Revisiting the Comparative Outcomes of Workplace Aggression and Sexual Harassment

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We focus on the differential outcomes associated with experiencing workplace aggression and sexual harassment by a supervisor. To do so, we identify and empirically address several issues within current workplace aggression and sexual harassment research, including the need to (a) conceptualize their multidimensional nature, (b) contrast comparable dimensions between the two, (c) recognize and control for covictimization, and (d) consider the role of target gender. Data were analyzed using multiple regression and dominance analyses on a sample of 467 employed women (M age = 40 years). Results showed that all forms of sexual harassment were more strongly associated with work withdrawal and psychological well-being than comparable forms of workplace aggression. Nonphysical workplace aggression accounted for more of the variance in attitudinal outcomes (job, coworker and supervisor satisfaction, intent to quit, commitment) than nonphysical sexual harassment. Sexual harassment accounted for more of the variance than workplace aggression in all outcomes when the harassment and aggression involved some form of threatened or actual physical contact. Conceptual and methodological issues are discussed.

Keywords: workplace aggression, sexual harassment, workplace violence

Workplace aggression (WA) and sexual harassment (SH) confront many employees, and have attracted considerable empirical scrutiny (Aquino & Thau, 2009; Barling, Dupré, & Kelloway, 2009; Schat, Frone, & Kelloway, 2006; Sims, Drasgow, & Fitzgerald, 2005; Willness, Steel, & Lee, 2007). Both WA and SH negatively affect victims' psychological, physical, and job-related well-being (Aquino & Thau, 2009; Cortina & Berdahl, 2008; Kelloway, Barling, & Hurrell, 2006; Raver & Nishii, 2010; Willness et al., 2007), create costs for organizations via employee absenteeism and turnover, and reduce productivity and organizational citizenship behavior (e.g., Bettencourt & Brown, 1997; Kelloway et al., 2006; Sims et al., 2005). However, despite similarities in the nature and outcomes associated with each form of mistreatment (Barling, Rogers, & Kelloway, 2001), what has emerged are two large but distinct bodies of research that have predominantly been investigated in isolation from each other.

The limited research that does explore WA and SH simultaneously has shown that targets often experience various forms of workplace mistreatment concurrently (e.g., Barling et al., 2001;

Lim & Cortina, 2005). A body of research by Rospenda, Richman, and colleagues not only showed substantial overlap in the experience of SH and generalized WA (e.g., Rospenda, Richman, & Shannon, 2009), but also that both types of mistreatment are linked with depression, anxiety, hostility, and substance use (Richman et al., 1999); problem drinking (McGinley, Richman, & Rospenda, 2011; Rospenda, Richman, Wislar, & Flaherty, 2000); and occupational injuries, illnesses, and assaults (Brown et al., 2011). Raver and Nishii's (2010) findings also show substantial correlations between generalized workplace harassment, gender harassment, and ethnic harassment, and provided support for an inurement effect, such that experiencing two or more forms of harassment concurrently does not result in a significant increase in negative outcomes, compared with the consequences associated with the experience of one form of harassment. However, although previous research speaks to the incidence and potential implications of co-occurring forms of victimization, it reveals relatively little about the direct comparative effects of WA and SH.

Hershcovis and Barling (2010a) meta-analytically compared the attitudinal, behavioral, and health-related consequences of SH and WA, and of workplace incivility (a mild form of WA) and gender harassment. They hypothesized that SH victims would be more able to depersonalize their mistreatment and attribute blame externally, whereas victims of WA would personalize their mistreatment, and attribute blame internally. As a result, they argued that WA would generate greater negative effects than sexual or gender harassment—a prediction supported by their meta-analytic findings. Nonetheless, further conceptual and methodological refinements are required. In this research, we identify four issues that remain to be confronted: The need to (a) conceptualize the multidimensional nature of WA and SH, (b) contrast appropriate di-

mensions of WA and SH, (c) recognize and control for covictimization, and (d) consider the role of target gender.

Exploring the comparative consequences of WA and SH is important for several reasons. First, gaining a better understanding of their relative effects will reveal more about the nature of these two phenomena. Second, given many organizations' limited resources, understanding the relative effects of WA and SH is important from a practical perspective, enabling more informed choices about where to target policies and interventions, and how to structure employee support and assistance most appropriately. Finally, if unique findings are obtained given the aforementioned methodological refinements, the importance of revisiting previously explored questions about both WA and SH using diverse and multiple methods, will be reaffirmed.

Multidimensional Nature of Workplace Aggression and Sexual Harassment

Providing a comprehensive understanding of the relative effects of WA and SH requires that we recognize their multidimensional nature, and then compare similar forms of mistreatment. Failure to do so may result in unfair comparisons (Cooper & Richardson, 1986) and potentially erroneous conclusions about their relative effects.

Sexual Harassment

SH reflects any "unwanted sex-related behavior at work that is appraised by the recipient as offensive, exceeding her resources, or threatening her well-being" (Fitzgerald, Swan, & Magley, 1997, p. 15), and comprises three separate but related dimensions (Fitzgerald, Gelfand, & Drasgow, 1995). First, *gender harassment* (GH) represents a broad range of behaviors that convey insulting, hostile, and degrading attitudes, and includes verbal, nonverbal, and symbolic conduct such as sexual taunts, slurs, gestures, and/or the display or distribution of pornographic materials. Second, *unwanted sexual attention* (USA) refers to offensive and unwelcome verbal and nonverbal behaviors aimed more at sexual cooperation than derogation. Unwanted touching or repeated and unreciprocated requests for dates typify this form of SH. Third, while sexual coercion (SC) also involves unwanted sexual advances, sexualized behavior is combined with threats or bribes (e.g., linking job promotions to sexual cooperation), and thus approximates the legal concept of *quid quo pro* harassment.

