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SEX OBJECT AND WORKER:  
INCOMPATIBLE IMAGES OF WOMEN\*

Barbara A. Gutek and Vera Dunwoody

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS.

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The topic of sexual behavior in the workplace was virtually unstudied until the concern of feminists over sexual harassment brought the issue to the attention of the public and researchers. This focus on sexual harassment has led to research on two complementary questions: 1) How do people define sexual harassment?; and 2) How common is sexual harassment? The first is important if one assumes that laws and regulations out to reflect broad public consensus. Likewise, knowing the frequency of sexual harassment--a workplace problem that had no name until the mid-1970s (Farley 1978)--is important for those seeking to establish laws and procedures to remedy the problem. Further it deserves study because it has negative consequences for women workers and organizations. These two areas--definition and frequency of sexual harassment--are often studied independently, using different research subjects, research designs, and methods of data collection.

Perhaps because sexual harassment at work and not sexual behavior at work caught the public imagination, and sexual harassment constitutes legal liability and other forms of sexual behavior at work do not, researchers have endowed sexual harassment with special significance. Other sexual behavior that might occur at work, in contrast, is assumed to be more benign in its effects and of less legal consequence, and it therefore has received less attention (Schneider 1984).

From a psychological or sociological point of view (as opposed to the legal view), there is less justification for distinguishing sexual harassment from the study of other kinds of sexual behavior at work. In this broader sociological and psychological perspective, the two focal issues of sexual harassment research--definition and frequency--recede in importance. Defining "sex" at work is still problematic but, as compared with defining sexual harassment, has fewer ramifications because it does not distinguish legal from illegal behavior. The issue of frequency also loses significance, since almost all workers have had some experience with sexual behavior at work, through comments, jokes, posters and ads, touching, and propositions, for example (Gutek 1985). The term "sex at work" will be used throughout this chapter to encompass the range of sexual behaviors found within the workplace. It includes sexual harassment and nonharassing sexual behavior.

We contend that the research on sex at work, reviewed below, reveals an interesting paradox. At work, women are perceived as using sex to their advantage, yet in practice, they are hurt by sex at work. On the other hand, men who are perceived as concerned with business display more sexual behavior than women at work and may benefit from it. This paradox contains three components: actual behavior, the impacts of sex at work, and beliefs and stereotypes concerning women and men.

This paper examines the research relevant to this paradox. It begins by tracing the development of research on sexual behavior in the workplace, from its early emphasis on defining and documenting sexual harassment through other findings concerning sexual nonharassment. In order to understand sex at work, several frameworks or theories are discussed, with special emphasis on the concept of sex-role spillover. The sex-roll spillover perspective is then used to tie together the three components of the paradox: behavior, impacts, and beliefs. This paper is not intended to review the legal status of sexual harassment laws or lawsuits.

#### The Discovery of Sexual Harassment

In the mid-1970s, sexuality in the workplace suddenly received considerable attention through the discovery of sexual harassment, which appeared to be relatively widespread and to have long-lasting, harmful effects on a significant number of working women. This "discovery" was somewhat counter-intuitive, since some women were believed to benefit from seductive behavior and sexual behaviors at work, gaining unfair advantage and acquiring perks and privileges they did not deserve (Lipman-Blumen 1976, 1984; Quinn 1977). The first accounts of sexual harassment were journalistic reports and case studies (Bernstein 1976; Fleming 1979; Lindsey 1977; Pogrebin 1977; Rivers 1978; Safran 1976). Soon the topic was catapulted into public awareness through the efforts of two authors. Farley's book *Sexual Shakedown: The Sexual Harassment of Women on the Job* (1978) aimed to bring sexual harassment to public attention, create a household word, and make people aware of harassment as a social problem. MacKinnon's book *Sexual Harassment of Working Women* (1979) sought a legal mechanism for handling sexual harassment and compensating its victims. In a strong and compelling argument, MacKinnon contended that sexual harassment was primarily a problem for women, that it rarely happened to men, and therefore that it should be viewed as a form of sex discrimination. Viewing sexual harassment as a form of sex discrimination would make available to victims the same legal protection available to victims of sex discrimination. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) has established guidelines consistent with MacKinnon's position, and numerous cases of sexual harassment have reached the courts in the United States in the past few years (see Livingston 1982). More recently, several states have passed their own increasingly strong law aimed at eliminating sexual harassment (see Gutek 1985;

Pearman and Lebrato 1984).

