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# Sexual Harassment in Las Vegas

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SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN LAS VEGAS

By

Jonathan Michael Birds

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the

Master of Arts in Criminal Justice

Department of Criminal Justice  
Greenspun College of Urban Affairs  
The Graduate College

University of Nevada, Las Vegas  
May 2012

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## THE GRADUATE COLLEGE

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**May 2012**

## ABSTRACT

### **Sexual Harassment in Las Vegas**

by

Jonathan M. Birds

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Sexual harassment, either “quid pro quo” demands or the creation of a hostile environment harms both success and social confidence (Welsh, 1999). The nature of sexual harassment in an overtly sexual environment like Las Vegas has not yet been explored. The current study primarily analyzed responses from UNLV students who work in Las Vegas. Experiences of and attitudes towards sexual harassment were compared by gender. Finally, experiences of sexual harassment were compared between UNLV students and students at another university.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Sexual harassment has become more recognized and has garnered attention from researchers over the past several years. Although much attention is paid to the study of physical sexual advances on women, coercive behaviors (sexual harassment) are more common than rape or sexual assault (Menard, Hall, Phung, Ghebrial, & Martin, 2003).

Sexual harassment has been commonly studied in workplace settings as well as within learning institutions. Sexual harassment is very much an institutional phenomenon. Sexual harassment within academic institutions is very interesting in that it has become commonplace, especially for teens and others considered to be “less mature” (Fineran & Bennett, 1999). Not only does sexual harassment relate to the environment of the institutions, it is also been stated that the nature of gender roles and attitudes about sex and gender are important with regard to the prevalence of coercive sexuality (Gutek, 1987).

This study considers sexual harassment in the specific context of attending school and being employed in an overtly sexual city, Las Vegas. Las Vegas promotes casual sexual activity through international marketing campaigns and in business advertisements in every corner of the city. To understand the context of Las Vegas, local responses will be compared to data collected in a different city of a similar size, Vancouver, British Columbia.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

#### Definitions of Sexual Harassment

As more women began to enter the workforce, organizations like the National Advisory Council on Women's Educational Programs and the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission have worked to define and understand sexual harassment better. The biggest hurdle for those contributing to the body of research on this topic is the complete absence of a well-defined, agreed-upon definition. Because more women began joining the work force following the close of World War II and the early study of sexual harassment in the late 1970s, researchers failed to find a common set of behaviors that would qualify. Catharine MacKinnon (1979) proposed what appeared to be the most influential definition of sexual harassment. This definition referred to sexual harassment as, an act that provoked an unwanted sexual requirement of a relationship between two people of disproportionate power (MacKinnon, 1979). A great deal of early sexual harassment was simply described in terms of forcefulness and inappropriateness; however this definition clearly spoke to the aspect of power, which would later be widely debated. Sexual harassment in the workplace has been defined by the United States Supreme Court (477 U.S. 57[1986]) as a hostile work environment created by unwelcome sexual advances or other acts including comments which result in an intimidating work environment would qualify as sexual harassment in the workplace (Uggen & Blackstone, 2004).

Sexual harassment had certainly begun to present itself in career settings, but it also began to be prevalent in other areas. Sexual harassment has also penetrated one of society's biggest institutions, education, and the need for a definition was evident again. The Office for Civil Rights (OCR) added Title IX of the 1972 Education Amendments, which is the law removing gender discrimination against students. The OCR has since changed a bit of language of the policy, but the basic elements are still present. The OCR, through the department of education, recognizes three basic concepts outlining sexual harassment of students. It recognizes conduct that is sexual in nature, is unwelcomed by the victim, and essentially hinders a student's ability to benefit from an institutional organization, as sexual harassment (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). Not only does the OCR go on to explain these three factors relating to sexual harassment, but it also provides educational examples of borderline acts that fall into each category.

As the body of work relating to sexual harassment has grown, so have the possible definitions. Even with numerous definitions arising within several disciplines acknowledging similar concepts, evidence still showed that many victims and researchers maintained very different definitions about coercive behaviors. Narratives from participants in Till's work (1980) indicated a wide range of responses to both behaviors and definitions of sexual harassment from victims. This range in definitions has been found in numerous studies including numerous participants of various organizations (Reilly, Carpenter, Dull, & Bartlett, 1982; Fitzgerald, Magley, Drasgow & Waldo, 1999; Paludi, et al., 1990). Not only do individual perceptions provide a range of definitions, but also so do the methods for studying this type of behavior.

Researchers have used generic behavior categories that appear exhaustive for a large number of acts and severity. For example, the “experience” of sexual harassment could mean several different things. Physical coercive behaviors can be significantly different from sexual conversation or inappropriate jokes but due to the nature of early studies, they all get generalized together. This variability on the part of participant understanding of sexual harassment has become important.

In 1986 the U.S. government actually outlined two different scenarios with which most acts of sexual harassment fall. The first is called *quid pro quo*, which describes a situation involving a person of power holding certain benefits from, or punishing formally, a person that does not respond positively to the sexual advances. The other form of harassment involves a situation where the harasser makes the setting hostile through threats or other forms of coercive action to get what is demanded. The latter is called hostile environment (U.S. Equal Opportunity Commission, 1993).

Sexual harassment has become a common problem as more women enter the work force and it has been studied since the late 1970s. Sexual harassment and our understanding of the phenomenon are always changing as we learn to behave and act in a way which is considered to be normal within our culture (Uggen & Blackstone, 2004). Court cases focused on finding laws to govern coercive sexuality are always changing as “reasonableness” is used to determine what actions should be covered.

Different cultures and different people reasonably expect different things from a work environment or a learning institution (Uggen & Blackstone, 2004). As early as 1979 the authors of works related to sexual harassment mounted numerous definitions of

sexual harassment, most of which include that reasonableness context. Due to this “reasonableness” aspect of the phenomenon, these definitions were both repetitive, but also different in many aspects. For example, some definitions covered mere aspects of what we now claim to be part of sexual harassment, while other definitions covered specific forms of sexual harassment or sexual harassment in general (Till, 1980).

*Assessing judgments of sexual harassment.* It has also been asserted that as different people maintain different reactions to sexual harassment, the gender of the rater of sexual harassment matters. Although cases of sexual harassment are generally complex in nature, it has been noted that gender of the rater is a consistent variable affecting judgments of sexual harassment (O’Connor, Gutek, Stockdale, Greer & Melancon, 2004).

### Measuring Sexual Harassment

Generally, sexual harassment is studied through a number of indicating behaviors (on the part of the harasser). It is interesting how these indicating behaviors came about. Due to the vague and convoluted definitions that surfaced early in the study of sexual harassment, a victim-based response was used to evaluate sexual harassment. This began with Till’s (1980) work when he completed a study to assist the National Advisory Council on Women’s Educational Programs (NACWEP) to assess and treat sexual harassment. This study mostly contained a content analysis of experiences of college-aged women. Till was the first to begin the process of studying sexual harassment. His report was related to sexual harassment of college students.