Despite these differences, with few exceptions (e.g., Richman et al., 1999), researchers have studied SH as a global construct, aggregating across its three dimensions (e.g., Fitzgerald, Drasgow, & Magley, 1999; Glomb, Munson, Hulin, Bergman, & Drasgow, 1999; Munson, Hulin, & Drasgow, 2000). Doing so, however, ignores conceptual differences between the dimensions (e.g., derogation vs. coercion), and the possibility that they have different antecedents, consequences, and degrees of impact (e.g., Leskinen, Cortina, & Kabat, 2010). We thus examine the three components separately in the current study.

Workplace Aggression

WA represents "behavior . . . that is intended to physically or psychologically harm a worker or workers, and occurs in a work-

related context" (Schat & Kelloway, 2005, p. 191). Like SH, WA is comprised of different types of behaviors, and has been conceptualized in various ways in the literature (Hershcovis, 2011). WA includes physical, psychological, and verbal behaviors, which can be active or passive, overt or covert, direct or indirect, with an interpersonal or organizational focus (e.g., Baron, Neuman, & Geddes, 1999; Binning & Wagner, 2002; Robinson & Bennett, 1995). Despite differences in the conceptualization and operationalization of WA across studies, there is agreement that physical acts of violence are different than psychological forms of aggression (Aquino & Thau, 2009; Barling et al., 2009). *Workplace violence* consists of behaviors that involve some form of physical contact (e.g., slapping, kicking, or punching), and are meant to cause physical harm (Schat & Kelloway, 2005). Although physical acts of aggression receive most attention in the media (Barling et al., 2009), they occur less frequently than *psychological aggression* (Schat et al., 2006), which includes verbal behaviors such as yelling, swearing, the spreading of rumors or lies, or nonverbal behaviors such as ignoring another employee. Although less physically harmful, psychological aggression significantly affects individuals and organizations (e.g., Barling et al., 2009), and may escalate into physical aggression (e.g., Dupré & Barling, 2006; Glomb, 2002). Thus, in this research we focus separately on workplace violence and psychological aggression.

Previous research directly comparing the effects of these two types of mistreatment has invariably ignored their multidimensional natures. Hershcovis and Barling (2010a) conducted two sets of analyses comparing the relative effects of SH and WA. In the first, they contrasted unidimensional measures of SH (i.e., collapsed across the three dimensions) and WA (i.e., pooled across constructs such as incivility, bullying, interpersonal conflict, petty tyranny, abuse, mobbing, social undermining). This allows for a general comparison of WA and SH, but it ignores important topographical differences (e.g., severity, overtness) within each. To provide a more nuanced comparison, Hershcovis and Barling (2010a) conducted a second set of analyses comparing one subtype of WA and one subtype of SH that are similar in terms of their nature and severity, namely GH and workplace incivility. These analyses provide a fair conceptual comparison (Cooper & Richardson, 1986), but the need to consider the full spectrum of both WA and SH remains.

Comparing Sexual Harassment and Workplace Aggression

SH and WA share many similarities: They often involve power imbalances (e.g., Einarsen, 2000; Keashly, & Jagatic, 2003), they are significant interpersonal stressors (e.g., Barling, 1996; Fitzgerald, Drasgow et al., 1997; Glomb et al., 1997), and they result in similar consequences (e.g., Barling et al., 2001; Bowling & Beehr, 2006; Willness et al., 2007). Some researchers indeed suggest that SH is best considered a form of aggression (e.g., O'Leary-Kelly, Paetzold, & Griffin, 2000). Early organizational theorists of SH also viewed it as a form of violence, given that women are often blamed for provoking this mistreatment, that complaints of this victimization are often not taken seriously by others, and that harassment is a means of social control that objectifies and forces women into positions of subordination—all characteristics reflected in rape and domestic violence (Fitzgerald, 1993).

However, regardless of such similarities, workplace SH and more generalized forms of aggression differ in at least one important way. While each can manifest as behaviors that frighten, punish, demean, threaten, or humiliate another (Berdahl, 2007; Fitzgerald et al., 1995 Zapf & Einarsen, 2001), when it comes to SH, all of these behaviors are ultimately based on sex (Berdahl, 2007). Whether experienced as a dirty joke or discriminatory comment, an explicit touch or salacious look, or pressure for sexual compliance, SH represents behavior that is defined in terms of its sexualized nature. In contrast, WA is not rooted in an identifiable attribute or legally protected identity (such as gender). Given its ambiguous and diffuse focus, the term *generalized workplace harassment* has been used to describe WA (Raver & Nishii, 2010; Rospenda & Richman, 2004). Thus, although analogous in many ways, SH and WA differ in their nature—a difference that we argue will meaningfully influence the magnitude of any outcomes. More specifically, we predict that the gender-based nature of sexual harassment will result in more severe negative outcomes than generalized workplace aggression for several reasons.