The various guidelines and regulations define sexual harassment broadly. For example, the EEOC guidelines (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission 1980) state that "unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when 1) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment, 2) submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual, or 3) such conduct has the purpose or effect of reasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment."

Researchers began serious study of sex at work only after Farley's and MacKinnon's books and two compendia of information on sexual harassment (Backhouse and Cohen 1978; Neugarten and Shafritz 1980) were in progress and generally after the EEOC had established guidelines in 1980. Not surprisingly, researchers were heavily influenced by these important developments in policy and law. These developments, however, focused the concerns of researchers on the two fairly narrow issues mentioned above: definition of harassment and frequency of occurrence.

### Defining Sexual Harassment

The first issue can be succinctly stated: "What constitutes sexual harassment?" For lawyers, the courts, personnel managers, ombudspersons, and others, this is perhaps the most important issue that they must face (Linenberger 1983; Powell 1983). If "it" is harassment, it is illegal; otherwise it is not. Researchers, aware of the problems in defining harassment and perhaps eager to contribute to the developments in law and policy, began to supply a spate of studies. These studies show how various groups of people defined harassment--that is, which behaviors are considered harassment by most people and which variables affect their perceptions. Many such studies use similar experimental designs, in which students, employees, or managers are asked to rate one or more hypothetical situations in which aspects of the situation are varied along important dimensions (for example, whether the harassed person is a man or a woman; see Collins and Blodgett 1981; Gutek, Morasch, and Cohen 1983; Reilly, Carpenter, Dull, and Bartlett 1982; Sherman and Smith 1983; Terpstra and Baker, 1983; Weber-Burdin and Rossi 1982). The strengths of this research design--random assignment to conditions and manipulation of causal variables--allow researchers to make causal statements about what affects how people define sexual harassment.

The research shows that sexual activity as a requirement of the job (as necessary to get or keep a job or get a promotion) is defined as sexual harassment by about 81 percent (Gutek, Nakamura, Gahart, Handschumacher, and Russell 1980) to 98 percent (Gutek 1985; Dunwoody-Miller and Gutek 1985) of working adults, and similar results have been reported with students as subjects (Adams and Peterson 1983). In general, these studies show that except for the most outrageous and clearly inappropriate behavior, whether or not an incident is labeled harassment varies with several characteristics of the incident and the people involved. In these studies, the following variables make a difference: 1) the behavior in question, 2) the relationship between harasser and victim, 3) the sex of the harasser, 4) the sex and age of the victim, 5) the sex of the rater, and 6) the occupation of the person doing the rating.

The most important factor determining judgment of sexual harassment is the behavior involved. Sexually explicit behavior and behavior involving threats or warnings is more likely than other, less threatening behavior to be judged sexual harassment (Gutek et al. 1980; Reilly et al. 1982, Weber-Burdin

and Rossi 1982). Weber-Burdin and Rossi (1982) concluded that the harasser's behavior is much more important than the victim's, although if a female victim behaved seductively, respondents may reduce the rating of harassment.

