Individual and Contextual Inhibitors of Sexual Harassment Training Motivation

Benjamin M. Walsh, Timothy J. Bauerle, Vicki J. Magley

Studies have evaluated the outcomes of sexual harassment training, but considerably less research has focused on variables that influence sexual harassment training effectiveness. To address this need, we developed and tested a model of individual and contextual inhibitors of sexual harassment training motivation to learn. Survey data collected from male and female participants across three time points were used to test the mediating role of pessimism about sexual harassment change in the relationship between sexual harassment myth endorsement and motivation to learn, as well as the moderating role of organizational tolerance for sexual harassment on the relation between sexual harassment myth endorsement and pessimism. Results were consistent with the hypotheses, and exploratory analyses also revealed unhypothesized sex differences. The strengths and limitations of the study, implications for practitioners, and directions for future research are discussed.

Sexual harassment remains a concern for employees, human resource professionals, and organizational leaders alike. Recent meta-analyses of studies summarize the harmful effects of sexual harassment, as targets of sexual harassment report lower satisfaction with coworkers, supervisors and work, depleted organizational commitment, and poorer psychological well-being (Chan, Lam, Chow, & Cheung, 2008; Hershcovis & Barling, 2010; Willness, Steel, & Lee, 2007). The deleterious effects of sexual harassment are comparable for men and women (Bergman & Henning, 2008; Chan et al., 2008; Magley, Waldo, Drasgow, & Fitzgerald, 1999), although women are targeted more often than men (Fitzgerald, Magley, Drasgow, & Waldo, 1999; Magley et al., 1999).

Organizations have employed various measures to help minimize sexual harassment, in part to reduce liability because sexual harassment is illegal under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Measures taken to address

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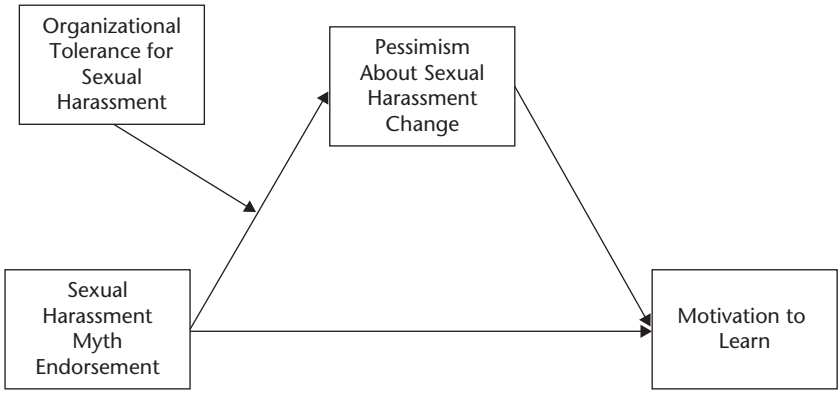
sexual harassment generally coincide with Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) guidelines and commonly include the development of zero-tolerance sexual harassment policies, implementation of procedures for reporting and responding to sexual harassment when it occurs, and the provision of sexual harassment training (Gutek, 1997). In the present study, we focused on sexual harassment training, as scholars highlight that this topic has received little empirical attention (e.g., Magley, Bauerle, & Walsh, 2010).

Magley et al. (2010) conducted a review of the research on sexual harassment training. Although they note that a number of *training evaluation* studies have investigated whether sexual harassment training changes factors such as trainee attitudes and knowledge of harassment, the authors concluded that considerably less *training effectiveness* research has been carried out. Alvarez, Salas, and Garofano (2004) highlight this distinction between training evaluation and training effectiveness research: "training evaluation . . . examines the extent to which training programs meet the goals intended," whereas "training effectiveness is the study of the variables that likely influence training outcomes at different stages (i.e., before, during, and after) of the training process" (p. 387). Some training effectiveness research has investigated whether effects of sexual harassment training vary due to factors such as gender and attitudes (Bingham & Scherer, 2001; Blakely, Blakely, & Moorman, 1998; Moyer & Nath, 1998; Robb & Doverspike, 2001), but there remains a need for research on the variables that influence effectiveness at different stages of sexual harassment training (Magley et al., 2010). This includes before training—the pretraining environment—so that trainers can better understand how to prepare learners and maximize training outcomes.

We addressed this research need by testing a model of sexual harassment training effectiveness, with a focus on the pretraining environment. We drew on Colquitt, LePine, and Noe's (2000) theory of training motivation to understand variables that influence one of the central drivers of training effectiveness across all forms of training—motivation to learn—but specifically within the context of sexual harassment training. Motivation to learn reflects "a specific desire on the part of the trainee to learn the content of the training program" (Noe & Schmitt, 1986, p. 501). Motivation to learn is an important pretraining criterion in its own right, given that numerous studies have shown that motivation to learn is a driver of short-term outcomes including reactions, knowledge and skill acquisition, and transfer (Bell & Ford, 2007; Colquitt et al., 2000; Facteau, Dobbins, Russell, Ladd, & Kudisch, 1995; Liao & Tai, 2006; Quiñones, 1995; Sitzmann, Brown, Casper, Ely, & Zimmerman, 2008). In brief, when trainees are more motivated to learn, better training outcomes are generally observed. As such, we sought to investigate correlates of sexual harassment training motivation to learn.