As noted previously, sexual harassment is a problem that spans across many different organizations and/or places of work. Much recent work has been completed on college campuses and other institutions of learning as well as in the military and more general organizations. Recently sexual harassment at the college level has been studied more intensely as it provides a unique dynamic with several levels of participation including but not limited to student, graduate student, staff, and faculty (Paludi, 1992).

Sexual harassment at the college level has proven to be a evident for undergraduate students as well as graduate students alike and it has been argued that graduate students may be more susceptible to sexual harassment due to the length of time spent within certain programs or commitments to superiors that they work for (Mohipp & Senn, 2008). Obviously this can be true for anyone trying to succeed in an organization. It can take a great amount of time and effort to accomplish goals. In 1997 a report of graduate women and occurrences of sexual harassment concluded that more than half of women have likely experienced sexual harassment while on campus (Gruber, 1992). Another study of college students concluded that as many as 60% of a sample of female graduate students had experienced everyday sexual harassment by a faculty member (McKinney, Olson, & Satterfield, 1988).

College campuses have been the targets of sexual harassment research for some time now. It has been observed that between 20% and 30% of college women have been victimized by a male faculty member while completing coursework (Williams, Lam, & Shively, 1992). Generally on college campuses, we see sexual harassment because of the power situation involved with faculty members and victims in a position with something to lose. This is a problem for students and university employees alike. Generally the

power within U.S. colleges lies with men and women find themselves targeted as both students and employees (Schneider, Swan & Fitzgerald, 1997).

Proper research has not been completed to give national information regarding sexual harassment, but individual studies have shown coercive sexuality to be a significant problem for a large number of female students every year (Uggen & Blackstone, 2004). The need for programs to effectively reduce the number of instances of sexual harassment on campuses is apparent. A study of over 300 U.S. institutions of higher education found that about 60% of participants indicated the presence of written sexual harassment policies and over 45% indicated that grievance protocols were available at their schools (Uggen & Blackstone, 2004). Another study in Indiana found that institutions with policies that govern sexual harassment saw higher rates of estimated and actual complaints about coercive sexuality. This is probably due to the increased awareness and understanding of sexual harassment as well as prevalence (Uggen & Blackstone, 2004).

The study of the university setting has led to the study of the same panel with regard to the places that they work, in or outside campus. It is not commonly known that sexual harassment can actually be perpetrated within two different scenarios relating to power. Generally, sexual harassment represents harassment by someone with more power than the person that they are harassing. However, sexual harassment can also include situations of a “contrapower”. This scenario would explain a person harassing another individual with more formal power than the aggressor actually has (Mohipp & Senn, 2008). This can be a confusing topic as perceptions about sexual harassment usually follow the belief that it comes with power. These perceptions make us believe

that the power we have over others gives us the “courage” to move forward toward others with coercive mentality (Wayne, 2000).

In fact, the study by Wayne (2000), reported that participants rated harassers more favorably when involved in contra power situations. Although it has been argued that nature of sexual harassment involves women who are in a powerless position relative the aggressor in the situation (Paludi, et al., 1990), this appears to be a misconception about what constitutes sexual harassment and who the aggressor is. This misconception can affect how people actually view the sexual harassment. Not only can the misconception change what people think about sexual harassment, but according to Wayne (2000), certain instances which are not considered normal (like contra power scenarios where the aggressor is actually in a less powerful position than the victim), may actually make sexual harassment hard to even spot. Generally, attitudes of women are less supportive of sexual harassment. It has been speculated that this is due to the differences in life experiences with regards to being in positions of power and having to deal with sexual harassment.

### Issues with Studying Sexual Harassment

As noted previously, one issue related to the study of sexual harassment is the varying definitions of sexual harassment. The theory of sociocultural factors will play a large part in attempting to explain those differences. The self-report nature of sexual harassment is what makes it difficult to measure accurately. The very nature of a given city or organization can play a large part in the participants’ perceptions of sexual harassment. Not only will large-scale social contexts affect the perception of sexual



harassment, but so will individual experiences in different organizations, most notably the home. Another issue related to the study of sexual harassment is the development of operational definitions of sexual harassment. This aspect has been the biggest focus for research over the past thirty years or so and has led to the Sexual Experience Questionnaire, which has been argued to be the best overall measure of sexual harassment that has been developed to date. Another major issue with the study of sexual harassment is related to traditional thinking. The traditional thought process generally has blamed the victim for the acts of sexual harassment and not men. Acts of sexual harassment related to a woman getting the grade or getting a raise has been attributed to aggressive acts on the part of women.

#### Effects of Being Harassed

The study of sexual harassment has evolved, and not only have researchers identified the prevalence of sexual harassment, but they have also identified serious acute and chronic consequences associated with it. In work related to organizations and sexual harassment, Fitzgerald et al. (1997) explain that sexual harassment is a product of two primary concepts. The first is organizational climate and the other relates to job gender context. Organizational climate, according to the authors, is the different characteristics of an organization that speak to its tolerance of sexual harassment. Job gender context refers to the nature of gender as it relates to the workgroup. For example, types of duties or gender breakdown of workers would classify as job gender. From this framework it has been argued that one can predict prevalence of sexual harassment in an organization. Furthermore, the residual effects of the sexual harassment that occurs when an

organization does not handle sexual harassment cases properly can be devastating for a victim of sexual harassment (Summers, 1996).

They explain that sexual harassment negatively affects one's job, mental health, and physical health (Fitzgerald et al., 1997). Mental health issues relate to symptoms of anxiety or depression, while issues related to physical health can relate to headaches, sleeping problems, and even gastro-intestinal issues. The authors also go on to note that personal factors relating to the victim can affect how intense the negative reactions are.

Koss (1990) notes that emotional reactions to sexual harassment include: anger, fear, depression, anxiety, irritability, low self-esteem, feelings of humiliation, alienation, helplessness, and vulnerability. This response involving these feelings is believed to be immediate and tends to lead to chronic stress symptoms related to the victimization. Salisbury, Ginorio, Remick & Stringer (1986) noted a sequence to the cognitive reaction to sexual harassment. First, they noticed confusion and self-blame on the part of the victim. The second reaction was fear or anxiety. This refers to either anxiety due to possible retaliation at work or feelings of being trapped in a hostile environment. This could be due in part to the large percentage of the sample that actually filed complaints. The third reaction is depression and anger. This phase comes in the wake of the victim recognizing his or her victimization and realizing that blame should be placed with the aggressor.

Disillusionment follows. The author refers to this phase as the time when the victim realizes that help within the system does not exist and that the institution he or she is working in is part of the problem.