The relationship between the two people is also important. The situation is considered more serious harassment when the harasser is the supervisor of the victim rather than a coworker or a subordinate (U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board 1981; Gutek, Norasch, and Cohen 1983), or more serious if the person previously declined to date the harasser (Reilly et al. 1982) than if the two people had a prior dating relationship (Reilly et al. 1982; Weber-Burdin and Rossi 1982). The incident is more likely to be viewed as sexual harassment when a man is the harasser (Gutek, Morasch, and Cohen 1982), when the woman is the victim (Gutek, Morasch, and Cohen 1983), and when the female victim is young (Sherman and Smith 1983),

When women are doing the rating, they define a wide variety of sexual behaviors at work as sexual harassment, while men tended to rate only the more extreme behaviors as harassment (Collins and Blodgett 1981; Dunwoody-Miller and Gutek 1985; Gutek 1985; Gutek, Morasch, and Cohen 1983; Gutek et al. 1980; Powell, in press; Reilly et al. 1982; U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board 1981). In addition, higher-level managers rating an incident are less likely to see it as serious harassment than middle-level or lower-level managers (Collins and Blodgett 1982), and faculty tend to view incidents as less serious than students (Reilly et al. 1982).

#### Frequency of Sexual Harassment at Work

The other area of research that developed in response to legal and policy development was a documentation of the kinds and frequency of harassment that people experience. The research focuses heavily but not exclusively on heterosexual harassment (see U.S. Merit System Protection Board 1981). It is often divorced from the research on definition and employs a different research design and different subjects. Research aiming to establish rates of harassment in a population is concerned with drawing a representative sample in order to generalize results to that population (Dunwoody-Miller and Gutek 1985; Gutek 1984; Stringer-Moore 1982; U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board 1981).

In terms of the incidence of harassment, this research shows a broad range of rates. The U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board's (1981) study showed that 42 percent of the women respondents reported experiencing sexual harassment on the job within the previous two years. In a Seattle, Washington study of city employees, more than one-third of all respondents report sexual harassment in the previous 24 months of city employment (Stringer-Moore 1982). Dunwoody-Miller and Gutek (1985) found that 20 percent of California state civil service employees reported being sexually harassed at work in the previous five years. Gutek (1985) suggested that up to 53 percent of women had been harassed sometime in their working life.

Other studies using purposive or convenience samples generally show higher rates of harassment. In a study by Working Women Institute (1975), 70 percent of the employed women respondents said they had experienced sexual harassment on their jobs. An early study of the readers of Redbook magazine (Safran 1976) found that 88 percent of those mailing in questionnaires had experience sexual harassment. Schneider (1982) reported that more than two-thirds of her matched sample of lesbian and heterosexual working women had experienced unwelcome sexual advances within the previous year.

Although women of all ages, races, occupations, income levels, and marital statuses experience harassment (see Farley 1978), research suggests that young and unmarried women are especially vulnerable (Gutek et al. 1980; Schneider 1982; Tangri, Burt, and Johnson 1982). Not surprisingly, most women

are harassed by men, not by women (Schneider 1982; U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board 1981). In addition, women in nontraditional jobs are more likely to experience harassment than other women, over and above what is expected by their high amount of work contact with men (Gutek and Morasch 1982).

Sexual harassment at work has also been reported by men in several studies. The U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board study found 15 percent of the men to be harassed by male and female employees (Tangri, Burt, and Johnson 1982). On the basis of men's reports of specific behavior, Gutek (1985) suggested that up to 9 percent of men could have been harassed by women sometime in their working lives. After a careful analysis of men's accounts of harassment, however, Gutek (1985) concluded that very few of the reported incidents were sexual harassment as it is legally defined, and some of the incidents may not have even been considered sexual if the same behavior had been initiated by a man or by another woman who was considered a less desirable sexual partner by the man.

#### Frequency of Sexual Nonharassment

Several studies have also examined other kinds of sexual behavior at work, behavior that most people do not consider harassment, including comments or whistles intended to be compliments, some sexual touching such as hugging or an arm around the shoulder, requests for a date or sexual activity often in a joking manner, and sexual jokes or comments that are not directed to a particular person (Brewer 1982). These other "nonharassing," less serious, and presumably nonproblematic behaviors are considerably more common than harassment. For example, Gutek (1985) found that 61 percent of men and 68 percent of women said that they had received at least one sexual comment that was meant to be complimentary sometime in their working lives. In addition, 56 percent of men and 67 percent of women reported that they had been the recipient of at least one sexual look or gesture that was intended to be complimentary. About eight out of every 10 workers have been recipients of some kind of sexual overture that was intended to be a compliment. Schneider (1982) found that 55 percent of a sample of heterosexual working women and 67 percent of a sample of lesbian working women reported that within the last year at work, someone had joked with them about their body or appearance. Other studies show similar findings. Dunwoody-Miller and Gutek (1985) reported that 76 percent of women and 55 percent of men indicated that, as California state civil service employees, they had received complimentary comments of a sexual nature. They also reported high incidences of looks and gestures of a sexual nature that were meant as compliments (67 percent of women and 47 percent of men).