Colquitt et al. (2000) and others (e.g., Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Cannon-Bowers, Salas, Tannenbaum, & Mathieu, 1995; Kozlowski, Brown, Weissbein, Cannon-Bowers, & Salas, 2000; Mathieu & Martineau, 1997; Quiñones,

Figure 1. Conceptual model of individual and contextual inhibitors of sexual harassment training motivation



1997) have theorized that both individual and situational variables affect motivation to learn, specifically, and training effectiveness, more generally. With this in mind, we examined both individual (i.e., endorsement of myths surrounding sexual harassment, pessimism about sexual harassment change, gender) and contextual inhibitors (i.e., organizational tolerance for sexual harassment) of sexual harassment training motivation to learn (see Figure 1). We focused on variables hypothesized to attenuate motivation to learn because there is empirical evidence of backlash to sexual harassment training (e.g., Kearney, Rochlen, & King, 2004; Robb & Doverspike, 2001), and anecdotal reports that trainers may even avoid delivering such training as a result (Hequet, 2004). We suspected that our model of sexual harassment training effectiveness could help clarify why such negative reactions occur. More generally, these findings will be informative to training researchers given the paucity of research on sexual harassment training effectiveness. Findings from the present study will also be important for practitioners as they plan to maximize pretraining motivation. We elaborate on the constructs and their hypothesized relationships in the following sections.

Sexual Harassment Myth Endorsement

Sexual harassment myths include "attitudes and beliefs that are generally false but are widely and persistently held, and that serve to deny and justify male sexual harassment of women" (Lonsway, Cortina & Magley, 2008, p. 600). Put simply, these myths are composed of misinformed, false, or incorrect beliefs concerning sexual harassment motives, behavior, and victims that form a social lens by which sexual harassment events are interpreted (Dolkart, 1994). Such myths include, but are not limited to, victim blame (i.e., victims deserve,

exaggerate, or contribute to the harassment), the belief that sexual harassment is very infrequent, and that sexual harassment is only perpetrated by extreme, deviant men (Leidig, 1981). It is worth noting that these myths stand in contrast to research findings, such as studies showing that sexual harassment is both frequent and detrimental (Schneider, Swan, & Fitzgerald, 1997) and is experienced by both men and women (Bergman & Henning, 2008; Magley et al., 1999). Moreover, situational factors (e.g., job gender context, organizational tolerance for sexual harassment) are consistent drivers of sexually harassing behavior (Bergman & Henning, 2008; Fitzgerald, Drasgow, Hulin, Gelfand, & Magley, 1997; Hulin, Fitzgerald, & Drasgow, 1996).

Due to the hostile nature of sexual harassment myths as described above, there is reason to suspect that the construct is linked to employees' motivation to learn the knowledge and skills taught in sexual harassment training. Employees who accept such myths do not believe that sexual harassment is a valid problem. Rather, the perpetration of sexual harassment is viewed as infrequent by those who accept sexual harassment myths, and experiences of sexual harassment are perceived as contrived by the targets themselves (Lonsway et al., 2008). Individuals endorsing such myths should see little value in sexual harassment training given this fundamental disconnect with the focus of the training. Hence, we reasoned that the more employees endorsed sexual harassment myths, the less motivated they would be for sexual harassment training:

HYPOTHESIS 1: *Sexual harassment myth endorsement will be negatively related to motivation to learn.*

The Mediating Role of Pessimism About Sexual Harassment Change

We sought to explore a central mechanism by which sexual harassment myth endorsement influences motivation to learn, in addition to the direct effect hypothesized above. One plausible mechanism originates out of the literature on cynicism about organization change, defined by Wanous, Reichers, and Austin (2000) as "a pessimistic outlook for successful change and blame placed on 'those responsible' for lacking the motivation and/or the ability to effect successful change" (p. 135), with management implicated for the lack of effectiveness. Cynicism about organizational change is detrimental to organizational change efforts, as the construct is related to greater intent to resist change (Stanley, Meyer, & Topolnytsky, 2005) and lower commitment to organizational change (Bernerth, Armenakis, Field, & Walker, 2007). Of greater relevance to the present study, Kath (2005) found that cynicism about organizational change predicted cynicism specifically about sexual harassment training; perceptions that one's organization introduces sexual harassment training

for disingenuous reasons. In turn, cynicism related to lower motivation and poorer training outcomes (e.g., lower satisfaction with training; Kath, 2005).