First, social identity theory (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Tajfel & Turner, 1986) emphasizes the importance of social group memberships to individuals' sense of self. As people understand and evaluate themselves based on the social groups to which they belong, and the extent to which these groups are valued compared with relevant others (Hogg & Terry, 2000), how individuals feel about the self is affected by the perceived worth of their social groups. Gender represents one such group. Thus, because SH derogates, demeans, or humiliates individuals in sex-based ways, SH can be viewed as an attack on a core component of the self—a point reaffirmed by Raver and Nishii (2010), who categorized this form of mistreatment as *social identity harassment*. Thus, SH may not only impact personal identity and associated self-esteem (i.e., how people view, and feel about themselves as individuals; Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992), but given its tie to social identity, may also impact judgments about the value of one's gender, and perceptions of how others evaluate this social group. In other words, SH may uniquely impact one's *collective self-esteem* (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992), which in turn, can affect one's psychological, physical, and job-related well-being (e.g., Bettencourt et al., 1999; Butler & Constantine, 2005; Katz, Joiner, & Kwon, 2002).

Second, society is stratified and organized by sex (Berdahl, 2007; Kolmar & Bartkowski, 2000), and gender is "a primary way of signifying relationships of power" (Scott, 1986, p. 1067). As a result, sex-based victimization can also impact one's social status, either reducing, or reaffirming the subordinate social position that one's sex proscribes (Berdahl, 2007; Franke, 1997). Given the social value attributed to gender, and the organizational power that sex symbolizes and confers, victimization targeting this distinct characteristic would be more threatening than victimization tied to more ambiguous or diffuse traits.

Finally, as gender represents a social group from which one cannot easily decouple, identity-based victimization is likely to be seen as more unavoidable and hopeless, when compared with forms of aggression that are not tied to an immutable characteristic. Indeed, sexual victimization is a pervasive fear among most women, and seen by many as an unavoidable risk associated with being female (e.g., Gordon & Riger, 1991; Softas-Nall, Bardos, & Fakinos, 1995; Warr, 1985). Paradoxically, while the connection to an identifiable trait renders SH illegal, thus making it a form of

mistreatment from which targets can receive protection, victims of SH typically do not access legal defenses. For example, the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board (1994) found that only 13% of females reported harassment to an authority, and 45% of females ignored the harassment. Similarly, Malamut and Offermann (2001) showed that 81% of harassment targets chose avoidance-denial coping strategies to deal with their mistreatment. Thus, the formal channels available to victims of SH, which in theory should help mitigate the harm caused by this form of mistreatment, are often not being used in practice. Taken together, sex-based victimization may thus be perceived as more persistent, pervasive, and difficult to escape, and therefore be experienced as more stressful. As a result, we predict that SH will exert detrimental attitudinal, health, and behavioral outcomes of a greater magnitude than WA when comparable forms of each type of mistreatment are evaluated.

Comparing Dimensions of Sexual Harassment and Workplace Aggression

In understanding and testing the differential effects of SH and WA, it is critical that comparable dimensions of each form of mistreatment be contrasted. We thus make the following comparisons in this research.

First, unlike SC or USA, GH "conveys hostility devoid of any explicit sexual motive" (Lim & Cortina, 2005, p. 484), and is rooted in the desire to psychologically demean, devalue, or antagonize another person. As such, we argue that GH is analogous to psychological forms of WA that also degrade, humiliate, and communicate hostility. Thus, our first comparison in this study will involve the relative contribution of GH and psychologically based WA to negative attitudinal, health, and behavioral consequences. Of note, we propose that at times, psychological aggression is also akin to a second form of sexual harassment, namely USA.

USA is often verbal in nature, and is psychologically intimidating in the way in which it sexually objectifies the target and communicates messages of subordination. Thus, in its nonphysical form, the threat posed by USA is psychological in nature, and would be comparable to psychological WA. However, USA can also be expressed physically, for example, through unwanted physical touching or other displays of physically intrusive sexualized behavior. Thus, a fair comparison requires that physically based, USA be examined relative to physical manifestations of WA (i.e., workplace violence), both of which involve breaches of self–other bodily boundaries and produce suffering through physical contact.

Finally, SC and *threats* of physical violence are comparable forms of workplace mistreatment; both involve the use of verbal or psychological pressure to intimidate and control targets through fear, and in both cases, either the threat itself, or failure to comply with the threat, will involve some form of physical contact. In addition, whether sexual or physical, coercion and threats are easily concealed from others in the workplace, do not materialize in visible ways, and do not leave any perceptible injuries.

Thus, in this study we compare GH with psychological WA, USA–psychological with psychological WA, USA–physical with workplace violence, and SC with threats of violence.

Sexual Harassment and Workplace Aggression: Covictimization

Existing research on workplace mistreatment has focused predominantly on the negative outcomes for targets of SH *or* targets of WA, with little consideration of the simultaneous experience of both forms of victimization (for exceptions see Barling et al., 2001; Raver & Nishii, 2010; Richman et al., 1999; Rospenda et al., 2000; 2009). This is a significant omission, as different types of mistreatment are frequently targeted against the same employee. Berdahl and Moore (2006) and Buchanan and Fitzgerald (2008) showed that reports of GH are often coupled with complaints of ethnic harassment. Other studies that examine more than one form of mistreatment reveal strong correlations between GH and general acts of incivility (Lim & Cortina, 2005), SH and WA (Barling et al., 2001), and gender, ethnic, and GH (Raver & Nishii, 2010). Given that GH is rooted in the desire to obtain power and status rather than sexual gratification (Berdahl, 2007; Franke, 1997; MacKinnon, 1979), and psychological forms of aggression are often motivated by goals of personal retribution or revenge following perceived injustices (Barling et al., 2009), the high correlations between these types of mistreatment are not surprising.