Although men seem rarely to be harassed, the amount of sexual behavior reported by them at work remains substantial. For example, Gutek (1985) found that men were more likely than women to say that they were sexually touched by an opposite-sex person on their job.

According to Abbey (1982), Davies (1982), and Gottfried and Fassenfest (1984), men are more likely than women to perceive the world in sexual terms. Also, men are more likely than women to mistake friendliness for seduction (Abbey 1982) and find the office is a little too exciting with women around (Wall Street Journal 1981). This seems consistent with the common stimulus-response view that women's presence elicits sexual behavior from men. Reports from men, however, suggest that sex is present in male-dominated workplaces, whether or not women are actually present (Gutek 1985). This "floating sex" takes the form of posters, jokes, sexual metaphors for work, comments, obscene language, and the like. The relationship seems to be quite straightforward; the more men, the more sexualized the workplace. The fact that much of this sexualization of work is degrading to women as well as sexual is what creates the "hostile" environment that the EEOC regulations aim to eliminate.

Taken together, the research on harassment and "nonharassment" shows that sexual behavior is so common at work that one might say that sex permeates work (Gutek 1985). An equally important conclusion of this body of research is that the legal behavior is considerably more common than the illegal sexual harassment. This finding is not surprising, but it is important, given that so much attention has been focused on sexual harassment.

#### Impacts of Sexual Behavior at Work

Any behavior that is as common as sexual harassment and nonharassment at work is likely to have a wide variety of ramifications, both on the individuals involved and on the work organization as well. So far researchers have concentrated on identifying negative effects of sexual harassment, in order to call attention to harassment as a social and workplace problem. Only scattered attempts, however, have been made toward studying the impacts of other types of sexual behavior at work (but see Crull 1982; Gutek 1985).

Sexual harassment has a variety of negative consequences for women workers (Benson and Thompson 1982; Crull and Cohen 1984; Dunwoody-Miller and Gutek 1985; Evans 1978; Gutek 1985; Gutek and Nakamura 1982; Schneider 1982; Tangri, Burt, and Johnson 1982; U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board 1981). In addition to the discomfort associated with the sexually harassing experiences and violation of physical privacy, women often find that their careers are interrupted (Hemming 1985). Up to 10 percent of women have quit a job because of sexual harassment (Gutek 1985; Gutek et al. 1980). Others fear becoming victims of retaliation if they complain about the harassment, and some are asked to leave (Crull and Cohen 1984).

Women may also experience lower productivity, less job satisfaction, reduced self-confidence, and a loss of motivation and commitment to their work and their employer (Gutek 1985). They may avoid men who are known harassers, even though contact with those men is important for their work (see Benson and Thomson 1982). Thus, harassment constrains the potential for forming friendships or work alliances with male workers (Schneider 1982). Furthermore, women are likely to feel anger and resentment and even exhibit self-blame (Jensen and Gutek 1982), which leads to additional stress. Crull and Cohen (1984) also stated that, while the implicit/covert types of harassment may not have the same direct repercussions as those of the explicit/overt types, all types of sexual harassment at work create high stress levels and serve as a hidden occupational hazard. Finally, sexual harassment helps to maintain the sex segregation of work when it is used to coerce women out of nontraditional jobs (see Gutek 1985; MacKinnon 1979; O'Farrell and Harlan 1982).

