.317	2.112	0.489	9.125
9 - 1	-1.368	0.949	-1.442	.149	0.255	0.040	1.635

**Table 8**  
*Covariate Analysis for Hypothesis 5*

Estimate	Estimate	Stand Estimate	95% CI		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p	$\eta^2$	$\eta_b^2$
			Lower	Upper							
Overall Model					21.261	16	1.329	4.179	<.001		
Victim Race * Perpetrator Race	-1.579	-1.442	-3.434	0.550	1.605	1	1.605	2.080	.153	.020	.027
Victim Race	0.873	0.798	-0.874	2.470	0.019	1	0.019	0.024	.877	0	0
Perpetrator Race	0.305	0.279	-0.621	1.179	0.595	1	0.595	0.771	.383	.007	.010
Victim Age	-0.003	-0.033	-0.312	0.245	0.044	1	0.044	0.057	.813	.001	.001
Victim Work Experience	-0.049	-0.441	-0.735	-0.147	6.902	1	6.902	8.941	.004	.086	.105
Education	0.027	0.019	-0.189	0.226	0.025	1	0.025	0.052	.859	0	0
Perpetrator Role	—	—	—	—	1.717	2	0.859	1.112	.334	.021	.028
Industry	—	—	—	—	10.355	8	1.294	1.677	.118	.130	.150
Residuals					58.664	76	0.772				

## Appendix A – Questionnaire

**Introduction**

This research study examines the types of conduct that women experience in the workplace. A description of this study will be provided to you and then you will have the opportunity to agree or refuse to participate. This study is being led by Alexa Sterling, in the Psychology Department at Appalachian State University. The Faculty Advisor for this study is Jacqueline Bergman, in the Management Department at Appalachian State University.

In order to be eligible for this study, you must identify as a woman with at least two years of full-time work experience.

**Consent****Introduction**

You are being invited to participate in a research study. This research will study the types of conduct that women might face at work to better understand the experiences of women in the workforce. This study will take you approximately 15 to 20 minutes to complete. You will complete a brief questionnaire pertaining to your experiences in the workplace, and then you will be asked a short series of questions to further describe those experiences.

**Risks and Discomforts**

You may find some of the questions to be upsetting or stressful. Please remember that you do not have to answer any questions that you do not feel comfortable answering, and you may withdraw your participation at any time.

**Compensation**

You will receive \$4.00 for completing this survey.

**Benefits to Subject and Society**

The results of this study will contribute to the research literature on the types of conduct women experience in the workplace, which may lead to future recommendations for organizations to improve the ways that certain types of conduct are addressed.

**Confidentiality**

No identifiable information will be collected. Compensation codes in MTurk are configured such that they do not link individual MTurk Worker IDs to survey responses.

**Subjects' Rights and Injury**

If you have questions about the research or feel that you have been harmed by this research, please contact the principal investigator Alexa Sterling at [sterlingak@appstate.edu](mailto:sterlingak@appstate.edu), or the faculty advisor Jacqueline Bergman at [bergmanjz@appstate.edu](mailto:bergmanjz@appstate.edu). If you have concerns about your rights as someone taking part in research, please contact the Office of Research Protections at Appalachian State University at 828-262-4060 or at [irb@appstate.edu](mailto:irb@appstate.edu).

**Voluntariness and Right to Decline or Discontinue Participation**

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may refuse to participate. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time. You have the right to refuse or discontinue this study at any time without penalty.

**Future Data Use Statement**

Your data will not be used for purposes other than those described in this consent form. We will not distribute your data outside the research team, even after all identifying information is removed.

Do you consent to participate in this survey?

- Yes
- No

**Instructions**

The next few pages list experiences that you may have had with co-workers, subordinates, clients, customers, supervisors, or others that you come into contact with at work. Please take your time and think about each experience and thoughtfully answer the questions. Please indicate how often you have been in each of these situations in the past 24 months.

**SEQ**

Please take your time and think about each experience listed below. Please indicate how often someone at work (e.g., co-worker, supervisor, client, customer) has behaved this way toward you in the past 24 months.