In light of the prevalence of covictimization, any comparison of the unique effects of SH and WA requires that the reality of covictimization be acknowledged and controlled; not doing so might result in exaggerated coefficients of mistreatment outcomes. Despite this, research has not directly addressed this issue. In addition, the meta-analytic nature of Hershcovis and Barling's (2010a) research did not allow for any statistical control for covictimization, potentially inflating the individual coefficients yielded, and leaving any comparisons between SH and WA open to question. We address covictimization in our research by accounting for the simultaneous experience of different dimensions of both WA and SH.

Considering Gender in Sexual Harassment

Although SH is more prevalent among female employees (Cortina & Berdahl, 2008), males are also the targets of SH (e.g., Berdahl, Magley, & Waldo, 1996; Waldo, Berdahl, & Fitzgerald, 1998). However, the experience of SH is qualitatively different for males and females. Compared with women, men do not necessarily report sociosexual behaviors to be anxiety-provoking or inappropriate, may describe conduct typically experienced as threatening by women as flattering or welcome, and often identify workplace behaviors that women do not experience as SH to be victimizing (e.g., harassment for deviating from the male gender role) (e.g., Berdahl et al., 1996; Cochran, Frazier, & Olson, 1997; Garlick, 1994; Parker & Griffin, 2002). As awareness of these differences builds, concerns about studying men and women together, and about the appropriate measurement of SH within male samples, have been raised (e.g., Street, Gradus, Stafford, & Kelly, 2007; Waldo et al., 1998). Although some researchers use measurement tools originally designed to assess the female experience of SH with males (e.g., Gerrity, 2000; Harned & Fitzgerald, 2002; Magley, Waldo, Drasgow, & Fitzgerald, 1999), the Sexual Experiences Questionnaire (SEQ; Fitzgerald et al., 1995) does not operate equivalently across gender (Donovan & Drasgow, 1999).

As such, criterion deficiency (Austin & Villanova, 1992) emphasizes the need to take gender into account when studying SH.

If the experience of SH is indeed different for men and women, aggregating data from men and women or using measures initially intended to assess SH experiences in women on men may result in inaccurate estimates of the prevalence and severity of SH. Mean scores might be truncated, and any estimates of the effects of harassment on outcomes would be biased downward, affecting comparisons between different forms of mistreatment. This is a significant issue: Hershcovis and Barling's (2010a) conclusion that WA consistently exerted stronger effects on outcomes than did SH was based on a mixed sample of males and females, which might have biased estimates of the experience of SH downward, spuriously resulting in findings that WA exerts more significant effects than SH. Moreover, even though Hershcovis and Barling's (2010a) supplementary analyses showed that use of the SEQ did not skew their results, findings that the SEQ may not be appropriate for males (Donovan & Drasgow, 1999) strengthens the importance of examining male and female SH separately. Accordingly, we explore the comparative effects of WA and SH from the perspective of women only.

As the goal of this study is to further our understanding of the relative effects of WA and SH, we focus on the same attitudinal, behavioral, and health variables studied in earlier research (e.g., Bowling & Beehr, 2006; Hershcovis & Barling, 2010a, 2010b; Lapierre, Spector, & Leck, 2005; Willness et al., 2007). Thus, we focus on psychological well-being, turnover intentions, job, coworker, and supervisor satisfaction, withdrawal, and affective commitment. Further, as previous research points to the importance of specifying the source of mistreatment (e.g., Hershcovis & Barling, 2010b; Hershcovis, Parker, & Reich, 2010), we only focus on the relative effects of supervisor-perpetrated WA and SH.

Method

Sample

Participants for this research project were recruited through StudyResponse, an online database operated by Syracuse University, comprised of individuals who have agreed to be contacted for survey research. Participants were sent a link via StudyResponse to our online questionnaire, and were compensated with $5.00 gift cards redeemable at Amazon.com for their participation. Data were collected from 467 employed women (M age = 39.89 years, SD = 10.6, range = 21–73 years; 76.2% Caucasian).

Measures

Sexual harassment. SH was measured with the SEQ (Fitzgerald et al., 1995), the most widely used and validated measure of SH (Cortina & Berdahl, 2008). Participants reported how often they had been the target of sexually harassing behaviors within the last year, from 0 (*never*) to 4 (*many times*). Respondents completed the SEQ regarding SH enacted by supervisors. Each of the scale's nineteen items corresponds to one of the four SH categories described above. Five items measured GH (e.g., "made sexist remarks such as suggesting that women are too emotional to be leaders"); five items were used to assess USA–psychological (e.g., "was staring, leering, or ogling you in a way that made you feel

uncomfortable"); three items assessed USA–physical (e.g., "touched you—for instance, laid a hand on your bare arm, put an arm around your shoulders—in a way that made you feel uncomfortable"); and six items were used to assess SC (e.g., "made you feel like you were being subtly bribed with some sort of reward or special treatment to engage in sexual behavior").