We built on Kath's (2005) research by studying the role of pessimism about sexual harassment change in sexual harassment training effectiveness. Whereas cynicism reflects distrust (Dean, Brandes, & Dharwadkar, 1998), pessimism entails negative expectations about the success of specific change efforts. As such, we conceptualized pessimism about sexual harassment change as perceptions that organizational efforts to reduce sexual harassment will be ineffective. Sexual harassment training is one of the primary mechanisms used by organizations to prevent sexual harassment (Gutek, 1997), so we reasoned that pessimism about sexual harassment change would be an important inhibitor of training effectiveness. Indeed, Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory of motivation suggests that negative outcome expectations restrict more general work motivation, so we hypothesized that pessimism about sexual harassment change would reduce motivation to learn:

HYPOTHESIS 2: *Pessimism about sexual harassment change will be negatively related to motivation to learn.*

Furthermore, we reasoned that pessimism would vary as a function of acceptance of sexual harassment myths, thereby acting as a mediator of the relationship between sexual harassment myth endorsement and motivation to learn. Employees who accept sexual harassment myths essentially make internal attributions for the causes of sexual harassment, given that they blame victims for its occurrence (Lonsway et al., 2008). In effect, sexual harassment myth acceptance is a kind of fundamental attribution error, where individuals mistakenly attribute the causes of sexual harassment to the victim rather than the organizational context (e.g., organizational climate; Fitzgerald et al., 1997). Individuals who accept such myths should also doubt that any external, organizational efforts to reduce sexual harassment (e.g., training) would be effective given their tendency to ignore the environment and blame victims for their own harassment experiences. Moreover, myth endorsers believe that sexual harassment is not a legitimate concern and does not need to be addressed in the first place. This suggests that sexual harassment myth endorsement will be positively related to pessimism about sexual harassment change:

HYPOTHESIS 3: *Sexual harassment myth endorsement will be positively related to pessimism about sexual harassment change.*

Organizational Tolerance for Sexual Harassment: Interactive Effects on Pessimism

As mentioned previously, Colquitt et al. (2000) and others (e.g., Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Cannon-Bowers et al., 1995; Kozlowski et al., 2000; Mathieu &

Martineau, 1997; Quiñones, 1997) suggest that a more complete picture of the drivers of motivation to learn must also consider contextual factors. In the present study, we examine organizational tolerance for sexual harassment, a climate construct reflecting perceptions of policies, practices, and procedures that convey to employees that sexual harassment is or is not acceptable conduct (Fitzgerald et al., 1997; Hulin et al., 1996; Williams, Fitzgerald, & Drasgow, 1999). As an example, a climate tolerant of sexual harassment is reflected in an organization that (a) has no policy on sexual harassment or does a poor job of communicating existing policies, (b) has no protocol for reporting sexual harassment or a reporting protocol is in place but reports are not consistently investigated, and/or (c) does not punish employees who engage in sexual harassment. Consistent findings demonstrate that sexual harassment occurs more frequently in organizations that are more tolerant of the behavior (Bergman & Henning, 2008; Fitzgerald et al., 1997; Hulin et al., 1996; Williams et al., 1999; Willness et al., 2007).

We drew from Kozlowski and colleagues' (Kozlowski & Salas, 1997; Kozlowski, Chao, & Jensen, 2009) training effectiveness framework to examine organizational tolerance for sexual harassment as a moderator in the proposed model. Their framework suggests that factors within the organizational system such as the organizational climate need to be aligned with training content to maximize effectiveness (Kozlowski & Salas, 1997; Kozlowski, Chao, & Jensen, 2009). Related to the variables examined in the present study, a *misalignment* would be present if there are plans to introduce training in a context that does *not* support such training, as is the case if sexual harassment training were to be delivered to employees who feel that their organization tolerates the behavior.

We propose that such a misalignment would drive high levels of pessimism about sexual harassment change among employees, particularly among those employees who do not endorse sexual harassment myths. When organizational tolerance for sexual harassment is high, it should not matter whether an employee accepts sexual harassment myths because the context is misaligned with training content (Kozlowski & Salas, 1997; Kozlowski et al., 2009), and, hence, pessimism should be high. What's more, employees who do not endorse sexual harassment myths are less likely to blame victims for causing the harassment (Lonsway et al., 2008), which implies they are more likely to make external attributions about the causes of sexual harassment. Therefore, levels of pessimism among employees who do not endorse sexual harassment myths should be affected by the context to a greater extent than individuals who do. Based on this rationale, we suspected that employees would doubt the viability of any change surrounding sexual harassment when their organization tolerates harassment, even if they do not accept such myths about the nature of the phenomenon.

HYPOTHESIS 4: *Organizational tolerance for sexual harassment will moderate the relationship between sexual harassment myth endorsement and pessimism about sexual harassment change. Pessimism will be high if organizational tolerance for sexual harassment is high, regardless of the level of acceptance of sexual harassment myths.*

Potential Sex Differences in the Hypothesized Model

There is also reason to suspect that there will be sex differences in the hypothesized model. Sexual harassment is a gendered phenomenon; women experience more sexual harassment than men (Fitzgerald et al., 1999; Magley et al., 1999), men experience different forms of harassment than women (Berdahl, Magley, & Waldo, 1996), and women endorse sexual harassment myths to a lesser extent than men (Lonsway et al., 2008). Sex differences have also been observed in studies evaluating sexual harassment training (e.g., Bingham & Scherer, 2001; Moyer & Nath, 1998), suggesting that sex is an important variable to consider in models of sexual harassment training effectiveness. It is difficult to speculate where such differences may lie in the hypothesized model, and the exact nature of those differences. Thus, we examined sex as a potential moderator of relationships among variables, but as a general research question rather than with specific hypotheses.