	Never	Once or twice	A few times	Several times	Most of the time
Tried to draw you into an unwanted discussion of sexual matters?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Told unwanted sexual stories or jokes?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Displayed, used, or distributed offensive sexual materials (for example, pictures, stories, or pornography)?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Made offensive sexist comments or jokes?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Gave you unwanted sexual attention?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please take your time and think about each experience listed below. Please indicate how often someone at work (e.g., co-worker, supervisor, client, customer) has behaved this way toward you in the past 24 months.

	Never	Once or twice	A few times	Several times	Most of the time
Attempted to establish a romantic or sexual relationship despite efforts to discourage it?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pressured you to "play along" with sexual jokes or behavior?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Made you feel you needed to flirt with them to be treated well?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Touched your face, butt, thigh, or another "private" part of their body to you without consent?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Made unwanted or uncomfortable attempts to expose a private part of their body to you?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please take your time and think about each experience listed below. Please indicate how often someone at work (e.g., co-worker, supervisor, client, customer) has behaved this way toward you in the past 24 months.

	Never	Once or twice	A few times	Several times	Most of the time
Forced themselves on you sexually?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Indicated there might be some reward or special treatment if you agreed to engage in sexual behavior?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Made you afraid that you would be penalized if you did not agree to engage in sexual behavior?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Treated you badly for refusing to engage in sexual relations with them?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Instructions**

Please answer the following questions based on your responses from the previous section.

**Number of Perpetrators (One)**

If you experienced any of these behaviors, were all of the behaviors perpetrated by the same individual?

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable - I did not experience any of these behaviors

Please indicate how many individuals perpetrated the behaviors.

- 2
- 3
- 4

Please indicate the race of the person who acted in these ways.

- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Asian or Pacific Islander
- Native American or Alaskan Native
- Middle Eastern or North African
- White or Caucasian
- Two or more races

Please indicate the title/position of the person who acted in these ways.

Supervisor

Co-worker

Other

Did you tell anyone about the behavior of this person?

Yes

No

Did you report the behavior of this person to anyone in your organization?

Yes

No

To whom did you report the incident perpetrated by the first person to?

Supervisor

Co-worker/friend

HR Department

Other

To what extent do you believe that your report was taken seriously?

	Not at all seriously	Slightly seriously	Somewhat seriously	Moderately seriously	Extremely seriously
Perceived seriousness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



**Two Perpetrators**

Please indicate the race of the *first* person who acted in these ways.

- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Asian or Pacific Islander
- Native American or Alaskan Native
- Middle Eastern or North African
- White or Caucasian
- Two or more races

Please indicate the title/position of the *first* person who acted in these ways.

- Supervisor
- Co-worker
- Other

Did you tell anyone about the behavior of the *first* person?

- Yes
- No

Did you report the behavior of the *first* person to anyone in your organization?

- Yes
- No

To whom did you report the incident perpetrated by the *first* person to?

- Supervisor
- Co-worker/friend
- HR Department
- Other

To what extent do you believe that your report of the *first* person was taken seriously?

	Not at all seriously	Slightly seriously	Somewhat seriously	Moderately seriously	Extremely seriously
Perceived seriousness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please indicate the race of the *second* person who acted in these ways.

- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Asian or Pacific Islander
- Native American or Alaskan Native
- Middle Eastern or North African
- White or Caucasian
- Two or more races

Please indicate the title/position of the *second* person who acted in these ways.

- Supervisor
- Co-worker
- Other

Did you tell anyone about the behavior of the second person?

- Yes
- No

Did you report the behavior of the second person to anyone in your organization?

- Yes
- No

To whom did you report the incident perpetrated by the second person to?

- Supervisor
- Co-worker/friend
- HR Department
- Other

To what extent do you believe that your report of the second person was taken seriously?

	Not at all seriously	Slightly seriously	Somewhat seriously	Moderately seriously	Extremely seriously
Perceived seriousness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Three Perpetrators**

Please indicate the race of the *first* person who acted in these ways.

- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Asian or Pacific Islander
- Native American or Alaskan Native
- Middle Eastern or North African
- White or Caucasian
- Two or more races

Please indicate the title/position of the *first* person who acted in these ways.

- Supervisor
- Co-worker
- Other

Did you tell anyone about the behavior of the *first* person?

- Yes
- No

Did you report the behavior of the *first* person to anyone in your organization?