Workplace aggression. WA was assessed with items that were derived from Straus and colleagues' (1979; 1996) Conflict Tactics Scales, and which have been used previously across a number of studies on WA (e.g., Dupré, Barling, Turner, & Stride, 2010; Dupré & Barling, 2006; Dupré, Inness, Connelly, Barling, & Hoption, 2006; Greenberg & Barling, 1999). Participants reported the number of times they had experienced a variety of aggressive acts enacted by their supervisors over the last 12 months (0 = *never*, 1 = *once*, 2 = *twice*, 3 = *3–5 times*, 4 = *6–10 times*, 5 = *11–20 times*, 6 = *more than 20 times*). Eight items measured psychological aggression (e.g., "I was yelled at;" "Something spiteful was said about me"); three items measured threats of physical violence (e.g., "I was threatened to be hit by a supervisor"); and fourteen items measured physical WA (e.g., "I was pushed," "I was kicked"). Support for these three subscales derives from an earlier factor analysis of the Conflict Tactics Scales (Barling, O'Leary, Jouriles, Vivian, & MacEwen, 1987), which showed strong support for separate psychological and physical aggression scales, and which suggested that threats of violence do not load consistently on either of these two factors.

Psychological well-being. Well-being was measured using Goldberg's (1972) General Health Questionnaire (GHQ). Participants indicated the extent to which they had experienced different feelings, thoughts, or difficulties during the past year, from 0 (*never*) to 6 (*always*). Responses were averaged across the twelve items (e.g., "I have felt unhappy or depressed," "I have been thinking of myself as a worthless person"); higher scores reflect poorer well-being.

Turnover intentions. Turnover intentions were measured with Bozeman and Perrewé's (2001) scale assessing the degree to which employees think about quitting their jobs. Respondents indicated their agreement with five statements (e.g., "I will probably look for a new job in the future," "At the present time, I am actively searching for another job at a different organization") on a scale of 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Higher scores reflect greater turnover intentions.

Job, coworker, and supervisor satisfaction. Job satisfaction components were measured with the relevant subscales of the Job Descriptive Index (JDI; Smith, Kendall, & Hulin, 1969). Participants responded with a "Yes" (coded 3), "No" (coded 1), or "?" (i.e., can't decide; coded 2) to adjectives describing relevant characteristics of their jobs, colleagues, and supervisors. Sample adjectives include "boring" and "frustrating" (job satisfaction), "unpleasant" and "easy to make enemies" (coworker satisfaction), and "around when needed" and "knows how to supervise" (supervisor satisfaction). The JDI is the most frequently used measure of facet-specific job satisfaction (Spector, 1997), with numerous studies demonstrating its reliability and validity (see Kinicki, McKee-Ryan, Schriesheim, & Carson, 2002).

Work withdrawal. Degree of withdrawal from work was assessed using four items from Barling et al.'s (2001) Neglect Scale, and three items from Kammeyer-Mueller and Wanberg's (2003) Work Withdrawal Scale. Sample items include "I do not pass on messages to others," "I stay out of sight to avoid work," and "I fail to attend scheduled meetings." A response scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*all of the time*) is used; higher scores reflect greater neglect of job duties.

Affective commitment. Commitment to the organization was measured with Allen and Meyer's (1990) scale. Respondents indicated their agreement with eight statements (e.g., "I would be happy to spend the rest of my career with my current employer," "I feel as if this company's problems are my own") on a scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Higher scores indicate greater affective commitment.

Results

Descriptive statistics, reliabilities and intercorrelations for all variables appear in Table 1. Reliabilities are not presented for any of the SH or WA subscales, as each constitutes formative indices rather than reflective scales, and internal consistency data would not be appropriate (Bollen & Lennox, 1991). Table 2 presents the frequency of covictimization of psychological aggression and GH ($\chi^2 = 100.49$, $p < .01$), psychological aggression and USA–psychological ($\chi^2 = 103.07$, $p < .01$), threat of physical aggression and SC ($\chi^2 = 163.41$, $p < .01$), and physical aggression and USA–physical ($\chi^2 = 182.15$, $p < .01$).

Comparisons of different forms of SH and WA were undertaken using hierarchical multiple regression analysis (which are robust in the face of violations of normality—an important consideration given the distributions of the harassment and aggression subscales; Judd, McClelland, & Culhane, 1995), and subsequent dominance analysis. In all comparisons, we first regressed the particular outcome (e.g., psychological well-being, intent to quit) on the relevant predictors (e.g., GH and psychological aggression). However, by itself, multiple regression would not provide sufficient information to make decisions about the relative importance of different predictors: When multicolinearity exists between the predictors, the results of multiple regression analyses may be inaccurate, because the importance of the strongest predictors tend to be overestimated, and the weakest predictors, underestimated (Behson, 2005; Johnson, 2000). Because some of the correlations between different forms of victimization in our study were significant and high (see Table 1), we also computed dominance analyses (Budescu, 1993; Tonidandel & LeBreton, 2011), which account for errors arising from multicolinearity. Thus, each of the outcome variables was first regressed separately onto each set of the mistreatment predictor variables (see Table 3). We then computed general dominance analyses (see Table 4) for each of the comparisons (Azen & Budescu, 2003; Budescu, 1993) using the macro supplied by LeBreton (see Tonidandel & LeBreton, 2011, pp. 9), for all instances in which at least one of the forms of mistreatment yielded a significant coefficient. Table 4 displays the percentage of variance attributable to SH and WA in each of the outcomes. As one illustrative example, GH accounted for 33% of the variance in withdrawal, or 62% of the variance when both GH and psychological aggression are considered together (total $R^2 = .53$).