Method

Below we provide details on the methodology utilized in our study, including the participants, procedure, and mesures.

Participants and Procedure

Participants were recruited through StudyResponse, a service that maintains a database of individuals who have agreed to participate in online surveys (Stanton & Weiss, 2002). Data were collected using three online surveys administered between November 2008 and June 2009, with approximately 2 to 3 months between survey administrations. A total of 1,045 employed individuals were sent links to each survey and unique identification numbers were used to track respondents across survey waves. Response rates exceeded 50% in each of the three waves, with 553 completing the first survey (52.9% response rate), 560 completing the second survey (53.6% response rate), and 561 completing the third survey (53.7% response rate). Our hypotheses were tested on a sample of 119 participants who completed all three surveys, reported that they had not had sexual harassment training at their organization, did not change jobs or organizations over the course of the three data collections, and completed all measures. We studied only those employees

who had not previously had sexual harassment training due to our exclusive attention to the pretraining environment, and our focus on motivation to learn.

Most respondents were female (69.7%), European American (89.7%), and married (57.1%). The participants were highly educated, with 52.5% of the sample holding an undergraduate or graduate degree. The mean age of participants was 41.9 years ($SD = 10.7$). Respondents had the option of selecting one of several job categories that best described their job, and the three most common choices were "office and administrator support" (15.1%), "management" (10.1%), and "healthcare support" (8.4%). In addition, 76.5% of the sample worked between 31 and 50 hours each week, and participants had worked for their company for 7.7 years on average ($SD = 7.6$).

In addition, most respondents (89.8%) reported that they had not had training at their current organization because it was not offered. However, 4.2% reported that training was voluntary and they had not participated, and 5.9% had mandatory training but they had not attended for various reasons. Finally, 68.1% of the sample had never been through a sexual harassment training program in their working life, but 31.9% of the sample had gone through at least one sexual harassment training program at a previous employer. As described below, we controlled for any prior experiences of sexual harassment training in hypothesis tests.

Measures

Respondents completed the measures of sexual harassment myth endorsement and organizational tolerance for sexual harassment at Time 1, the measure of pessimism about sexual harassment change was completed at Time 2, and the measure of motivation to learn was completed at Time 3. Unless otherwise noted, responses to items were captured on a 7-point scale ranging from "1" (strongly disagree) to "7" (strongly agree).

Sexual Harassment Myth Endorsement. Sexual harassment myth endorsement was measured with a 6-item scale developed for the present study, with items comparable to existing measures (e.g., Lonsway et al., 2008). Example items include: "Much of what is called sexual harassment is simply a misunderstanding," "A lot of so-called sexual harassment is just innocent flirting at work," and "Women often report sexual harassment just to get money or special treatment." Higher scores reflect greater endorsement of sexual harassment myths. The internal consistency reliability estimate for the measure was alpha = 0.89.

Organizational Tolerance for Sexual Harassment. Organizational tolerance for sexual harassment was assessed with 13 items developed for the present study. These items tap various organizational practices surrounding sexual harassment, similar to existing measures (e.g, Williams et al., 1999). Prior to the items, respondents were presented with the instructions "To my knowledge, my company …" with example items including "Investigates harassment

complaints no matter who does the harassment," "Enforces penalties against leaders who allow sexual harassment," and "Punishes people who harass, no matter who they are." Responses were either "3" (*yes*), "2" (*don't know*), or "1" (*no*), and items were reverse-scored to ensure that higher scores reflected greater organizational tolerance of sexual harassment. Internal consistency reliability for the scale was alpha = 0.96.

Pessimism About Sexual Harassment Change. Pessimism about sexual harassment change was measured with three items modified from the pessimism subscale of Wanous et al.'s (2000) measure of cynicism about organizational change. The items included "Programs to reduce sexual harassment in my company won't do much good," "Attempts to reduce sexual harassment at my company won't produce good results," and "Suggestions on how to solve problems of sexual harassment at my company would produce real change" (reverse-scored). Higher scores reflect greater pessimism about sexual harassment change. The internal consistency reliability estimate for the measure was alpha = 0.76.

Motivation to Learn. Four items were modified from Noe and Schmitt's (1986) measure to assess motivation to learn within the section in the survey on sexual harassment training in their current organization. Example items include "I would be motivated to learn the skills emphasized in sexual harassment training" and "I would try to learn as much as I could from sexual harassment training." Higher scores indicate greater motivation to learn. The internal consistency reliability estimate for the measure was alpha = 0.84.

Control Variables. We controlled for two variables in tests of our hypotheses. Sex was controlled for in-hypothesis tests due to the sex differences in sexual harassment described earlier, but studied as a moderator to examine our research question. Sex was coded "1" (male) and "2" (female). In addition, participants were asked to report the number of times they had been through sexual harassment training in their working life, which equates to the number of training experiences prior to their current organization, given that all participants had not had sexual harassment training in their current workplaces. We included this variable as a covariate because we suspected that exposure to sexual harassment training at another company may influence motivation to learn in their current workplace, and also because trained individuals are less likely to endorse sexual harassment myths (Lonsway et al., 2008). Response options ranged from "0" (zero) to "5" (five or more times).

