

## **GENDER, CONFLICT, AND WORKPLACE BULLYING: IS CIVILITY POLICY THE SILVER BULLET?<sup>1</sup>**

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The experience of office bullying appears to be commonplace, with approximately thirty-five percent of the workforce reporting psychological and/or physical abuse (Workplace Bullying Institute [WBI], 2011). Websites, public forums, and media scrutiny have made bullying an everyday topic. Correspondingly, there has been renewed attention in academic studies on this increasing form of interpersonal violence. Much of bullying research has focused on: (1) a description of the phenomenon and its widespread impact; (2) perpetrator and target characteristics; (3) outcomes such as stress and somatic complaints; and (4) the aftermath on firms (Namic, 2003; Rayner and Hoel, 1997; Salin, 2003). Untangling the causes and consequences of adult bullying can be complex because according to Rayner and Hoel (1997: 188): “The breadth of the phenomenon encompasses many different forms of behavior. . .”

More than half of targets in workplace bullying cases are women (WBI, 2011). A potential explanation is that stereotypes regarding their behavior (in some cases)

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remain stubborn (Duehr and Bono, 2006). Moreover, when women display incongruent role behaviors they may be punished (Berdahl, 2007; Eagly and Sczesny, 2009). However, the research lacks in describing what may happen when women attempt to defend themselves from a bullying attack, and, if any form of organizational intervention can improve the situation. As Rayner and Hoel (1997) have alluded, studying a confluence of variables (as opposed to univariate factors) may be necessary to understand how deviant workplace acts unfold.

The purpose of this paper is to investigate how men and women are differentially perceived when they are bullied at work, and whether the existence of a civility policy makes a positive difference. Specifically, the following studies explore whether women who violate gender norms are viewed as more responsible when bullied (as compared to men), and if aggressors are considered less justified when organizations have institutionalized anti-bullying measures. The researchers suspect there are undercurrents of enhanced responsibility (and perhaps a lack of perceived collegiality) when a woman defends herself in a bullying scenario. The researchers also speculate that a civility policy can impact the way individuals process situations.

Perceived levels of target collegiality and responsibility, rater hostile sexism, and bully justification (and their interaction with target gender, reaction, rater sex, and rater race) are analyzed under conditions where a civility policy is and is not present. This study examines the interaction of these variables to extrapolate information for future research.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The Workplace Bullying Institute (WBI) defines bullying as “repeated, health harming abusive conduct committed by bosses and co-workers” which can include “sabotage by others that prevent[s] work from getting done, verbal abuse, threatening conduct, intimidation, and humiliation” (WBI, 2011: “What is Workplace Bullying?”). The preponderance of bullying behavior is the result of non-physical assault (Salin, 2003), such as verbal and psychological attack. These assaults can include shouting, mobbing (the infliction of abuse from a group directed toward a single individual), insults delivered in an audience setting, ostracism, blowing things out of proportion, wielding power in a manner designed to put people in their place (e.g., officiousness), misplaced blame, disrespectful discourse, and using positional power to leverage work-related credit. Bullying is not an across-the-board workplace phenomenon, but is pinpointed toward certain individuals (Salin, 2003). The majority of bullied persons are either subordinate in rank (by 71%) or are direct reports (Namie, 2003).

### **Workplace Bullying: Gender and Race**

The social construction of gender affects the frequency, duration, and type of bullying that women experience. Bad behavior does not impact genders equally, with women reporting “scapegoating” and bullying from both colleagues and subordinates (Salin, 2005). Only female respondents in Salin’s (2005) study noted they were targets of subordinate bullying.

Differential treatment could be the result of cultural conditioning. Girls, for example, are taught that displaying competence, aptitude, or ambition may have negative overtones (Fisher and Davis, 1996). Consequently, when expectations of “feminine” behavior are thwarted (e.g., when women are considered “bully broads”), they may suffer consequences (Eagly and Sczesny, 2009), even from their own gender (Cikara and Fiske, 2009). These perceptions are compounded by hostile sexism, which encompasses negative stereotypical, derogatory, and patronizing attitudes toward women. Hostile sexism manifests in covert discriminatory behaviors, or in “selective incivility.” To avoid organizational sanction, bullies may use underhanded means of expressing prejudicial attitudes within companies (Barreto *et al.*, 2009).

According to Berdahl (2007), assertive or “uppity” women in male-dominated firms are the ones who have the highest chance of experiencing sexual harassment: “... sexual harassment is driven not out of desire for women who meet feminine ideals, but out of a desire to punish those who violate them” (Berdahl, 2007: 434). Could the same hold true for women who display behaviors that are considered outside the norm of “acceptable” female conduct?

Because of ingrained socialization patterns and corresponding expectations, assertive women may be on the receiving end of harsh judgments from other people. Furthermore, disrupting male/female norms of interaction could be perceived as inappropriately “stepping out of bounds” (Babcock and Laschever, 2003). Statistical discrimination indicates that the number of women in leadership positions is small, and as a result, stereotypic notions are slow to change (Eagly and Sczesny, 2009).