There are numerous works that also explain other significant consequences of sexual harassment. Gruber (1992) explains that sexual harassment can lead to decreased job satisfaction. Sexual harassment can also lead to loss of relationships with co-workers (Gutek, 1985).

Till's (1980) analysis of self-report surveys of college students indicated several things. Participants commonly reported instances that would fall outside the range of a majority of sexual harassment definitions. It was noted that respondents reported instances of rape as well as comments about gender that would not be considered derogatory. The analysis of the report also noted that a large majority of the acts reported may be considered malicious in action, but the intent of the harasser was not necessarily malicious. It appeared to the author that the harassers might not have considered the acts to actually be sexual harassment. The respondents reported instances of sexual harassment where the threat of punishment or inference of reward was absent. The other major finding from the self-report surveys was very interesting. The last major finding of the survey indicated a big variance in the ability of respondents to define "sexual harassment" or agree on what behaviors are "unacceptable". These findings speak to how difficult this topic is to define and understand (Till, 1980).

Till completed his report in 1980 to instigate conversation about sexual harassment legislation and guide future research to follow. Ultimately, Till's goal was to push for the continued recognition of sexual harassment as a prevalent problem in the U.S., but also to convince the federal government to continue to pass legislation that will positively affect the situation. Till was able to categorize self-reported instances of sexual harassment to create levels of sexual harassment. He was able to then create five

categories of actions; they were: “gender harassment, seductive behavior, sexual bribery, sexual coercion, and sexual imposition or assault.” The categories he created were generally listed in order due to severity, which was the only basic criterion for analyzing sexual acts.

After Till (1980) created this original categorical system, James Gruber (1980) created another system which used severity to describe sexual actions. This newer system contained a list of ranked actions within three separate categories of sexual actions including: nonverbal displays, verbal requests, and verbal remarks (Gruber, 1992). Gruber (1992) compiled his new system from the typologies mentioned in seventeen other works previously published on sexual harassment studies. His categories contained actions commonly cited by previous researchers and he ranked them based on the resulting analysis of two specific studies (Fitzgerald & Hesson-McInnis, 1989 and Baker et al., 1990).

The category of verbal requests (ranked in order from worst to least serious) included: sexual bribery, sexual advances, relational advances, and lastly subtle pressures. His category of verbal comments included: personal remarks, subjective objectification, and sexual categorical remarks. Lastly, his category titled non-verbal displays (from worst to least severe) included: sexual assault, sexual touching, sexual posturing, and sexual materials (Gruber, 1992). As a general rule, the actions were ranked more severe as the act became more personal and more sexually focused.

The development of sexual harassment research has mostly involved the organization of acts by severity level. A widely used system for defining sexual

harassment has been the U.S. Merit System Protection Board (USMSPD, 1981, 1987). This organization was created in 1978 as a result of the Civil Service Reform act to oversee federal merit systems and protect basic civil rights of those who work for agencies in the federal government (USMSPD, 1981, 1987). The system utilized seven basic behaviors, organized into three intensity levels. The three intensity levels included actions considered to be: less severe (such as unwanted sexual behaviors), moderately severe (such as pressure for sexual acts), and most severe (such as attempted rape) (USMSPD, 1981, 1987). Even though this system is slightly different than the ones previously mentioned, it is still evident that researchers have ranked coercive behaviors more severely as they become more personal and sexually focused. Until 1987, information gathering on this topic had left out conceptual factors pertaining to sexual harassment and levels of reliability and validity for such measures (Fitzgerald, Gelfand & Drasgow, 1995).

### Theoretical Explanations

Sexual harassment has been studied through a number of theories that relate to life-course issues, organizational structures, individual level traits, and even evolutionary theories of sexual harassing on the part of the harasser. Findings of the current study can be best interpreted through the framework of sociocultural theory of sexual harassment. This theory is related in part to feminist theory. It examines larger scale societal factors and the political contexts that create sexual harassment and within which sexual harassment occurs. This theory states that sexual harassment is an expected consequence of the gender inequality and sexism that already exists in our society (Pina, Gannon & Saunders, 2009; Tangria & Hayes, 1997). Sociocultural theory adapted ideals of the

feminist theory paradigm based on cultural circumstances. The feminist ideology asserts that there are fundamental differences between men and women and when research needs to be guided appropriately.

This theory states that sexual harassment is a logical, inevitable end from the culture and the experiences of that culture. This theory relies strongly on the notion that cultural norms affect behavior. The theory explains a great deal of sexual acts that could be defined as sexual harassment with one simple variable. The theory explains sexual harassment with just the concept of experiences within a culture which creates and tolerates sexual harassment. .

The sociocultural theory of sexual harassment fails to recognize the effect of the cultural norms on men. It is known that not all men sexually harass. Therefore, it is more useful with regard to explaining opinions of sexual harassment and the individual definitions associated with it. Even the reporting of being sexually assaulted is largely reliant on the definition associated with it by the harassed. Due to the nature of studying sexual harassment (i.e., self-report studies), the sociocultural theory will be tested as the possible explanation for any differences in experienced sexual harassment as well as simple perceptions about sexual harassment (Pina et al., 2009; Tangria & Hayes, 1997).

#### The Context: Las Vegas

Las Vegas, as many already know, is very different from most cities in the United States. The city is one of the premier travel destinations in the world and attracts millions of visitors every year. In fact, the transient population that travels to Las Vegas in a given year outnumbers the resident population by nearly 37 million (LVCVA, 2011).

Although it has become a prime spot for travelers from all over, the city has garnered a reputation unlike any other. Las Vegas has grown into an adult playground where the rules are thrown away and sex is the ultimate vehicle for it. Billboards and traveling trucks project the ongoing culture and norms of Las Vegas and the sexual nature surrounding it.

It is plausible that the overtly sexual nature of the city affects the way residents assess sexual harassment and sex. There are two competing interests in Las Vegas. The first is the financially successful promotion of the overtly sexual image of Las Vegas. The second is the reality for Las Vegasans employed in this environment.

#### Purpose of the Study

This project sought to explore whether this cultural environment creates unique attitudes about sex and sexual harassment for those who live and work in the city. To properly consider the effect of Las Vegas, the data will be compared to findings from a comparison group of students from Vancouver, British Columbia. The first purpose of the study was to describe how UNLV students define sexual harassment. Another goal of the current study was to determine if students at UNLV experience sexual harassment and determine if gender and age distinguish student experiences and perceptions. Lastly, the students from Las Vegas were compared to those from another city (Vancouver) to describe differences in experiences of sexual harassment. It was expected that experiences in Las Vegas and Vancouver would be significantly different. It was expected that participants in Las Vegas would experience sexual harassment at higher

rates than those in Vancouver. Vancouver is another tourist destination that sees millions of visitors every year and is comparable to Las Vegas.