Results

We begin with a description of descriptive statistics and an overview of our strategy for data analysis. Next we present results from hypothesis tests and exploratory analysis to assess sex differences in the hypothesized model.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics, zero-order correlations, and reliability estimates for variables

Variable	*M*	*SD*	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*
1. Sexual harassment myth endorsement	3.45	1.19	(0.89)					
2. Organizational tolerance for sexual harassment	1.80	0.53	0.11	(0.96)				
3. Pessimism about sexual harassment change	3.66	1.12	0.32**	0.34**	(0.76)			
4. Motivation to learn	4.75	1.35	−0.42**	−0.21*	−0.53**	(0.84)		
5. Sex	—	—	−0.29**	0.07	−0.01	0.12	—	
6. Number of times through sexual harassment training at previous employers	1.64	1.13	−0.21*	−0.03	−0.08	0.04	0.11	—

Note. $N = 119$. Sex was coded "1" male and "2" female. *$p < 0.05$. **$p < 0.01$.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics and zero-order correlations among variables are presented in Table 1. Sexual harassment myth endorsement was significantly related to pessimism about sexual harassment change ($r = 0.32$, $p < 0.01$) and motivation to learn ($r = -0.42$, $p < 0.01$) in the hypothesized direction. Sexual harassment myth endorsement was uncorrelated with organizational tolerance for sexual harassment ($r = 0.11$, $p > 0.05$). Pessimism about change was also negatively correlated with motivation to learn ($r = -0.53$, $p < 0.01$), which was consistent with our expectations. Finally, female respondents ($r = -0.29$, $p < 0.01$) and individuals who had prior sexual harassment training ($r = –0.21$, $p < 0.05$) were significantly less likely to endorse sexual harassment myths. These findings are consistent with previous research (Lonsway et al., 2008).

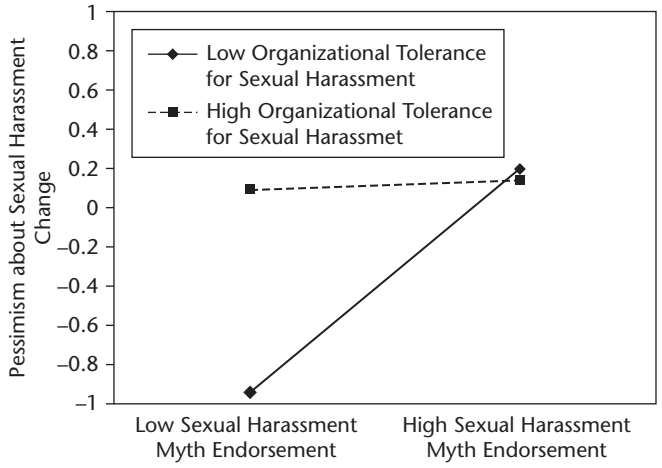
Overview of Data Analysis Strategy

We used the SPSS macro developed by Preacher, Rucker, and Hayes (2007) to test our hypotheses. The macro allows researchers to test several different types of mediation models which also include interaction terms, as is the case in the present study. When a variable functions as a moderator, it can create a situation where the indirect effect of a predictor on an outcome is conditional on the level of the moderator (i.e., a conditional indirect effect; Preacher et al., 2007). This would occur in the present study if, as hypothesized, organizational tolerance for sexual harassment moderates the relationship between sexual harassment myth endorsement and pessimism about sexual harassment change. In this case, the indirect influence of sexual harassment myth endorsement on motivation to learn (through pessimism) would be conditional on the level of organizational tolerance for sexual harassment. Finally, separate regression analyses were conducted to test our general research question pertaining to sex differences in the hypothesized model. All variables except participant sex were standardized prior to the analyses by calculating z scores.

Hypothesis Tests

The results of the analyses conducted to test our hypotheses are presented in Table 2. Hypothesis 1 was supported as sexual harassment myth endorsement was directly and negatively related to motivation to learn ($b = -0.27$, $p < 0.01$). Pessimism about sexual harassment change was also negatively associated with motivation to learn ($b = -0.44$, $p < 0.001$), supporting Hypothesis 2. Support was also observed for Hypothesis 3 as sexual harassment myth endorsement was positively related to pessimism about sexual harassment change ($b = 0.30$, $p < 0.001$). Finally, Hypothesis 4 was supported as organizational tolerance moderated the effect of sexual harassment myth endorsement on pessimism about sexual harassment change ($b = -0.27$, $p < 0.001$, $\Delta R^2 = 8.1\%$), and the interaction was of the hypothesized form. This interaction is presented in Figure 2, with low and high values corresponding to +/− 1

Figure 2. Moderation of organizational tolerance for sexual harassment on the relationship between sexual harassment myth endorsement and pessimism about sexual harassment change. Low and high values correspond to +/− 1 *SD* (Aiken & West, 1991)



SD (Aiken & West, 1991). When organizational tolerance for sexual harassment was low, pessimism about sexual harassment change varied as a function of sexual harassment myth endorsement. However, pessimism remained stable when organizational tolerance for sexual harassment was high, regardless of the degree to which individuals accepted sexual harassment myths. In total, these models accounted for 28.1% of the variance in pessimism about sexual harassment change and 35.1% of the variance in motivation to learn.