The above research taken as a whole suggests that women have a narrower band of acceptable behaviors than men; in other words, they are expected to walk a behavioral tightrope that fits with societal expectations regardless of the situation (Babcock and Laschever, 2003). In addition, those who veer toward the hostile side of the ambivalent sexism spectrum may negatively evaluate women who display behaviors considered masculine, or that violate “traditional gender roles” (Masser and Abrams, 2004). Some have suggested that women are unjustly blamed even when they are harassed or assaulted (Masser and Abrams, 2004; Miner-Rubino and Cortina, 2004).

In a related vein, Fox and Stallworth (2005) reported that scant attention has been paid to studying the nexus of workplace bullying and race. According to the Workplace Bullying Institute (WBI, 2011), Hispanics report the highest rates of bullying, African-Americans the second highest, and Asians the lowest. Interestingly, Fox and Stallworth (2005) found that although Asian, African-American, and Hispanic/Latino groups indicated higher levels than Whites, only Hispanic/Latino participants experienced greater general levels of bullying that were unrelated to either their race or ethnicity. Correspondingly, the WBI (2011) concluded that current laws and company practices have been insufficient to address the harassment of racial minorities. Based on their history of discrimination, it is proposed here that both women and persons of color may react more strongly to bullying in the workplace than whites.

### **Workplace Bullying Policy**

The WBI (2011) survey revealed that there is support for legislation that would dissuade employees from harassing their coworkers. According to Namie, it is time to

“. . . treat workplace bullying the same as sexual harassment or racial discrimination . . . and to establish rules of conduct and penalties” (2003: 1). To this end, organization-wide structures, policies and procedures, and regular interventions must be crafted to curb bullying (Daniel, 2006; Lewis and Orford, 2005). Employers should respond by: (1) giving due consideration to the target complaint; (2) providing a safe environment for the complainant; (3) investigating charges of abuse; and (4) differentiating bullying from interpersonal conflict (Namie, 2007).

The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM, a human resources professional trade organization) reports that a mere three percent of organizations have a policy that is specific to workplace bullying (WBI, 2012). Ideally, procedures to prevent abuse at work should be led by an organization’s top administration in order to set the tone and corresponding expectations (Daniel, 2006; Namie, 2003). Behavioral procedure should be widely disseminated through in-house publications, and periodically reviewed through training exercises (Daniel, 2009). Namie (2003) also argues that coaching, counseling, and training should be part of a process to implement and enforce a civility policy. The bully should not be appeased, the target should not be blamed, and the bullying behavior should not be ignored (Daniel, 2006). Coworkers and managers, however, often sidestep the issue because they fear backlash from the bully (Daniel, 2006), and there is often no anti-bullying policy to inform employees’ actions. This lack of workplace procedure may soon change, as The Healthy Workplace Bill has been introduced in at least 25 states (WBI, 2013).

Although preliminary research has indicated diversity management and sexual harassment policies may in fact prevent work abuse (Gilbert and Stead, 1999; Stockdale and Bhattacharya, 2009), little if any research has investigated the impact civility policies may have on organizations. Considering this gap within the literature (and the importance of the issue), a closer examination of steps to create a better working environment is warranted. Kelly (2006), for example, recommends a trans-disciplinary investigation involving professionals from multiple spectrums to construct a civility code. To complement their perspective, Rayner *et al.* (2002) advocate trying to “crack the complexity” by using data collection to delineate factors that contribute to workplace bullying.

The first study attempts to address Rayner *et al.*’s (2002) suggested course of action by exploring the role civility policies have on influencing perceptions of bullied targets (particularly those who attempt to defend themselves). The broad research question is explored in R1, while the [dual] role of hostile sexism as an independent variable is examined in R2. Previous studies have found that gender accounts for variance in hostile sexism (Glick *et al.*, 2000; Napier *et al.*, 2010). As such, it is possible that race may also be a contributor [R1]. In turn, hostile sexism may be associated with negative perceptions of women [R2].

*R1: How do the independent variables of gender, reaction, bullying policy, rater sex, and rater race impact perceived levels of collegiality, responsibility, bully justification, and hostile sexism?*

*R2: Does hostile sexism impact the way women are perceived within a bullying scenario?*

The literature suggests that women who defend themselves when bullied may be perceived as less collegial and more responsible for the bullying incident. It is possible, however, that a civility policy might mitigate those perceptions. In addition, individuals who are impacted by inequity at work might react more strongly to bullying incidents.

The proposed research is a step toward understanding the complexities of workplace bullying by investigating whether the existence of a civility policy mitigates negative perceptions toward individuals who violate expected gender norms. This exploratory study builds upon previously published work (using student samples) that tested the influence of policy on decision-making (e.g., Gilbert and Stead, 1999; Heilman *et al.*, 1992).