### Vancouver

The city of Vancouver is a travel destination comparable to Las Vegas. It has a similar base population and is a major tourist destination internationally. The metropolitan area of Vancouver has a population of about 2.3 million (Statistics Canada, 2011). . In 2010, the city of Vancouver saw over 8.4 million overnight visitors (Tourism Vancouver, 2011).



## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### Participants

##### *Las Vegas Sample*

The primary sample included responses from 862 college students at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Just over 56% of respondents were female. Over half of all respondents (54.8%) indicated that they were single. The ethnicity of participants is presented in Table 1. The largest group self-identified as Caucasian at 50.2%. The remaining half was ethnically diverse. The majority of participants (94.6%) indicated they were “extremely comfortable” with the English language. Almost 31% of all respondents indicated that they were born in Las Vegas. 37.3% of respondents were first year students. 28.3% of respondents were second year students. 22.1% were third year students. 12.3% were fourth year students or more experienced students.

Table 1

##### *Ethnicity of Sample, Las Vegas data*

Ethnicity	% of sample	N
Caucasian	50.2	422
Hispanic	21.8	183
Asian-Pacific Islander	15.8	133
African-American	14.8	124
Other	5.0	42

*Note:* Percents may not add up to 100% as participants had the option to select multiple ethnicities

Other demographic information was collected for participants and is reported split by gender. Participants in Las Vegas usually report being sexual active. Just over 77% of female participants reported being sexually active. Over 80% male participants reported being sexual active. About 35% of the women in the sample were first year students, about 30% were second year students, almost 25% were third year students, and about 10% were more senior. The average age for female participants was 20.75 with a median of 19. Just over 41% of male participants were first year criminal justice students, almost 27% were second year students, about 17% were third year students, and about 15% were more experienced students. The average age of male participants was 21.03, with a median age of 20.

#### *British Columbia Sample*

For comparison purposes of experiences of sexual harassment, data collected from university students in British Columbia were analyzed to confirm a city effect for Las Vegas. Data was collected at the University of British Columbia and Simon Fraser University from 1283 students (981 female and 302 male).

The average age for female students in the British Columbia sample was 19.47 with a median age of 19. The average age for male participants was 19.84 with a median age of 19 as well. The ethnicity of students from British Columbia was diverse and representative of the city of Vancouver. Just over one third (35.8%) self reported their ethnicity as Caucasian, 44.7% as Chinese, 14.8% as other Asian, less than 1% as African American, less than 1% as Hispanic, and 3.4% as other ethnicities.

### *Procedures*

The UNLV data was collected through Criminal Justice Student Subject pool participation. The data collected at UNLV followed all procedures required by the Institution Review Board of UNLV (protocol #1001-3335M) including informed consent and debriefing of subjects. The UBC and SFU data were collected from the psychology subject pools and had IRB approval at both universities.

## Measures

### *Sexual Experiences Questionnaire*

In 1988, Fitzgerald et al. created the first “Sexual Experiences Questionnaire” (SEQ). This survey was created with the goal of increasing measurement validity by touching on all the dimensions of sexual harassment previously mentioned, mainly Till’s (1980) five categories and Gruber’s (1992) three categories of eleven specific behaviors. Multiple indicators were used to measure each concept on a higher, more consistent level, thus content validity was much better. The authors found that using multiple indicators to assess sexual harassment lead to a rough estimate related to severity of the behaviors as seen in earlier measures (Fitzgerald et al., 1995). Since its inception, the SEQ has been used in numerous settings involving different institutions, organizations, and areas. The measure has also been used across different cultures as well to assess sexual harassment. Some limitations of the SEQ have also been noted. These limitations include a possible oversight by using all five dimensions, which may utilize unnecessary indicators, and the use of dichotomous variables, which limit the ability to analyze the results statistically. Given these limitations, the SEQ was amended accordingly to accommodate these issues.

In 1995, the SEQ measure was amended once again to more accurately and thoroughly assesses the presence of sexual harassment through focus groups, meetings with sexual harassment experts, and other methods (Fitzgerald et al., 1995). The resulting product was the “Sexual Experiences Questionnaire”. The questionnaire was aimed at fulfilling questions left behind by previous measures. The level of

measurement, a complete measure of all concepts relating to sexual harassment, and the distinction of legal and psychological standards were instrumental in creating this particular questionnaire (Fitzgerald et al., 1995). The difference between sexual harassment as a legal term as well as a psychological concept is noted as a basic theoretical background for the SEQ. Between “hostile environment” harassment and “quid pro quo” harassment, the SEQ highlighted three basic subscales to make up the concepts.

There are 39 questions within the SEQ, the last being a criterion question regarding the participant’s experience with sexual harassment. Behaviors reported can be coded into three subscales, gender harassment, unwanted sexual attention, and sexual coercion (Fitzgerald et al., 1995). Gender harassment is a scale created from five of the SEQ questions, with responses ranging from 0-20. These questions include general interactions with co-workers regarding offensive remarks. The next subscale is comprised of questions to assess unwanted sexual attention focus on several types of instances where a co-worker may have inappropriately touched the participant or tried to initiate contact and range from 0-32. The third subscale measures quid pro quo instances through six questions polling instances where a co-worker may have used bribery or gain in exchange for sex. This scale ranges from 0-24. Two subscales, used to measure gender harassment and unwanted sexual harassment, can be combined for a fourth subscale measurement entitled hostile environment (Fitzgerald et al., 1994).

Almost all the items from this questionnaire are ordinal level measures; they include the answers: “strongly agree”, “agree”, “neutral”, “disagree”, and “strongly disagree” for items relating to the nature of Las Vegas or about how an act offended the

participant. Other items for experiences included the answers: “never”, “rarely”, “sometimes”, “very often”, and “always” for experiential questions. These answers were later used on a scale of 1-5 for offensiveness rankings. The answers to experiential SEQ items were analyzed on a scale of 0-4. The means produced from this research reflect these likert-type scales as they were represented numerically for analyses.

#### *Attitudes toward Las Vegas Environment*

Questions were developed by Dr. Alexis Kennedy and the Legal and Social Issues Research lab at UNLV and were designed to measure students’ perceptions of sexual behavior and high risk activity related to sexual behavior in Las Vegas. Agreement with these items was measured on a likert-type agreement scale with 1 represented strong agreement and 5 representing strong disagreement. Seventeen items were written to measure perceptions of sexual norms around local Las Vegas’s sexual behavior. Items included questions such as, “Most Las Vegas treat sex as a casual act” and “Most Las Vegas have had sex with someone on the same night that they met that person.” Fifteen items were written to measure attitudes towards the sexual behavior of tourists while in Las Vegas. Items included such questions as “Most tourists in Las Vegas believe casual sex is easy to find in Las Vegas” and “Most female tourists in Las Vegas engage in sexual activity because it is expected.” These items were exploratory but were compared for gender differences in response rates.