Besides affecting their work, sexual harassment affects women's personal lives in the form of physical and emotional illness and disruption of marriage or other relationships with men (see Dunwoody-Miller and Gutek 1985; Gutek 1985; Tangri, Burt, and Johnson 1982). For example, Tangri, Burt, and Johnson (1982) reported that 33 percent of women said their emotional or physical condition became worse, and Gutek (1985) found that 15 percent of women victims of harassment said their health was affected and another 15 percent said it damaged their relationships with men.

What is even more intriguing is that nonharassing behavior also has negative work-related consequences for women workers, although even they are not always aware of them. For example, Gutek (1985) found that the experience of all kinds of sexual behavior, including remarks intended to be complimentary, was associated with lower job satisfaction among women workers. In addition, women reported that they are not flattered, and in fact are insulted, by sexual overtures of all kinds from men (Carothers and Crull 1984; Gutek 1985; Littler-Bishop, Seidler-Feller and Opaluch 1982). In one study, 62 percent of women said they would be insulted by a sexual proposition from a

man at work (Gutek 1985). Another example, the office "affair," can have serious detrimental effects on a woman's credibility as well as her career, especially if the relationship is with a supervisor (Schneider 1984),

Men seem to suffer virtually no work-related consequences of sexual behavior at work. Less than 1 percent of men reported that they quit a job because of sexual harassment, and, in the course of discussing sexual incidents, not one man said he lost a job as a consequence of a sexual overture or request from a woman at work (Gutek 1985). In one study, 67 percent of men said they are flattered by sexual overtures from women (Gutek 1985). In addition, many men view a certain amount of sexual behavior as appropriate to the work setting (Gutek, Morasch, and Cohen 1983; Hearn 1985) and, as noted above, they are less likely to consider any given behavior as sexual harassment. In one study, 51 percent of the men who received overtures from women said they themselves were at least somewhat responsible for the incident (Gutek 1985). That men experience so few work-related consequences of sex at work is especially odd, since they report so much sexual behavior both that is directed at them by women and that seems to float throughout the workplace.

When men do report "consequences," they are personal rather than work-related, and again, they are viewed in a positive manner. Most often, they report dating relationships or affairs that they find enjoyable; for instance, "There was this little blond who had the hots for me," or "I think she liked me. I was young and she was married. She wasn't very happy with her husband" (Gutek 1985).

Organizations are also negatively affected by sexual behavior at work. In the past, they tried to limit sex at work by forbidding dating and requesting that wives of male employees quit their jobs (Gutek 1985). More recently, various attempts have been made to demonstrate the costs of sexual harassment. For example, the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board (1981) study estimated that between May 1978 and May 1980, sexual harassment of federal employees cost the federal government at least \$189 million. More frequently cited are the costs of court cases arising out of allegations of sexual harassment (see Pearman and Lebrato 1984). Besides the cost of the court case itself, an employer found guilty of harassment might be required, for example, to hire or promote the victim, pay back wages, award seniority credit, restore sick leave and vacation credits, and pay compensatory and/or punitive damages.

In addition, the negative consequences reported by individuals become organizational consequences when they happen to many employees of the same firm. For example, the interrupted careers at a personal level translate into turnover and absenteeism at the organizational level. Likewise, lowered job satisfaction of individuals translates into lower morale at the organizational level. Less frequently acknowledged is the "cost" of misusing the organization's human resources and the waste of other organizational resources that are expended in employees' attempts to attract sexual partners by nonharassing or harassing means.

#### Understanding Sexual Behavior at Work

As mentioned earlier, most studies of sexual behavior at work have been in response to the discovery of sexual harassment and policies developed to address harassment. Much of the research is descriptive and diverse, providing interesting information about sexual behavior at work, and useful information for policymakers and lawyers. Unfortunately, few attempts have been made to develop a framework for studying sex at work. Nonetheless, some researchers have begun to develop theoretical frameworks, both deductive and inductive.