- Yes
- No

To whom did you report the incident perpetrated by the *first* person to?

- Supervisor
- Co-worker/friend
- HR Department
- Other

To what extent do you believe that your report of the *first* person was taken seriously?

	Not at all seriously	Slightly seriously	Somewhat seriously	Moderately seriously	Extremely seriously
Perceived seriousness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please indicate the race of the *second* person who acted in these ways.

- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Asian or Pacific Islander
- Native American or Alaskan Native
- Middle Eastern or North African
- White or Caucasian
- Two or more races

Please indicate the title/position of the *second* person who acted in these ways.

- Supervisor
- Co-worker
- Other

Did you tell anyone about the behavior of the second person?

- Yes
- No

Did you report the behavior of the second person to anyone in your organization?

- Yes
- No

To whom did you report the incident perpetrated by the second person to?

- Supervisor
- Co-worker/friend
- HR Department
- Other

To what extent do you believe that your report of the second person was taken seriously?

	Not at all seriously	Slightly seriously	Somewhat seriously	Moderately seriously	Extremely seriously
Perceived seriousness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please indicate the race of the third person who acted in these ways.

- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Asian or Pacific Islander
- Native American or Alaskan Native

Please indicate the title/position of the *third* person who acted in these ways.

- Supervisor
- Co-worker
- Other

Did you tell anyone about the behavior of the *third* person?

- Yes
- No

Did you report the behavior of the *third* person to anyone in your organization?

- Yes
- No

To whom did you report the incident perpetrated by the *third* person to?

- Supervisor
- Co-worker/friend
- HR Department
- Other

To what extent do you believe that your report of the *third* person was taken seriously?

	Not at all seriously	Slightly seriously	Somewhat seriously	Moderately seriously	Extremely seriously
Perceived seriousness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Four Perpetrators**

Please indicate the race of the *first* person who acted in these ways.

- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Asian or Pacific Islander
- Native American or Alaskan Native
- Middle Eastern or North African
- White or Caucasian
- Two or more races

Please indicate the title/position of the *first* person who acted in these ways.

- Supervisor
- Co-worker
- Other

Did you tell anyone about the behavior of the *first* person?

- Yes
- No

Did you report the behavior of the *first* person to anyone in your organization?

- Yes
- No



To whom did you report the incident perpetrated by the *second* person to?

- Supervisor
- Co-worker/friend
- HR Department
- Other

To what extent do you believe that your report of the *second* person was taken seriously?

	Not at all seriously	Slightly seriously	Somewhat seriously	Moderately seriously	Extremely seriously
Perceived seriousness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please indicate the race of the *third* person who acted in these ways.

- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Asian or Pacific Islander
- Native American or Alaskan Native
- Middle Eastern or North African
- White or Caucasian
- Two or more races

Please indicate the title/position of the *third* person who acted in these ways.

- Supervisor
- Co-worker
- Other

Did you tell anyone about the behavior of the *third* person?

- Yes
- No

Did you report the behavior of the *third* person to anyone in your organization?

- Yes
- No

To whom did you report the incident perpetrated by the *third* person to?

- Supervisor
- Co-worker/friend
- HR Department
- Other

To what extent do you believe that your report of the *third* person was taken seriously?

	Not at all seriously	Slightly seriously	Somewhat seriously	Moderately seriously	Extremely seriously
Perceived seriousness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please indicate the race of the *fourth* person who acted in these ways.

- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Asian or Pacific Islander
- Native American or Alaskan Native
- Middle Eastern or North African
- White or Caucasian
- Two or more races

Please indicate the title/position of the *fourth* person who acted in these ways.

- Supervisor
- Co-worker
- Other

Did you tell anyone about the behavior of the *fourth* person?

- Yes
- No

Did you report the behavior of the *fourth* person to anyone in your organization?

- Yes
- No

To whom did you report the incident perpetrated by the *fourth* person to?

- Supervisor
- Co-worker/friend
- HR Department
- Other

To what extent do you believe that your report of the *fourth* person was taken seriously?

	Not at all seriously	Slightly seriously	Somewhat seriously	Moderately seriously	Extremely seriously
Perceived seriousness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Instructions**

Please answer the following demographic questions.

**Demographics**

Please indicate your sex.