Finally, eight items were created to measure the assessment of risk for sexual harassment related to employment conditions in Las Vegas. Items included “The behaviors of tourists creates an environment of sexual harassment” and “The attitudes of

management at my job creates an environment of sexual harassment.” Responses to these items were compared across genders.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS

#### Gender Comparisons

Independent tests of means were used to identify significant differences between men and women on their responses.

##### *Attitudes toward Las Vegas environment*

Male and female participants varied significantly from each other on a number of attitudes. Looking first at their attitudes towards the behavior of visitors to Las Vegas, women tended to agree more that tourists take a casual attitude towards sexual behavior while in Las Vegas. Women were significantly more critical of tourists' behavior on 11 of the 15 items presented in Table 2. Women had significantly lower means (indicating greater agreement) for questions about where tourists are likely to hang out indicating that women generally agreed more that tourists were spending time in bars, nightclubs, and strip clubs.



Table 2

*Attitudes toward tourists' sexual behaviors, gender comparisons*

How much do you agree with the following statement...	Mean		t	p
	Men	Women		
1. Most tourists in Las Vegas socialize/hang out at bars	2.240	1.903	-5.030	<.001
2. Most tourists in Las Vegas socialize/hang out at nightclubs	2.000	1.720	-4.450	<.001
3. Most tourists in Las Vegas socialize/hang out at strip clubs	2.571	2.363	-2.870	<.001
4. Most tourists in Las Vegas have visited an adult superstore	2.852	2.450	-5.640	<.001
5. Most tourists in Las Vegas consume alcohol	1.526	1.437	-1.870	.062
6. Most tourists in Las Vegas use illegal drugs to become intoxicated	2.859	2.738	-1.680	.094
7. Most tourists in Las Vegas believe sex is a meaningful act	3.130	3.312	2.670	.008
8. Most tourists in Las Vegas believe sex is a sacred act	3.546	3.551	.0740	.941
9. Most tourists in Las Vegas treat sex as a casual act while in Las Vegas	2.144	2.008	-2.19	.029
10. Most tourists in Las Vegas have had sex with someone on the same night that they met	2.355	2.076	-4.19	<.001
11. Most tourists in Las Vegas believe casual sex is easy to find in Las Vegas to find in Las Vegas	1.772	1.590	-3.742	<.001

*Note: 1 represents strong agreement, 5 strong disagreement*

Continued on next page

Table 2 (Continued)

How much do you agree with the following statement...	Mean		t	p
	Men	Women		
12. Most tourists in Las Vegas think advertising in Las Vegas is too sexualized	2.786	2.760	-.349	.727
13. Most tourists in Las Vegas think of women as sex objects	2.340	2.132	-3.180	<.001
14. Most male tourists in Las Vegas feel entitled to sex	2.237	2.052	-3.020	.003
15. Most female tourists in Las Vegas engage in sexual activity because it is expected	2.837	2.619	-3.068	.002

*Note: 1 represents strong agreement, 5 strong disagreement*

The second area of attitudes that were compared across genders was attitudes towards locals' behaviors. These results are presented in Table 3. Female participants were significantly more critical of local behavior than men on 8 of the 13 items. Female participants were significantly more likely than male participants to agree that residents in Las Vegas treat women as sex objects. This response pattern was similar to the perceptions that tourists were treating women as sex objects. The last several items contained in this section indicated respondents' feelings about gender expectation around sexual activity. Both groups agreed that males in Las Vegas expect sex and females in Las Vegas engage in casual sex acts because it is expected. Men were significantly more likely to agree with these statements about expectations among men and women.

Table 3

*Sexual nature of Las Vegans, means test for significance*

Question: How much do you agree with the following statement	Mean		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	Men	Women		
1. Most Las Vegans socialize/hang out at bars	2.719	2.590	-1.796	.073
2. Most Las Vegans socialize/hang out at nightclubs	2.460	2.413	-.630	.529
3. Most Las Vegans socialize/hang out at strip clubs	3.169	3.105	-.855	.393
4. Most Las Vegans have visited an adult superstore	2.652	2.331	-4.41	<.001
5. Most Las Vegans consume alcohol	1.868	1.913	.773	.440
6. Most Las Vegans use illegal substances to become intoxicated	2.868	2.753	-1.573	.116
7. Most Las Vegans have used online dating sites	2.980	2.741	-3.795	<.001
8. Most Las Vegans believe sex is a meaningful act	3.093	3.280	2.711	.007
9. Most Las Vegans believe sex is a sacred act	3.557	3.625	1.108	.268
10. Most Las Vegans treat sex as a casual act	2.183	2.170	-.220	.826
11. Most Las Vegans believe two people should have sex only if they are in love	3.516	3.635	1.859	.063
12. Most Las Vegans have had sex with someone on the same night that they met that person	2.612	2.421	-2.749	.006
13. Most Las Vegans believe casual sex is easy to find in Las Vegas	2.147	1.959	-2.984	.003

*Note: 1 represents strong agreement, 5 strong disagreement*

Continued on next page

Table 3 (Continued)

Question: How much do you agree with the following statement	Mean		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	Men	Women		
14. Most Las Vegans think advertizing in Las Vegas is too sexualized	2.606	2.505	-1.508	.132
15. Most Las Vegans think of women as sex objects	2.969	2.701	-3.529	<.001
16. Most Las Vegan men feel entitled to sex	2.663	2.390	-4.082	<.001
17. Most Las Vegan women engage in sexual activity because they feel it is expected	3.024	2.781	-3.429	.001

*Note: 1 represents strong agreement, 5 strong disagreement*

The third area of questions which polled perceptions towards the Las Vegas work environment are presented in Table 4. Male and female participants varied significantly from each other on 3 of the 8 items with women being more likely to agree that advertising slogans in Las Vegas and the overtly sexual nature of the city created an environment of sexual harassment. Female participants were also more likely to agree that tolerance of sexual harassment in the workplace contributes to a negative work environment.

Table 4

*Las Vegas sexual harassment questions*

How much do you agree with the following sentence	Men	Women	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
1. The nature of my job creates an environment where sexual harassment occurs	4.01	4.02	.092	.926
2. The behavior of tourists creates an environment of sexual harassment	3.16	3.01	-1.62	.105
3. The policies at my workplace create an environment of sexual harassment	4.36	4.33	-.420	.673
4. The availability of alcohol creates an environment of sexual harassment	3.01	2.94	-.670	.497
5. The attitude of management at my job creates an environment of sexual harassment	4.23	4.33	1.30	.192
6. The advertising slogans in Las Vegas create an environment of sexual harassment	2.75	2.57	-1.96	.050
7. The overtly sexual nature of Las Vegas creates an environment of sexual harassment	2.67	2.47	-2.17	.030
8. The tolerance of sexual harassment in the work place puts people at risk for sexual harassment	3.30	2.97	-3.39	.001

*Note: 1 represents strong agreement, 5 strong disagreement*

*Sexual Experiences Questionnaire*

Gender comparisons were run for the means of the SEQ subscales and individual items. Women reported significantly higher levels of harassment than men on the unwanted sexual attention subscale. Women and men did not differ significantly on the Gender Harassment and Sexual Coercion subscale scores. Women did score significantly higher than men on the hostile environment subscale which is the composite

measure of both unwanted sexual attention and gender harassment. Females reported significantly higher scores on the SEQ total measure. Table 5 shows the results of means tests for the different subscale sexual harassment constructs.