First, replicating Hershcovis and Barling (2010a), all forms of sexualized mistreatment accounted for substantially more of the variance in withdrawal than nonsexualized mistreatment; the average difference in variance explained was 20.5%. Unlike Hersh-

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics: Reliabilities and Intercorrelations for All Study Variables[a,b,c] (N = 467)

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1. Well-being	4.93	1.07	**.91**													
2. Intent to quit	2.47	1.07	−44	**.94**												
3. Job satisfaction	2.03	0.81	46	−51	**.85**											
4. Coworker satisfaction	2.37	0.77	48	−43	59	**.88**										
5. Supervisor satisfaction	2.21	0.77	39	−42	44	58	**.85**									
6. Withdrawal	2.35	1.25	−42	24	−21	−31	−40	**.91**								
7. Commitment	4.43	1.29	41	−59	65	53	43	−21	**.84**							
8. Gender harassment[1]	0.50	0.94	−32	19	−15	−31	−36	71	−17	[1]						
9. USA[2]–psychological	0.37	0.84	−29	16	−15	−28	−33	73	−11	92	[1]					
10. USA–physical	0.35	0.84	−29	15	−13	−25	−33	73	−12	90	94	[1]				
11. Sexual coercion	0.40	0.93	−30	15	−12	−27	−33	75	−11	91	95	96	[1]			
12. Psychological aggression	0.32	0.80	−25	20	−18	−28	−34	54	−17	66	73	69	64	[1]		
13. Physical threat	0.17	0.69	−18	08	−03	−15	−18	53	−07	63	71	73	66	84	[1]	
14. Physical aggression	0.26	0.88	−22	11	−08	−21	−25	62	−08	70	78	78	72	87	97	[1]
15. Age (years)	39.83	10.79	−19	−23	12	11	05	−27	13	−23	−19	−19	−22	−06	−07	−11

[a] Decimal points omitted for all correlations. [b] Reliability (internal consistency) appears on the diagonal in bold. [c] $r > .10$ and $< .11$, $p < .05$; $r > .12$, $p < .01$.
[1] Because the data from the SH and WA subscales reflect formative indices (Bollen & Lennox, 1991), no internal consistency data are provided. [2] USA = unwanted sexual attention.

covis and Barling (2010a), however, all forms of sexualized mistreatment also explained more of the variance in psychological well-being than did nonsexualized mistreatment (difference in average variance explained = 3.25%).

Second, a different pattern of findings emerged for nonphysical and physical manifestations of mistreatment for the remaining outcome variables. In the case of nonphysical mistreatment (GH or USA–psychological vs. psychological aggression), nonsexualized mistreatment accounted for more of the variance in eight of the remaining nine comparisons; the average difference in variance explained across these eight outcomes was 1.37%. In contrast, when mistreatment involved threatened or actual physical contact, sexualized mistreatment accounted for more of the variance in all outcomes in which at least one of the predictors was significant, than did nonsexualized forms of mistreatment. The average difference in variance explained across these eight comparisons was 9.5%.

Discussion

Prior research (Hershcovis & Barling, 2010a) has suggested that with one exception, the negative outcomes associated with expe-

riencing WA are significantly stronger than those associated with SH. The goal of the present study was to determine the relative magnitude of the effects of WA and SH, addressing a number of limitations present in previous research. To this end, we recognized the multidimensional nature of WA and SH, contrasted comparable dimensions of these forms of mistreatment, controlled for their co-occurrence, and accounted for the role of target gender. In doing so, the results of the current study provide a more nuanced understanding of the comparative effects of WA and SH. Several aspects of the current findings are now discussed.

First, we did not fully replicate prior meta-analytic findings (i.e., Hershcovis & Barling, 2010a) showing that the differences in outcome severity for WA and SH were consistently statistically significant. Statistically controlling for covictimization might account for this. As can be seen in Table 1, and replicating the findings from previous studies (e.g., Barling et al., 2001; Raver & Nishii, 2010), there are substantial correlations between dimensions of WA and SH (with correlations ranging between .63 and .78), necessitating implementation of controls for covictimization. Moreover, several patterns within the covictimization literature warrant attention (see Table 2). First, Rospenda et al. (2009)

Table 2
Covictimization (Patterns of Overlap) of Comparable Forms of Supervisor-Perpetrated Sexual Harassment and Workplace Aggression

	Psychological aggression				Psychological aggression	
	No	Yes			No	Yes
Gender harassment				USA–psychological		
No	235 (50%)	62 (13%)		No	261 (56%)	84 (18%)
Yes	55 (12%)	115 (25%)		Yes	29 (6%)	93 (20%)
	Threat aggression				Physical aggression	
	No	Yes			No	Yes
Sexual coercion				USA–physical		
No	356 (76%)	10 (2%)		No	338 (72%)	14 (3%)
Yes	49 (11%)	52 (11%)		Yes	47 (10%)	68 (15%)

Table 3
Results of the Multiple Regression Analysis Contrasting Sexual Harassment and Workplace Aggression (N = 467)