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary / third gender
- Prefer not to say

Please indicate your race.

- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Asian or Pacific Islander
- Native American or Alaskan Native
- Middle Eastern or North African
- White or Caucasian
- Two or more races

Please indicate your age at the time that you experienced this conduct.

Please indicate years of work experience.

Please indicate the highest degree or level of education you have completed.

- Less than high school diploma
- High school diploma or equivalent
- Some college but no degree
- Associate's degree
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Professional degree
- Doctoral degree

Please indicate the state in which you worked at the time of this conduct.

Please indicate the industry of the company that you worked for at time of this conduct.

- Accommodation and Food Services
- Administrative and Support Services
- Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting
- Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation
- Construction
- Education
- Finance and Insurance
- Government or Public Administration
- Health Care and Social Assistance
- Information
- Management of Companies and Enterprises
- Manufacturing
- Other Services
- 
- Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services
- Real Estate and Rental and Leasing
- Retail or Wholesale Trade
- Transportation and Warehousing
- Utilities

**Debrief**

In the event that you found any of these topics to be distressing, a list of resources is provided below:

- The National Sexual Assault Hotline at 800.656.HOPE(4673). This 24/7 phone line is for users to speak with a professional about seeking help or reporting an assault.
- The National Sexual Assault Online Hotline External — RAINN: 24/7 online chat tool for users to speak with a trained professional about seeking help or reporting an assault.
- Crisis Text Line External — 24/7 text line for anyone in the United States to speak with a trained counselor about any mental health concerns.
- Find Help Near You External — RAINN: tool for users to find the closest sexual assault help center to their home or current location and access information about what kinds of services are available at local centers.
- Your Rights External — U.S. Equal Employment Commission: list of federally recognized rights for youth who are employed in any state regarding their right to work free of discrimination or harassment.
- Reporting Sexual Assault to the Police External link — Break the Cycle: description of what to expect when reporting a sexual crime to law enforcement.
- How to Avoid Victim Blaming External link — Harvard Law School Harassment Assault Law Student Team: overview of the harm of victim-blaming and talking points that individuals can use to affirm and comfort a survivor.
- Sexual Harassment at Work: What Could Happen (If You Report)? — Equal Rights Advocates: guide to possible outcomes after reporting sexual assault or harassment that includes a sample internal complaint document to guide survivors of any sexual misconduct on writing an official complaint to an organization.

If you have questions about the research or feel that you have been harmed by this research, please contact the principal investigator Alexa Sterling at [sterlingak@appstate.edu](mailto:sterlingak@appstate.edu), or the faculty advisor Jacqueline Bergman at [bergmanjz@appstate.edu](mailto:bergmanjz@appstate.edu). If you have concerns about your rights as someone taking part in research, please contact the Office of Research Protections at Appalachian State University at 828-262-4060 or at [irb@appstate.edu](mailto:irb@appstate.edu).

## Appendix B – IRB Approval

**From:** IRB Administration  
**Date:** 2/03/2022  
**RE:** Notice of Exempt Research Determination  
**Agrants #:**  
**Grant Title:**

**STUDY #:** 22-0144

**STUDY TITLE:** The Role of Race on the Prevalence of and Perceived Response to Workplace Sexual Harassment

**Exemption Category:** 2.Survey, interview, public observation

**NOTE:** This project, like all exempt and non-exempt research with human subjects at Appalachian State University, is subject to other requirements, laws, regulations, policies, and guidelines of Appalachian State University and the state of North Carolina. As of August 26, 2021 and until further notice, this includes additional requirements for protections against COVID-19. Please go [here](#) for the additional requirements that you must fulfill.

This study involves no more than minimal risks and meets the exemption category or categories cited above. In accordance with the 2018 federal regulations regarding research with human subjects [45 CFR 46] and University policy and procedures, the research activities described in the study materials are exempt from IRB review.