Table 2 also presents bootstrapped estimates for the indirect effect of sexual harassment myth endorsement on motivation to learn. Results suggest that pessimism partially mediated the relationship between sexual harassment myths and motivation to learn (Mathieu & Taylor, 2006), but the nature of this partial indirect effect was conditional on levels of organizational tolerance for sexual harassment due to its aforementioned moderating role (Preacher et al., 2007). When organizational tolerance was low, sexual harassment myth endorsement had a negative indirect effect on motivation to learn through pessimism (bootstrapped indirect effect $= -0.25$, $p < 0.001$), but this indirect effect was not statistically significant when organizational tolerance for sexual harassment was high (bootstrapped indirect effect $= -0.01$, $p > 0.05$).

Exploratory Analyses

Additional regression analyses were used to investigate whether there were sex differences in several relationships in the hypothesized model. Specifically, we examined potential two- and three-way interactions between and among

Table 2. Regression results for hypothesis tests

Predictor	*b*	*SE*	*t*	*p*
Dependent Variable Model: Motivation to Learn (Total $R^2 = 35.1\%$)				
Sex	0.08	0.17	0.48	0.632
Number of times through sexual harassment training	−0.06	0.08	−0.80	0.427
Pessimism about sexual harassment change	−0.44	0.09	−4.90	<0.001
Sexual harassment myth endorsement	−0.27	0.09	−3.16	0.002
Organizational tolerance for sexual harassment	−0.04	0.08	−0.50	0.617
Sexual harassment myth endorsement × Organizational tolerance for sexual harassment	−0.03	0.08	−0.36	0.723
Mediator Model: Pessimism about Sexual Harassment Change (Total $R^2 = 28.1\%$)				
Sex	0.09	0.18	0.51	0.614
Number of times through sexual harassment training	−0.08	0.08	−0.93	0.356
Sexual harassment myth endorsement	0.30	0.09	3.48	<0.001
Organizational tolerance for sexual harassment	0.25	0.08	2.98	0.004
Sexual harassment myth endorsement × Organizational tolerance for sexual harassment	−0.27	0.08	−3.56	<0.001
Indirect Effect at Organizational Tolerance for Sexual Harassment = *M* +/− 1 *SD*	Boot Indirect Effect	Boot *SE*	Boot *z*	Boot *p*
−1 *SD* Low organizational tolerance for sexual harassment	−0.25	0.07	−3.71	<0.001
M	−0.13	0.04	−2.92	0.004
+1 *SD* High organizational tolerance for sexual harassment	−0.01	0.05	−0.23	0.817

Note. $N = 119$. Sex was coded "1" male and "2" female. All variables except sex were standardized prior to the analysis, although reported estimates are the unstandardized coefficients derived from the output. Bootstrapping was used to examine the indirect effect of sexual harassment myth endorsement on motivation to learn at various levels of organizational tolerance for sexual harassment. Five thousand bootstrap samples were drawn.

sexual harassment myth endorsement, organizational tolerance for sexual harassment, and sex with pessimism about sexual harassment change and motivation to learn as outcomes. There were no two- or three-way interactions predicting motivation to learn. However, analyses with pessimism as the outcome revealed intriguing findings which are presented in Table 3. The three-way interaction was not statistically significant in Model 3, so we reverted to interpreting Model 2 which included main effects and all two-way interactions (see Table 3). Sex differences were observed in the relationship between sexual harassment myth endorsement and pessimism about sexual harassment change as the interaction coefficient was statistically significant ($b = –0.36$, $p < 0.05$). Figure 3 displays this interaction. The relationship between sexual harassment myth endorsement and pessimism about sexual harassment change was stronger among male respondents.

Discussion

To date, few studies have attempted to understand the variables that influence sexual harassment training effectiveness. We attempted to address this research need by testing a model of the correlates of motivation to learn in sexual harassment training. Findings from this study facilitate increased understanding of sexual harassment training theory and practice in several meaningful ways.

Results were consistent with models of training effectiveness such as Colquitt et al.'s (2000) theory of training motivation, in that both individual and contextual factors had significant influences on sexual harassment training motivation to learn. More specifically, individuals endorsing sexual harassment myths—the very people who could likely benefit the most from sexual harassment training—were less motivated for sexual harassment training. This relationship was explained in part by pessimism about sexual harassment change, such that employees who endorsed sexual harassment myths were more pessimistic about the success of sexual harassment change efforts, and as a result they were less motivated to learn.