Table 5

*SEQ Scales, means test, split by gender*

Scale	Male	Mean	Female	t	p
Unwanted Sexual Attention	3.69		5.33	4.63	<.001
Gender Harassment	4.57		4.31	-.912	.362
Sexual Coercion (quid pro quo)	1.96		1.89	-.433	.665
Hostile Environment (GH + USA)	8.24		9.72	2.502	.013
SEQ total	10.17		11.63	1.96	.05

*Note: 0 represents "never", 1 represents "once or twice", 2 represents "sometimes", 3 represents "often", and 4 represents "most of the time"*

The responses to the gender harassment section of the questionnaire were very interesting and somewhat unexpected. Males actually scored higher than females on 2 of the 3 experiential questions for gender harassment that showed significant gender differences. Males reported experiencing crude remarks and co-workers displaying sexist pictures at a higher level than female participants. Females scored significantly higher on the item related to experiencing co-workers making sexist remarks. Table 6 highlights the items from the questionnaire relate to gender harassment split by gender.

Table 6

*Gender harassment experience results by gender*

Question	Mean		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	Male	Female		
How often have you experienced a co-worker, colleague, or supervisor habitually tell suggestive stories or offensive jokes?	1.53	1.40	-1.45	.147
How often have you experienced a co-worker, colleague, or supervisor make crude and offensive remarks?	.900	.743	-2.02	.043
How often have you experienced a co-worker, colleague, or supervisor make offensive remarks about your body?	.811	.774	.52	0.6
How often have you experienced a co-worker, colleague, or supervisor display sexist pictures?	.483	.331	-2.71	.007
How often have you experienced a co-worker, colleague, or supervisor make sexist remarks?	.821	1.017	2.49	.013

*Note: 0 represents "never", 1 represents "once or twice", 2 represents "sometimes" 3 represents "often", and 4 represents "most of the time"*

What made the gender harassment experience questions so interesting was that while males scored higher on experiencing the behavior for two items, it did not appear to offend them as much as the same experiences offended the female participants. Every item related to gender harassment offended women at a higher level than for men. Endorsement of offense among participants who had experienced harassment were statistically higher for female participants for all 5 items. Table 7 shows the perceived offensiveness items related to the same questions for the gender harassment scale.

Table 7

*Gender Harassment offensiveness results by gender, filtered for experience*

Question	Mean		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	Men	Women		
How much did it bother you to have a co-worker tell suggestive stories at work?	.302	.715	6.890	<.001
How much did it bother you to have a co-worker make crude and offensive remarks?	.522	1.373	9.153	<.001
How much did it bother you to have offensive remarks made about your body by a co-worker?	.883	1.536	6.125	<.001
How much did it bother you to have a co-worker display sexist pictures?	.360	1.439	8.068	<.001
How much did it bother you to have a co-worker make sexist remarks?	.562	1.779	12.263	<.001

*Note: 1 represents "not at all upset", 5 "extremely upset"*

The unwanted sexual attention experience items split by gender indicated that generally female participants reported experiencing these acts more than male participants. Only one item from this list saw male participants score higher than female participants. This question may have been interpreted in different ways as it was a compound question because it included attempts by co-workers to draw the participant into discussion of personal matters as well as sexual matters. The gender difference on this item was not statistically significant. Women were significantly more likely to experience unwanted sexual attention on five of the eight items included (see Table 8).



Table 8

*Unwanted Sexual Attention results by gender for experience*

How often have you experienced...	Mean		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	Men	Women		
a co-worker, colleague, or supervisor make unwanted attempts to draw you into discussions of personal or sexual matters?	.951	.914	-.49	.626
a co-worker, colleague, or supervisor give you unwanted sexual attention?	.573	.783	3.01	.003
a co-worker, colleague, or supervisor stare at you in a way that made you uncomfortable?	.547	1.106	7.95	<.001
a co-worker, colleague, or supervisor attempt to start an affair	.477	.667	3.08	.002
a co-worker, colleague, or supervisor continue to ask you for dinner even though you declined?	.381	.806	6.68	<.001
a co-worker, colleague, or supervisor touch you?	.450	.640	3.19	.001
a co-worker, colleague, or supervisor make unwanted attempts at stroking you?	.248	.277	.626	.531
a co-worker, colleague, or supervisor make forceful attempts to have sex with you?	.055	.086	1.144	.253

*Note: 0 represents "never", 1 represents "once or twice", 2 represents "sometimes" 3 represents "often", and 4 represents "most of the time"*

Table 9 shows the perceived offensiveness items related to the questions included in the unwanted sexual attention scale. Women experiencing unwanted sexual attention reported significantly higher distress than men experiencing the same behavior.

Table 9

*Unwanted Sexual Attention offensiveness results by gender, filtered for experience*

Question	Mean		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	Men	Women		
How much did it offend you to have co-workers discuss unwanted sexual matters?	.456	.959	6.225	<.001
How much did it offend you to have a co-worker give you unwanted sexual attention?	.481	1.462	10.157	<.001
How much did it offend you to have a co-worker stare at you in a way that made you uncomfortable?	.383	1.483	11.772	<.001
How much did it offend you to have a co-worker attempt to start an unwanted romantic relationship?	.721	1.613	8.254	<.001
How much did it offend you to have a co-worker continue to ask you for dinner?	.600	1.130	4.605	<.001
How much did it offend you to have a co-worker touch you?	.694	1.715	8.519	<.001
How much did it offend you to have a co-worker participate in unwanted stroking?	.656	2.167	8.603	<.001
How much did it bother you to have a co-worker make forceful attempts to have sex with you?	.9167	2.348	3.037	.005

Table 10

*Quid Pro Quo results by gender for experience*

How often have you experienced this from a co-worker, colleague, or supervisor	Mean		t	p
	Male	Female		
imply rewards for sex?	.121	.17	1.325	.186
imply poor treatment for not doing something sexual?	.050	.073	.925	.355
imply a raise for sex?	1.532	1.40	-1.45	.147
make you do something social with him to be treated well on the job?	.121	.064	-1.91	.057
make you afraid you would be treated poorly without sex?	.055	.08	.907	.365
treat you badly for refusing sex?	.072	.096	.874	.383

*Note: 0 represents "never", 1 represents "once or twice", 2 represents "sometimes" 3 represents "often", and 4 represents "most of the time"*

Females experienced significantly more sexual coercion than males on 5 of the 6 items. The answers to these items speak to actions commonly thought of when defining about sexual harassment. Unexpectedly, Table 11 highlights the sexual coercion offensiveness responses split by gender.