One deductive framework sometimes used to study harassment is the power perspective; that is, sexual harassment is an expression of power relationships, and women constitute a threat to men's economic and social



standing (Benson and Thomson 1982; Carothers and Crull 1984; Gottfried and Fasenfest 1984; Schneider 1982). Within that perspective, Lipman-Blumen (1984) viewed the women's "seductive" behavior as micro-manipulation, a response to male control of social institutions--including the workplace--which she labeled macro-manipulation. Other researchers explicitly borrowed from the literature on rape. They contend that sexual harassment is analogous to rape in that power, not sexual drive, is the dominant motivation. They further contend that victims of rape and harassment experience similar effects (see Jensen and Gutek 1982).

Others have used an inductive approach to model building. For example, in an attempt to explain their own findings on sexual harassment, Tangri, Burt, and Johnson (1982) developed three models: the natural/biological model, the organizational model, and the sociocultural model. The natural/biological model assumes that sexual harassment and other forms of sexual expression at work are simply manifestations of natural attraction between two people. According to Tangri, Burt, and Johnson (1982), one version of this model suggests that because men have a stronger sex drive, they more often initiate sexual overtures, at work as well as in other settings. The organizational model assumes that sexual harassment is the result of certain opportunity structures within organizations such as hierarchies. People in higher positions can use their authority (their legitimate power) and their status to coerce lower-status people into accepting a role of sex object or engaging in sexual interactions. The third model, the sociocultural model, "argues that sexual harassment reflects the larger society's differential distribution of power and status between the sexes" (Tangri, Burt, and Johnson 1982:34). Harassment is viewed as a mechanism for maintaining male dominance over women, in work and in society more generally. Male dominance is maintained by patterns of male-female interaction as well as by male domination of economic and political matters. Tangri, Burt, and Johnson's analysis revealed that none of the three models could by itself offer an adequate explanation of their data on sexual harassment. Another model, emphasizing the effects of sex-role expectations in an organizational context, is called sex-role spillover. The following analysis builds on earlier research on this concept (Gutek 1985; Nieva and Gutek 1981).

### Sex-Role Spillover

Sex-role spillover denotes the carryover of gender-based expectation into the workplace. Among the characteristics assumed by many to be associated with femaleness (such as passivity, loyalty, emotionality, nurturance) is being a sex object (see Williams and Best 1982). Women are assumed to be sexual and to elicit sexual overtures from men rather naturally (see Schneider 1982). In a 32-nation study of sex stereotypes, the characteristics of sexy, affectionate, and attractive were associated with femaleness (Williams and Best 1982). This aspect of sex-role spillover, the sex-object aspect, is most relevant to the study of sex at work.

Sex-role spillover occurs when women, more than men in the same work roles, are expected to be sex objects or are expected to project sexuality through their behavior, appearance, or dress (Gutek and Morasch 1982). What is equally important is the fact that there is no strongly held comparable belief about men. For example, of the 49 items that were associated with maleness in at least 19 of the 24 countries studied by William and Best (1982), none was directly or indirectly related to sexuality. While it is generally assumed that men are more sexually active than women (see Glass and Wright 1985) and men are the initiators in sexual encounters (Grauerholz and Serpe 1985; Kinsey, Pomeroy, and Martin 1948; Zilbergeld 1978), the cluster of characteristics that are usually associated with the male personality do not include a

sexual component. Rather the stereotype of men revolves around the dimension of competence and activity (Constantinople 1973; Deaux 1985). It includes the belief that men are rational, analytic, assertive, tough, good at math and science, competitive, and make good leaders (Bem 1974; Spence and Helmreich 1978; Williams and Best 1982). The stereotype of men--the common view of the male personality--is the perfect picture of asexuality. Sex-role spillover, thus, introduces the view of women as sexual beings in the workplace, but it simply reinforces the view of men as organizational beings--"active, work-oriented" (Deaux 1985). It should also be noted that these stereotypes of female characteristics and male characteristics have remained quite stable through the 1970s and thus far into the 1980s (Ruble 1983).