Predictor variables	(β weight)						
	Psychological well-being	Intent to quit	Job satisfaction	Coworker satisfaction	Supervisor satisfaction	Withdrawal	Commitment
Gender harassment	−.21**	.07	−.02	−.15*	−.14*	.54**	−.08
Psychological aggression	−.15*	.16*	−.18**	−.21**	−.31**	.24**	−.12
r	.33	.22	.19	.33	.42	.73	.18
R^2	.11	.05	.04	.11	.17	.53	.03
F	25.96**	10.68**	8.24**	27.30**	46.36**	244.55**	7.56**
USA–psychological	−.18**	−.00	.06	.02	−.02	.63**	.08
Psychological aggression	−.12	.20**	−.24**	−.32**	−.35**	.08	−.23**
r	.28	.19	.20	.30	.37	.70	.18
R^2	.08	.04	.04	.09	.13	.48	.03
F	18.54**	8.24**	9.03**	20.51**	32.36**	197.73**	7.02**
Sexual coercion	−.26**	.12	−.12	−.17**	−.27**	.66**	−.07
Psychological threats	−.01	.00	.04	−.05	−.12	.09*	−.02
r	.27	.12	.10	.20	.28	.73	.09
R^2	.07	.02	.01	.04	.08	.53	.01
F	16.20**	3.22*	2.19	9.28**	17.79**	238.12**	1.56
USA[1]–physical	−.29**	.13	−.13	−.19*	−.32**	.64**	−.12
Physical aggression	.01	.01	.01	−.07	−.00	.12*	.02
r	.29	.14	.12	.24	.32	.74	.11
R^2	.08	.02	.01	.06	.10	.55	.01
F	19.04**	4.07*	3.10*	13.71**	24.91**	261.72**	2.49

[1] USA = unwanted sexual attention.
* $p < .05$.   ** $p < .01$.

showed that 40% of the men and women in their sample experienced overlapping WA and SH, whereas the corresponding figure in our all-female sample was lower (25%). These different rates of covictimization may be due to our study's focus on dimension-specific, supervisor-perpetrated sexual harassment and aggression, as opposed to Rospenda et al.'s (2009) focus on overall experiences of mistreatment in the workplace. Second, the experience of covictimization decreases when the mistreatment involves actual or threatened physical contact. Third, in all instances, more respondents experienced neither form of mistreatment, than either form alone, or both forms together. Last, and critical to understanding the nature of covictimization, in all four comparisons in

our study, more respondents experienced covictimization than either form of mistreatment alone.

However, as is evident from the multiple regression results (see Table 3), once controlling for the parallel form of mistreatment, many of the coefficients were no longer significant. As such, by accounting for the reality of covictimization, the results of this study provide a more nuanced and realistic perspective of the relative effects of WA and SH. Second, even after controlling for covictimization, we replicated Hershcovis and Barling's (2010a) findings that psychologically based WA was more strongly associated with attitudinal outcomes (job, supervisor, and coworker satisfaction; affective commitment; intent to quit) than GH and

Table 4
Dominance analysis: Contrasting Different Forms of Sexual Harassment and Workplace Aggression (N = 467)

Predictor variable	R^2/% R^2 explained						
	Well-being	Intent to quit	Job satisfaction	Coworker satisfaction	Supervisor satisfaction	Withdrawal	Commitment
Gender harassment	.06/58%	.02/40%	.01/33%	.06/55%	.07/41%	.33/62%	—
Psychological aggression	.04/42%	.03/60%	.02/66%	.05/45%	.10/58%	.20/38%	—[2]
Total	.11/100	.05/100	.04/100	.11/100	.17/100	.53/100	—[2]
USA[1]–psychological	.05/63%	.01/25%	.02/35%	.04/44%	.06/46%	.37/77%	.01/33%
Psychological aggression	.03/37%	.03/75%	.03/65%	.05/56%	.07/54%	.12/23%	.02/67%
Total	.08/100	.04/100	.04/100	.09/100	.13/100	.48/100	.03/100
Sexual coercion	.06/86%	—	—	.05/98%	.08/86%	.40/77%	—
Physical threats	.01/14%	—	—	.00/2%	.00/4%	.12/23%	—
Total	.07/14%	—[2]	—[2]	.04/100	.08/100	.53/100	—[2]
USA–physical	.06/75%	—	—	.04/67%	.08/73%	.35/65%	—
Physical aggression	.02/25%	—	—	.02/33%	.03/27%	.19/35%	—
Total	.08/100	—[2]	—[2]	.06/100	.10/100	.55/100	—[2]

[1] USA = unwanted sexual attention.   [2] Analyses not computed because neither of the individual coefficients was significant.

psychologically based USA. Given the attitudinal nature of these outcomes, and the health- and behavior-related nature of psychological well-being and withdrawal, where opposite findings emerged, one possible explanation is that the relative strength of SH and WA are dependent to some extent on the nature of the outcome. However, because differences in the average amount of variance accounted for by sexualized and generalized mistreatment was relatively small in these analyses, replication of these findings is warranted.

Third, irrespective of the specific comparison (e.g., GH vs. psychological aggression, USA–physical vs. physical WA), all forms of SH exerted significantly stronger negative effects on work withdrawal than comparable forms of WA. Findings from the dominance analysis show that sexualized mistreatment accounted for substantially more of the variance in behavioral withdrawal than nonsexualized mistreatment. As is evident from data presented by Hershcovis and Barling (2010a; see Tables 5 and 6), there is less research focusing on the effects of WA and SH on work withdrawal than any of the other outcome variables. Given the consistency of findings for work withdrawal in the current research, and the fact that understanding the negative effects of mistreatment on behavior (e.g., withdrawal), rather than on employees' attitudinal and health-related outcomes might result in organizational interventions more readily, further research exploring the effects of mistreatment on behavioral work withdrawal is appropriate.