Table 11

*Quid Pro Quo offensiveness results by gender, filtered for experience*

Question	Mean		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	Men	Women		
How much did it offend you to have co-workers imply a reward for sex?	.680	2.057	5.041	<.001
How much did it offend you to have a co-worker imply poor treatment for sex?	1.091	1.944	1.900	.068
How much did it offend you to have a co-worker imply a raise for sex?	2.004	2.052	.581	.561
How much did it offend you to have a co-worker make you do something social with him to be treated well on the job?	.621	1.500	2.999	.004
How much did it offend you to have a co-worker make you afraid you would be treated poorly without sex?	.786	2.000	2.918	.006
How much did it offend you to have a co-worker treat you badly for refusing sex?	.684	1.967	3.416	.001

The SEQ total score is presented in Table 12. Females scored significantly higher than males on average on the total SEQ score. This is the score including all facets of sexual harassment and provides overall results consistent with what was expected for each gender. Overall results and the significance level for the means test are shown in Table 12.

Table 12

*SEQ total score split by gender, means test*

Scale	Means		t	p
	Men	Female		
Total SEQ score	10.17	12.00	1.96	.05

*Regression Analyses*

Descriptions of all the sexual harassment constructs were used to describe sexual harassment in Las Vegas. Previous studies describe sexual harassment as primarily experienced by women. Due to the nature of the Las Vegas nightlife, regression analysis was run on the variables gender and age to determine which sexual harassment concepts were possibly affected more by these two variables. Table 13 highlights five regression models placed in a single table and shows the predictive ability of the independent variables. Gender was predictive of 2 of the 4 subscale scores and on overall scores. Being a woman increased the likelihood of sexual harassment for these scores. Increased age was predictive of higher sexual harassment experience on 3 of the 4 subscale scores and the overall score.

Table 13

*Regression Models using gender and age as predictors of sexual harassment, hostile environment, sexual coercion, gender harassment unwanted sexual attention, Las Vegas only*

Scale	Predictor	B	S.E.	$\beta$	Sig
SEQ Total	Gender	-1.586	.75	-.076	.035
	Age	.323	.081	.142	<.001
Hostile Environment	Gender	-1.605	.602	-.094	.008
	Age	.261	.066	.141	<.001
Sexual Coercion	Gender	.049	.163	.011	.764
	Age	.064	.017	.13	<.001
Unwanted Sexual Attention	Gender	-1.661	.364	-.159	<.001
	Age	.066	.038	.061	.081
Gender Harassment	Gender	.192	.279	.024	.492
	Age	.174	.03	.198	<.001

*Comparison Data*

To build upon the understanding of sexual harassment experiences in Las Vegas, a comparison with data collected in a second location was undertaken. The data collected from Las Vegas was merged with the data collected in Vancouver using the same SEQ measures. The levels of sexual harassment experienced in these two locations are presented in Table 14, separated by gender. Merging the data collected at both locations allowed for the analysis of the city as a predictor variable for sexual harassment. The results of the regression analyses are presented in Table 14. Subscales were analyzed with city, gender and age entered as potential predictors. Table 15 presents the regression analyses results.

Table 14

*Experienced Sexual Harassment for Las Vegas and Vancouver*

	Mean			
	Females n= 1457		Males n=669	
	Vancouver	Las Vegas	Vancouver	Las Vegas
Total SEQ score	7.61	11.63	6.52	10.17
Hostile Environment (GH + USA)	7.3	9.72	6.18	8.24
Unwanted Sexual Attention	4.08	5.33	3.06	3.7
Gender Harassment	3.24	4.31	3.13	4.57
Sexual Coercion	.311	1.89	.493	1.96

The test of age, gender, and city revealed that city was the only significant predictor across all subscales and the composite score. The regression model also indicated that gender was a predictor of sexual harassment experience for the SEQ total score, the hostile environment composite score, and the unwanted sexual attention score. Age was a significant predictor of the total SEQ score, the hostile environment score, the sexual coercion score, and the gender harassment score. The city variable was a significant predictor above and beyond age and gender for all measures. The predictive ability of the independent variables is shown in Table 15. The regression model was significant overall ( $F=29.51, p<.001$ ).

Table 15

*Regression Model using age, gender, and city as predictors of sexual harassment, hostile environment, sexual coercion, gender harassment unwanted sexual attention, Las Vegas and Vancouver*

Scale	Predictor	B	S.E.	$\beta$	Sig
SEQ Total	Gender	-1.314	.452	-.065	.004
	Age	.152	.06	.057	.011
	City	3.716	.437	.193	<.001
Hostile Environment (GH + USA)	Gender	-1.331	.386	-.078	.001
	Age	.116	.051	.051	.023
	City	2.162	.372	.132	<.001
Sexual Coercion	Gender	.115	.093	.026	.218
	Age	.039	.012	.066	.002
	City	1.499	.090	.352	<.001
Unwanted Sexual Attention	Gender	-1.32	.237	.101	<.001
	Age	.019	.031	.014	.531
	City	1.017	.228	-.125	<.001
Gender Harassment	Gender	.023	.181	.003	.897
	Age	.094	.024	.087	<.001
	City	1.088	.174	.140	<.001

This analysis using the data from the study in Vancouver added some value to the notion that the city of Las Vegas likely has an effect on the perceived experience of sexual harassment by those living and working in the city. These variables all appear to be possible significant predictors of sexual harassment. The regression analyses of the merged data indicate a stronger significance level for the city variable than the gender or are variable. This also falls in line with sociocultural theory which argues that cultures can tolerate and even create sexual harassment based on wide scale societal factors.



## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This study used a convenience sample of 862 students at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas to describe sexual harassment experiences in Las Vegas. This study used the Sexual Experience Questionnaire to describe the nature of sexual harassment in Las Vegas. The survey also contained Las Vegas specific questions about concepts related to “the sexual nature” of the city, places of employment for participants, and the behaviors of tourists. The Las Vegas results were contrasted with a sample of 1,264 students from Vancouver, British Columbia. Analyses were conducted to describe the nature of sexual harassment for both genders in Las Vegas as well as test the sociocultural theory that explains large-scale contextual factors that promote and tolerate sexual harassment.