What an exempt determination means for your project:

1. The Office of Research Protections staff have determined that your project constitutes research with human subjects, but that your research is exempt from the federal regulations governing human subjects research, per [45 CFR 46.104](#).
2. Because this research is exempt from federal regulations, the recruitment and consent processes are also exempt from Institutional Review Board (IRB) review. This means that the procedures you described and the materials you provided were not reviewed by the IRB, further review of these materials are not necessary, and that you can change the consent procedures and materials without submitting a modification.
3. **You still need to get consent from adult subjects and, if your study involves children, you need to get assent and parental permission.** At the very least, your consent, assent, and parental permission processes should explain to research subjects: (a) the purpose, procedures, risks, and benefits of the research; (b) if compensation is available; (c) that the research is voluntary and there is no penalty or loss of benefits for not participating or discontinuing participation; and (d) how to contact the Principal Investigator (and the Faculty Advisor if the PI is a student). You can also use exempt research consent template, which accounts for all of these suggested elements of consent: <https://researchprotections.appstate.edu/human-subjects-irb/irb-forms>. **Please note that if your consent form states that the study was "approved by the IRB" this should be removed. You can replace it with a sentence that says that the study was determined to be exempt from review by IRB Administration. In addition, be sure that the number you have listed for the IRB is 828-262-2692**
4. **Special procedures and populations for which specific consent language is suggested.** Research involving children, research that uses the SONA database for recruitment, research with students at Appalachian State University, or research that uses MTurk for recruitment should use the specific language outlined by The Office of Research Protections on our [website](#).
5. **Study changes that require you to submit a modification request:** most changes to your research will not require review by the Office of Research Protections. However, the following changes require further review by our office:
  - the addition of an external funding source;
  - the addition of a potential for a conflict of interest;
  - a change in location of the research (i.e., country, school system, off site location);
  - change in contact information for the Principal Investigator,
  - the addition of non-Appalachian State University faculty, staff, or students to the research team, or
  - **Changes to study procedures.** If you change your study procedures, you may need to submit a modification for further review. Changes to procedures that may require a modification are outlined in our SOP on exempt research, a link to which you can find below. Before submitting a modification to change procedures, we suggest contacting our office at [irb@appstate.edu](mailto:irb@appstate.edu) or (828) 262-2692 to confirm whether a modification is required.

**Investigator Responsibilities:** All individuals engaged in research with human participants are responsible for compliance with University policies and procedures, and IRB determinations. The Principal Investigator (PI), or Faculty Advisor if the PI is a student, is ultimately responsible for ensuring the protection of research participants; conducting sound ethical research that complies with federal regulations, University policy and procedures; and maintaining study records. The PI should review the IRB's list of PI responsibilities.

**To Close the Study:** When research procedures with human participants are completed, please send the Request for Closure of IRB Review form to [irb@appstate.edu](mailto:irb@appstate.edu).

If you have any questions, please email [IRB@appstate.edu](mailto:IRB@appstate.edu) or contact the Director of Research Protections at (828) 262-2692.

Best wishes with your research.

### Important Links for Exempt Research:

Note: If the link does not work, please copy and paste into your browser, or visit <https://researchprotections.appstate.edu/human-subjects>.

1. Standard Operating Procedure for exempt research (#9): [https://researchprotections.appstate.edu/sites/researchprotections.appstate.edu/files/sop\\_9\\_approved\\_1.21.2019.pdf](https://researchprotections.appstate.edu/sites/researchprotections.appstate.edu/files/sop_9_approved_1.21.2019.pdf)
2. PI responsibilities: <https://researchprotections.appstate.edu/sites/researchprotections.appstate.edu/files/PI%20Responsibilities.pdf>
3. IRB forms: <http://researchprotections.appstate.edu/human-subjects/irb-forms>



## **Vita**

Alexa K. Sterling began her academic career at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 2017. Over the next three years, she earned a bachelor's degree in Psychology, a bachelor's degree in Sociology, and minored in Women's and Gender Studies. During her undergraduate studies, she became interested in Industrial-Organizational Psychology, working as a research assistant in the Kenan-Flagler School of Business. Hoping to pursue a career in the discipline, she attended Appalachian State University from 2020-2022, earning a master's in Industrial-Organizational Psychology and Human Resource Management. Throughout the program, she worked on various professional projects, including working as a graduate administrative assistant and graduate teaching assistant, leading the HR Science Evidence-Based Practice (EBP) team, and interning at Dow Chemical. Upon graduating from Appalachian State University, she began work at Bank of America as a Human Resource Associate in the Global Human Resources Development Program.