The spillover of the female sex role, including the sexual aspect, occurs at work for at least four reasons (see also Gutek and Morasch 1982). First, gender is the most noticeable social characteristic: that is, people immediately notice whether a person is a man or a woman (Bem 1981; Grady 1977; Kessler and McKenna 1978; Laws 1979). Second, men may feel more comfortable reacting to women at work in the same manner that they react to other women in their lives, and unless a woman is too young, too old, or too unattractive, that includes viewing her as a potential sexual partner. Third, women may feel comfortable reacting to men in a manner expected by the men, that is, conforming to the men's stereotype (Gutek 1985; Gutek and Morasch 1982; Kanter 1977). Fourth, characteristics of work and sex roles may facilitate the carryover of sex role into work role. Sex roles remain relatively stable throughout our lives and permeate all domains of life. On the other hand, the work role may change many times and is specific to only one domain of life. Sex roles are also learned much earlier than are work roles, and they entail a wide variety of diffuse skills and abilities. Work roles, on the other hand, call for more specific skills and abilities.

The important point here is that being sexual and being a sex object are aspects of the female sex role that frequently are carried over to the workplace by both men and women. A variety of subtle pressures may encourage women to behave in a sexual manner at work, and this then confirms their supposedly essential sexual nature. Because it is expected, people notice female sexuality, and they believe it is normal, natural, an outgrowth of being female (Lipman-Blumen 1984).

Unfortunately, women do not seem to be able to be sex objects and analytical, rational, competitive, and assertive at the same time because femaleness is viewed as "not-maleness" (Deaux and Lewis 1984; Foushee, Helmreich and Spence 1979; Major, Carnevale and Deaux 1981), and it is the men who are viewed as analytic, logical, and assertive (Constantinople 1973; Spence and Helmreich 1978). Despite the fact that the model of male and female as polar opposites has been severely criticized on several grounds (Bem 1974; Constantinople 1973; Spence and Helmreich 1978), a dichotomy is used by researchers and laypersons alike (for example, we speak of the "opposite" sex). This is an important part of sex-role spillover. Not only are the sexual aspects of the female role carried over to work, but also they swamp or overwhelm a view of her as a capable, committed worker. As Kanter (1977) noted, a woman's perceived sexuality can "blot out" all other characteristics. Thus, sex role interferes with and takes precedence over work role.

What is doubly troublesome about this inability to be sexual and a worker at the same time is that women are not the ones who usually choose between the two. A female employee might decide to be a sex object at work, especially if her career or job is not very important to her. More often, however, the working woman chooses not to be a sex object but may be so defined by male colleagues or supervisors anyway, regardless of her own actions. A woman's sexual behavior is noticed and labeled sexual even if it is not intended as such (Carothers and Crull 1984; Gutek 1985; Schneider 1982; see also Abbey

1982, who found that women's actions in a bar are often interpreted as sexual by men, even though the women meant them to be friendly, but not sexual). In order to avoid being cast into the role of sex object, a woman may have to act completely asexual. Then she is subject to the charge of being a "prude," an "old maid," or "frigid," and in her attempt to avoid being a sex object, she is still stereotyped by her sexuality, or more accurately, by her perceived lack of sexuality.

The situation for men is entirely different. Benefiting from the stereotype of men as natural inhabitants of organizations--goal-oriented, rational, analytic, competitive, assertive, strong, or, as Deaux (1985) puts it, "active, work-oriented"--men may be able to behave in a blatantly sexual manner, seemingly with impunity. Even when a man goes so far as to say that he encourages overtures from women by unzipping his pants at work (as reported by one man in Gutek's 1984 study), he may escape being viewed as sexual or more interested in sex than work by supervisors and colleagues. While the image of women acting in a seductive manner and distracting men from work is viewed as a detriment to the organization, many executives know of men in their employ who are "playboys" and harassers, yet they may not see that these men are a detriment to the organization. Although these men may hire the wrong women for the wrong reasons, make poor use of female human resources in the organization, squander the organization's resources in their quests for new sexual partners, and make elaborate attempts to impress potential sexual partners, all this may escape the notice of employers. In short, men's sexual behavior at work often goes unnoticed. At least two reasons for this can be cited. First, as noted above, there is no strongly recognized sexual component of the male sex role. Thus men's sexual behavior is neither salient nor noticed. Second, perhaps sexual pursuits and conquests, jokes and innuendos can be subsumed under the stereotype of the organizational man--goal-oriented, rational, competitive, and assertive, which are expected and recognized as male traits. Men may make sexual overtures in an assertive, competitive manner. Likewise, sexual jokes, metaphors, and innuendos may be seen as part of competitive male horseplay (Hearn 1985). Thus the traits of competitiveness, assertiveness, and goal orientation are noticed, whereas the sexual component is not.