Many would agree that the nature of Las Vegas is different from most other cities in the United States. Describing how it is different is difficult however. Most would speak, at least in part, to the expectation of female entertainment, the readily available supply of casual sexual encounters, the suspension of normal social rules due to the nature of visiting the “adult playground”, and the ability to go back to their hometown and go on living the “normal” life when it is all over. These concepts are incredibly difficult to study empirically. This study was a first step in beginning to describe what it means to be different as far as Las Vegas is concerned. Although there are numerous concepts that are difficult to quantitatively measure, the concepts are distinguishable. It is believed that even though definitions of sexual harassments differ across laws, most

people maintain similar understandings of sexual harassment concepts as it applies to them individually. Research has shown that the more coercive in nature an act gets, the more agreement there is about the act being harassing (Fitzgerald & Omerod, 1991). The current study necessitates the review of sexual harassment and its possible causes.

Although gender has been a popular concept relating to sexual harassment in nearly every respect, there is reason to believe that there are wider-scale issues at hand as well. Maybe it is difficult to describe Las Vegas and what makes it different from other cities, but the results from this study begin to describe just what it means to be different.

This study sought to test a sociocultural theory of sexual harassment, which is also loosely rooted in feminism theory as well. This study revealed that the city and the nature of accepted norms may be the strongly predictive of sexual harassment experiences based on the differences from merged data. This study showed that gender would be a predicting independent variable for certain types of sexual harassment as well. Gender has been a popular topic for researchers studying sexual harassment since the late 1970s. Although this study is based on the collective cultural values of a city, there was also continued proof that gender will have a significant impact on the chances of experiencing sexual harassment. The expectation of norms for genders is believed to be part of that sociocultural theory of sexual harassment and the results from this study support that notion. In Las Vegas, working in casinos, nightclubs, and strip clubs, comes with certain norms that are adopted. Not only are there norms from these places that can lead to sexual harassment, but the perceptions of tourists also feed this notion of what it means to be a female or what it means to work in a given industry in Las Vegas.

This study also indicated a significantly higher rate of perceived sexual harassment experience for female participants than male participants, which is consistent with previous literature. What is not generally measured by sexual harassment researchers is the reaction of the male participants. This study was interesting in that it found relative high rates of certain types of sexual harassment being experienced by males. Their perception of this harassment, in terms of offense taken, was still significantly lower (less offended) than among women experiencing the same harassment.

Regression analysis showed that gender was a significant predictor of sexual harassment; it also showed that city was more significant. Maybe the culture of the city has expanded past gender roles with regards to expected norms. Maybe the city of Las Vegas has simply become an adult playground creating negative values that affect both genders. Most of the SEQ items, even the significantly different ones, indicated a general agreement about the given item for both genders. Means were still close on a number of items indicating similar “agreement” about topics.

The current research also shows, at least, some age effect. Although it was not as strong as of a predictor of sexual harassment as the city for the data collection, age is also important. This is consistent with prior research as age has been repeatedly linked as a possible cause.

## Limitations

While the data from this study are helpful when describing the nature of sexual harassment, this study does not allow for generalization. This study is exploratory in nature and the data should be used to guide further research on the study of sexual harassment. The Las Vegas sample only contains students from UNLV and thus is not a random sample representative of all those who live and work in Las Vegas. Gender and age were found to be significantly related to sexual harassment, but this could also be a representation of those who frequent the most sexual areas of Las Vegas. The significance of gender as a result of perceived harassment is consistent with what previous studies have found (Fitzgerald & Omerod, 1991).

Perhaps the most important limitation to note from this study is similar to those from most prior studies. Sexual harassment has been and will continue to be an act based mostly on perception. Not only are definitions of sexual harassment based on perception, but so are experiences. Even though the government and other official governing agencies have sought to define sexual harassment, studies of individuals will continue to be problematic when it comes to assessing sexual harassment definitions and experiences (MacKinnon, 1979; Fitzgerald, 1990). This is a limitation due to the variation in respondent answers for sexual harassment questions. Perception can lead participants to answer questions differently based on varying definitions of acts.

The differences in perception of sexual harassment could be to blame for the higher rates of male experiences of certain sexual harassment acts. The SEQ subscale based on acts of sexual coercion saw higher rates of sexual harassment perpetrated

against male participants. The individual definition of sexual harassment, or possibly more importantly, the definition of “experience” could have led to higher rates of experience for males. This type of definitional issue has been common for those who have studied sexual harassment. The combination of varying definitions and the nature of self-report studies can lead to issues of validity and reliability (Golafshani, 2003); However, this study employed the best composite measure used to date based on literature reviews in this field.

The sociocultural theory of sexual harassment is grounded partly in feminism and it is evident in sections of the questionnaire. The SEQ contains questions that speak to the gender issue related to sexual harassment and are gender specific. Items related to the quid pro quo subscale for experience and offensiveness contained an item asking the participant about a situation where a supervisor made him/her do something social with “him”. The use of leading questions will guide certain responses from participants and researchers must be wary when these types of questions are used.

Another consideration from the survey was the absence of eighteen students from the gender analysis. Students had the ability to skip questions from the survey so 18 students could not be included in the gender comparisons. There was also variability in the responses for questions throughout the entire questionnaire due to this same issue.

### Implications

Even with some data limitations this study leads to some important findings. One of the biggest findings from this study is the importance of the nature of an entire city and how it can lead to an environment of sexual harassment. Many have simply stated that

Las Vegas is different than other cities. This is the first study in which the “difference” is beginning to be described. Qualitatively measuring that difference should be the next step in continuing research based on sexual harassment and how the characteristics of a city can produce very different outcomes using the same scale. This study did find significant differences between males’ and females’ experiences of sexual harassment, with women being more bothered by harassing behavior. This finding is in line with what has been published on sexual harassment (Till, 1980; Fineran & Bennett, 1999; Gutek & Cohen, 1987). Based on the sociocultural theory of sexual harassment, the results of this study indicate that the tolerance of an overtly sexual nature can lead to a rise in or even create a culture of sexual harassment.

Future works on the study of sexual harassment should continue to test these variables as predictors of sexual harassment. Although many agree that Las Vegas is different than other cities, finding a way to actually measure that concept is imperative. Until there is a way to actually measure the overtly sexual nature of a city, there will not be a true way to assess the effect of that overtly sexual nature. Future research should seek to find comparable cities to both Las Vegas and Vancouver to better understand the concepts of sexual harassment. One limitation that should be noted was the difference in ethnicity between these two comparison populations. The sociocultural theory should continue to be tested as a cause for sexual harassment, especially in cities where the culture is what appears to be the cause of sexual harassment.

Future research should seek to test age as a possible determinant for sexual harassment as well. Prior research, as well as this study, show that age could be linked to sexual harassment experience.

Overall, this research contributed new information to our understanding of community cultures that promote casual sexual activity as a major part of its advertising campaign. The message that Las Vegas sells comes with a side consequence of elevated sexual harassment of local employees.

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