One implication of these findings is that trainers implementing sexual harassment training should attempt to address and refute sexual harassment myths early on—either prior to the introduction of training or at the beginning of the training session—in an attempt to increase motivation to learn. For example, trainers could begin the sexual harassment training by presenting each sexual harassment myth, followed by the presentation of evidence contradicting the myth from the research literature. Without doing so, the relatively low levels of motivation to learn among trainees who endorse such myths could impede their willingness to learn the content of the training (Colquitt et al., 2000), which could also restrict long-term change in attitudes and behavior related to sexual harassment. This suggestion seems reasonable, but future research is needed to examine the effectiveness of approaches for

Table 3. Regression results to explore sex differences in effects on pessimism about sexual harassment change

Predictor	*b*	*SE*	*t*	*p*	ΔR^2 (%)
Model 1					20.1
Number of times through sexual harassment training	−0.02	0.09	−0.18	0.859	
Sex	0.13	0.19	0.67	0.508	
Sexual harassment myth endorsement	0.30	0.09	3.34	0.001	
Organizational tolerance for sexual harassment	0.30	0.08	3.58	0.001	
Model 2					10.5
Number of times through sexual harassment training	−0.05	0.09	−0.55	0.584	
Sex	0.18	0.19	0.94	0.351	
Sexual harassment myth endorsement	0.89	0.31	2.87	0.005	
Organizational tolerance for sexual harassment	0.10	0.32	0.31	0.756	
Sexual harassment myth endorsement × Organizational tolerance for sexual harassment	−0.25	0.08	−3.18	0.002	
Sexual harassment myth endorsement × Sex	−0.36	0.18	−1.99	0.049	
Organizational tolerance for sexual harassment × Sex	0.08	0.19	0.42	0.672	

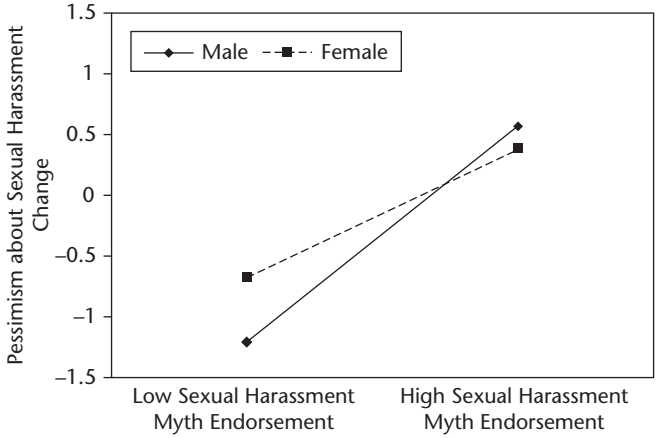
(Continued)

Table 3. Regression results to explore sex differences in effects on pessimism about sexual harassment change (continued)

Model 3					0.7
Number of times through sexual harassment training	−0.04	0.09	−0.52	0.602	
Sex	0.22	0.19	1.16	0.248	
Sexual harassment myth endorsement	0.92	0.31	2.97	0.004	
Organizational tolerance for sexual harassment	0.06	0.33	0.20	0.844	
Sexual harassment myth endorsement × Organizational tolerance for sexual harassment	0.06	0.30	0.19	0.853	
Sexual harassment myth endorsement × Sex	−0.37	0.18	−2.07	0.041	
Organizational tolerance for sexual harassment × Sex	0.09	0.19	0.47	0.640	
Sexual harassment myth endorsement × Organizational tolerance for sexual harassment × Sex	−0.18	0.17	−1.08	0.285	
Total R^2 (%)	31.3				

Note. $N = 119$. Sex was coded "1" male and "2" female. All variables except sex were standardized prior to the analysis, although reported estimates are the unstandardized coefficients derived from the output.

Figure 3. Sex differences in the relationship between sexual harassment myth endorsement and pessimism about sexual harassment change



targeting sexual harassment myths, and the utility of this approach for increasing motivation to learn.

Results also supported the hypothesized moderating role of organizational tolerance for sexual harassment on the relationship between sexual harassment myth endorsement and pessimism about sexual harassment change. When organizational tolerance for sexual harassment was high, levels of pessimism for individuals who do not endorse sexual harassment myths were comparable to those who do. This finding was consistent with the propositions outlined by Kozlowski and Salas (1997) and Kozlowski et al. (2009) who theorized that all factors in the organizational system must be aligned with one another to maximize training effectiveness. Moreover, these results suggest that pessimism may be high and, hence, motivation to learn may be low among trainees working in organizations that tolerate sexual harassment, even if the individuals do not endorse sexual harassment myths. This is concerning because it implies that individuals employed in organizations that are most in need of change surrounding sexual harassment are less motivated for training.

These results have important implications for practitioners working to reduce sexual harassment in their workplaces. Specifically, practitioners in (or working for) organizations that are perceived to tolerate sexual harassment should proceed cautiously with initial sexual harassment training efforts, because resistance among employees (e.g., pessimism) is likely. Practitioners must recognize that such pessimism is likely, and consider utilizing multiple change efforts in conjunction with the initial phases of sexual harassment training in an effort to reduce levels of pessimism among employees. Such

changes might include, but are not limited to, personnel changes (e.g., in leadership which has previously tolerated sexual harassment), the implementation or revision of existing sexual harassment policies, and the use of external consultants to develop and deliver training because such individuals would not share the organization's history of tolerating sexual harassment.