To recapitulate, expectations about male and female behavior that are derived from stereotypes (clusters of beliefs) about men and women spill over, or are carried over, into work roles for a variety of reasons. While the female stereotype has a sexual component (sex object), the male stereotype revolves around competence and achievement. The stereotype declares men to be asexual and women to be sexual. People attend to behavior that is expected, and behavior that is consistent with a stereotype is expected. Beliefs (stereotypes) take precedence over behaviors. Thus, men's sexual behavior is not noticed, and even some men's sexually intended behavior is not interpreted by women as such. On the other hand, women's behavior is interpreted as sexual even when it is not intended as such.

The Spillover Perspective:

Behaviors. Impacts. and Beliefs Concerning Sex at Work

How does the sex-role spillover perspective enrich our understanding of sex at work or integrate the diverse findings about sexual harassment and sex at work? This perspective leads to an examination of both men's and women's behavior at work and stereotypes or beliefs about how men and women behave at work. It helps to explain the paradox offered above: women are perceived as using sex to their advantage. In practice, they are hurt by sex at work. On the other hand, while men are not perceived as sexual at work, they display more sexual behavior and may benefit from it.

Sex-role spillover is further useful in explaining why sexual harassment

remained invisible for so long. In the absence of data on the subject, women were labeled as sexy, men as asexual. Sexual overtures including harassment were elicited by the sexy women; men who are normally active and work-oriented, "all business," could be distracted by seductively behaving women, but these distractions were considered a trivial part of men's overall work behavior. If the woman subsequently felt uncomfortable with the situation, it was her problem. If she could not handle the problem and complained about it, it was at least partially her fault. Men and women, including women victims, shared this belief. Thus a woman who complained might be labeled a trouble-maker and be asked to leave the job or the company.

It should be noted, however, that the spillover perspective falls somewhat short when attempting to account for actual hostile sexual coercion at work. To take an extreme (but not unknown) case, one would hardly say that rape in the office is a spillover from externally appropriate sex roles (see MacKinnon 1979). Rather, it might best be construed as aggression or power, and a power perspective of sexual harassment may be a better explanatory model (O'Farrell and Harlan 1982).

#### Closing Remarks

The research that has been done on sexual harassment and sex at work has provided data showing that many of the common beliefs about sexual behavior at work are false. The contribution of research--exploratory, descriptive, or theoretical toward understanding and explaining sex at work as been invaluable (Bernard 1981). A domain of human behavior that was largely invisible a decade ago is now visible, numerous misconceptions have been uncovered, and some facts have been exposed as myths by researchers, some of whom have served as both scholars and advocates in this area (see Wittig 1985).

It is somewhat unrealistic to assume policies could be drafted and/or accepted to desexualize work environments totally. However, employers, employees, and policymakers must move beyond the myths and stereotypes (Schneider 1984) and deal with the realities of sexuality at work. One of the most important implications of this body of research should be to help in this movement from myth to reality. We would like to see two developments: 1) the use of current research findings to generate more theory about organizational behavior and dyadic interactions between men and women; and 2) more research that integrates the study of sexual behavior at work with other areas of concern to social scientists, such a sex-role stereotypes, family structure, social power, sex segregation of work, job involvement, motivation, and organizational culture. No mere cliché is intended by our conclusion: more research is needed on various aspects of sex at work,

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