Fourth, this is the first study to contrast what some may regard as more severe forms of SH and WA, namely SC and USA–physical versus actual and threatened workplace violence. Across both comparisons, sexualized forms of mistreatment exerted significantly greater negative effects on employee well-being than did workplace violence or threatened violence—an average difference of 4.5% of the variance. Given that the comparisons involve similar levels of threatened or actual physical contact, we suggest that the sex-based nature of threats and/or physical contact inherent in SC and/or USA–physical (as opposed to the generalized nature of WA) account for these findings. Further, drawing on previous research exploring the "fear of rape" (e.g., Gordon & Riger, 1991; Softas-Nall et al., 1995; Warr, 1985), it is also plausible that, given the type of threats to bodily integrity posed by sexualized forms of mistreatment, such behavior may evoke female fears of more serious sexual abuse and penetrative assault (Warr & Stafford, 1983). SC and USA–physical may thus exert greater negative effects on well-being than more generalized forms of aggression by increasing the perceived likelihood, and thus fear, of being raped, though empirical validation is required to make such a conclusion.

Fifth, unlike previous research (e.g., Hershcovis & Barling, 2010a), analyses in the current study are limited to a female-only sample. It is possible that psychometric issues in prior research with mixed-gender samples might have biased coefficients involving SH downward, artificially inflating the likelihood of finding that WA is more strongly associated with actual outcomes than SH. Based on an entirely female sample, the current findings question the stronger negative effects found in earlier research for WA. Although men undoubtedly experience SH and its negative consequences (Berdahl et al., 1996; Waldo et al., 1998), and thus should be considered in future research comparing sexualized mistreatment with generalized workplace aggression, our results

and prior research (Berdahl et al., 1996; Cochran et al., 1997; Garlick, 1994; Parker & Griffin, 2002) demonstrate that male and female experiences of SH are qualitatively different, and suggest caution against aggregating and/or directly comparing men and women on harassment experiences in future studies.

Sixth, in the present study we account for the possibility that differences in outcomes result from differences in the source of mistreatment, by focusing solely on WA and SH perpetrated by supervisors. Further, in no case was the amount of variance explained by any form of SH or WA in coworker satisfaction, greater than the amount of variance explained by these forms of mistreatment in supervisor satisfaction. As such, support for a "source effect" is evident. Given that empirical data support the target-specific nature of WA (Hershcovis et al., 2007), and a source effect has emerged in previous research exploring the impact of workplace mistreatment on behavioral, attitudinal, and/or health outcomes (Hershcovis et al., 2010; Hershcovis & Barling, 2010b), the need to devote additional attention to source effects (e.g., coworkers as perpetrators) in future research on workplace mistreatment is emphasized.

Future Directions

The goal of this study was to compare outcomes associated with WA and SH. Future research should extend this line of inquiry to additional forms of mistreatment, thus increasing its generalizability. For example, extending the current findings to other forms of identity-based victimization (e.g., ethnic or racial harassment), along with other forms of WA (e.g., incivility or ostracism) would be beneficial. Further, we found that some forms of SH exerted significantly greater negative effects on employee outcomes than did corresponding WA forms, whereas in other cases the reverse was true. These findings point to the need for future research to respect the multidimensional nature of workplace mistreatment. Along this line, the three-factor structure of WA used in this study, in which verbal threats of violence are separated from psychological aggression and physical violence, warrants replication.

In addition, future research might consider whether organizational and individual variables might account for the differential effects of WA and SH. Although many organizations have policies, procedures, and practices designed to address SH, these policies are not always utilized in confronting acts of mistreatment. As such, victims of WA or SH may feel they lack the organizational support needed to effectively cope with their mistreatment, which in turn, may result in the experience of negative affective reactions such as those measured in this study (i.e., satisfaction, commitment). Perceived organizational support and/or climate may be important moderators to consider in future studies. Previous arguments that victim attributions concerning their mistreatment account for the different magnitude of outcomes produced by WA and SH (Hershcovis & Barling, 2010a) also need to be replicated in light of the current findings.

Finally, several limitations inherent in the current study point to additional directions for future research. First, analyses in this study are based entirely on cross-sectional data, precluding any inferences about the causal effects of WA and SH; future research might replicate the current findings with longitudinal data. Second, we relied exclusively on self-report data in this study. Even though calls for external validation of self-reports of WA and SH are

frequent, we should not underestimate the difficulty in accessing such data. Given this challenge, one way of avoiding the problems associated with mono-source bias would be to use external sources of data for the outcome measures wherever possible. However, researchers should proceed with caution, given the sensitive nature of these issues, and the challenges (e.g., respondent honesty) and risks (i.e., respondent safety) associated with collecting identifying information from individuals facing mistreatment. Third, younger, white women were overrepresented in our sample. As such, the findings should be replicated using older and more racially diverse participants. Coverage bias is also a concern in this study, as respondents were obtained from the StudyResponse database, thus limiting the sample to volunteers who are comfortable with Internet use.

Conclusion

The present study contributes to our understanding of the absolute and relative effects of SH and WA. The findings replicate and extend prior research, inasmuch as the outcomes of WA were not uniformly more negative than those of SH. In the case of some outcomes (namely, work withdrawal and psychological well-being), as well as forms of mistreatment (physical and threatened mistreatment), SH accounted for more of the variance in the outcomes than did WA. In contrast, WA was more significantly associated with attitudinal outcomes (e.g., job satisfaction and affective commitment) than was GH or psychologically based USA. We suggest that the multidimensional nature of SH and WA, contrasting comparable dimensions of mistreatment, the reality of covictimization, and the gender of the sample, together account for the discrepancies in conclusions across studies. While our findings await further replication and refinement using longitudinal and multisource data, and older and more racially diverse samples, the current research nonetheless represents an important theoretical and practical contribution to the understanding of WA and SH.

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