Results from exploratory analyses also indicated that there were sex differences in the model which are consistent with findings regarding sex differences in studies evaluating sexual harassment training (e.g., Bingham & Scherer, 2001; Moyer & Nath, 1998). A finding observed by Lonsway et al. (2008) was replicated in our study, such that male respondents were more likely than female respondents to endorse sexual harassment myths. Moreover, sexual harassment myth endorsement was a stronger driver of pessimism about sexual harassment change for male participants. This finding implies that sexual harassment myth endorsement, at least to some degree, can be considered a proximal indicator of gender, specifically the traditional masculine gender role (cf. Levant, 1996; Pleck, 1981). When sexual harassment myth endorsement is high, men and women are nearly equally as likely to be pessimistic about the potential for change. However, at lower levels of sexual harassment myth endorsement, women were actually more pessimistic. A possible explanation for this finding lies in the notion of target group skepticism, such that women—who are more likely to experience sexual harassment (Fitzgerald et al., 1999; Magley et al., 1999)—may have a more realistic viewpoint regarding the difficulties of organizational change surrounding sexual harassment behaviors and attitudes. Thus, while high-myth-endorsing women may have similar dismissive attitudes akin to their male counterparts, low-myth-endorsing women may still have more experiential-based reservations regarding improvement of sexual harassment conditions.

These exploratory observations also have important implications for the implementation of sexual harassment training, particularly when sexual harassment training is being delivered in male-dominated workplaces. As the proportion of male employees increases, it becomes increasingly important for practitioners to explicitly acknowledge and address myths surrounding sexual harassment before training begins, or at the beginning of training sessions. As we highlighted earlier, refuting such myths early on could help maintain motivation to learn, and it seems that the most appropriate situation to do so is in workplaces comprised primarily of male employees. Again, though, future research is needed to address the utility of this practical suggestion.

Study Strengths, Limitations, and Additional Research Directions

This study had several strengths that extend beyond the recommendations for practitioners described above. First and foremost, the present study contributes to knowledge about the variables affecting sexual harassment training effectiveness, generally, and motivation to learn, in particular. To

our knowledge, Kath (2005) conducted the only other study examining of motivation to learn in sexual harassment training, so our research helps to address this knowledge gap. Our model was also informed by the more general literature on training effectiveness (e.g., Colquitt et al., 2000; Kozlowski & Salas, 1997), which responds to the call made by Magley et al. (2010) to draw on this body of work to better understand sexual harassment training effectiveness.

Additional strengths of the present research stem from our methodology. Most notably, the validity of the causal order among variables is strengthened by having participants complete measures of the constructs at three separate time points. Temporally separating the measurement of variables has also been shown to reduce response bias due to common method variance (Ostroff, Kinicki, & Clark, 2002). Together, these methodological advantages strengthen the utility of the aforementioned conclusions and implications for practitioners.

Although our study had several strengths, there are also limitations associated with this work. Despite the fact that assessments of the variables of interest occurred at separate times, we relied exclusively on self-report surveys to capture scores on the variables. This was necessary for most of the variables in our study including sexual harassment myth endorsement, pessimism about sexual harassment change, and motivation to learn, since these variables are all psychological in nature. However, future research could examine the role of organizational tolerance for sexual harassment by capturing others' reports of this climate construct (e.g., via one's coworkers) and subsequently examining their influence on pessimism and motivation to learn.

A related limitation is that our operationalization of organizational tolerance for sexual harassment was at the individual level of analysis, as a form of psychological climate (Schneider & Reichers, 1983). It was not possible to conceptualize and study the construct at a higher level of analysis given that respondents in our sample worked for separate organizations. Consequently, future research is needed to examine the cross-level and potential incremental effects of shared perceptions of organizational tolerance for sexual harassment on pessimism about sexual harassment change and motivation to learn.

Finally, there remains a need to conduct sexual harassment training effectiveness research to investigate variables that drive effectiveness at all stages of training, and with the use of multiple methodologies. Our focus was explicitly on the pretraining context and the drivers of motivation to learn because of the important role that motivation to learn plays in training effectiveness (Colquitt et al., 2000). Some research has begun to investigate variables that influence effectiveness at other training stages. For instance, Perry, Kulik, Bustamante, and Golom (2010) studied how different sexual harassment training practices (e.g., needs assessment, active training methods, post-training activities) influenced distal outcomes including the frequency of sexual

harassment complaints. More research such as this is needed to examine drivers and inhibitors of effectiveness before, during, and after training. Finally, qualitative research could also complement our quantitative approach to uncover key variables influencing sexual harassment training effectiveness at the various stages of training.

Conclusion

To date, little research has explored the antecedents of sexual harassment training motivation to learn. We observed that inhibitors of motivation to learn in sexual harassment training are both individual and contextual in nature. Specifically, individuals most in need of sexual harassment training (i.e., individuals who endorse sexual harassment myths) and employees working in contexts that could benefit the most from sexual harassment training (i.e., organizations which tolerate sexual harassment), are likely to be pessimistic about change and have low levels of motivation to learn, factors that can impede training effectiveness (Colquitt et al., 2000). We believe that practitioners implementing sexual harassment training can draw on these results and the aforementioned implications to maximize sexual harassment training effectiveness.

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Benjamin M. Walsh is with the University of Illinois Springfield.

Timothy J. Bauerle is with the University of Connecticut.

Vicki J. Magley is with the University of Connecticut.