## METHOD

A total of 238 students enrolled in advanced business courses agreed to participate in this research. This study was conducted at a four-year institution in the Southeast, with a sample comprised of 145 men and 93 women. Due to the small number of persons of color, the original survey descriptors of Asian-American, Hispanic, African-American, White, and Native American were collapsed into one variable (race) with two categories - white and persons of color. There were 190 white and 48 persons of color within the sample. Respondents were from a primarily "commuter" university, with an average age of 23 years, average full-time work experience of 2.53 years, and average part-time work experience of 4.72 years. Some students at this institution are considered "non-traditional," in that they are returning after a hiatus, and/or have full-time work and family obligations. Based on the sample, they have high average working experience and consist of predominantly working students. The average age for undergraduate students at this university is 23, which appears above the norm compared to that of other undergraduate institutions.

The distributed surveys were based on a crossed manipulation, with variables of policy (bullying policy, no bullying policy), reaction (reaction or no), and gender (male, female). In other words, this research investigated if individuals (either male or female) who were bullied under the organizational rubric of a bullying policy (or no policy) were differentially treated based on whether they chose to defend themselves when attacked (reaction), or remained silent (no reaction). There was a mean cell size of 29.75 across all eight conditions.

Packets were distributed within class time to advanced management and marketing students; subjects were informed that their participation was voluntary, and could be discontinued at any time. The first pages in distributed packets consisted (in order) of: (1) a cover sheet explaining the study on which subjects recorded demographic information; and (2) a meeting scenario accompanied by questions. In the "Reaction" scenario, an employee "Debra" interrupts "Tony" (the district manager) during a sales meeting to explain an alternative viewpoint. Tony castigates her in an explosive manner. However, Debra defends herself before the group, rising to Tony's tenor and volume. In the "no reaction" scenario, Debra chooses to say nothing. The same scenario (in a different manipulation) was presented using a male-

bullied target, “Ed.” Group composition was stated in the “Scenario Background Information” as primarily male to heighten the gender manipulation:

12 men: 8 district managers, 4 sales people

3 women: 1 senior sales person, 2 new hires

The next page consisted of a resume for each candidate (Ed or Debra), which included information regarding their education, employment, awards, and associations (which remained the same across conditions). “Employees” received several awards including The Gold Circle Sales Club Award and the Most Promising Junior Salesperson. The club name “Swedish American Association” was included in the “Associations” section so that sex and not race would appear salient. Both candidates held both a BBA and an MBA in Marketing. On the respondent sheet, subjects were asked (and in many instances correctly identified) the applicant name and club as manipulation checks. The candidates’ average job performance rating across all conditions was 6.67 on a nine point bi-polar scale. Half of the surveys contained an “Anti-bullying policy.” [This policy was adapted from SHARP, Research for Safe Work, with permission]. It included statements pertaining to the definition of workplace bullying, employee rights in a civil environment, investigation procedures, disciplinary action, and cultural tone.

Similar to the Gilbert and Stead (1999) study, the research design and manipulation check were patterned after Heilman *et al.* (1989). One of the primary dependent variables was a three item measure of collegiality (adapted from Gilbert and Lownes-Jackson, 2005), measured on a nine-point bi-polar scale. The second dependent variable was the Hostile Sexism subscale from the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (Glick and Fiske, 1996) (used with permission)<sup>2</sup>. Two other single-item variables were used in this research: Justified (Do you think that the senior managers were justified in their reactions toward this employee?) and Responsible (How responsible do you think that this employee is for the incident that occurred?) (adapted from Gilbert, 2005) both measured on a nine-point bi-polar scale. Coefficient alphas for the collegiality and hostile sexism scales were 0.71 (three items), and 0.88 (eleven items), respectively.

## RESULTS

A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to test the differences on four dependent variables (Responsible, Justified, Hostile Sexism, and Collegiality) based on five factors or class variables (Gender, Reaction, Policy, RaterSex, and RaterRace). This model simultaneously tested all interactions and main effects of the five factor variables to the four dependent variables. Because the groups had an unbalanced sample, Least Square Means (LSMs) was used to compare group means. In all multiple comparison means (post hoc tests) from different groups, Tukey’s HSD was used.

MANOVA indicated that the interaction effects of five factor (independent) variables on the four dependent variables Responsibility, Justified, Hostility, and

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<sup>2</sup> Due to transcription wording, the last item of the Hostile Sexism Inventory was not reverse scored, as in the original research of Glick and Fiske (1996).

Collegiality were not significant. However, it indicated that the interaction effects of four factor independent variables (Gender, Reaction, RaterSex, and RaterRace) on the four dependent variables were significant with Wilks'  $\lambda = 0.93$ ;  $F(4, 203) = 3.77$ ;  $p < 0.0063$  and power of the test  $(1 - \beta) = 0.89$ . The MANOVA also indicated that the interaction effects of four independent variables (Gender, Policy, RaterSex, and RaterRace) on the four dependent variables were significant with Wilks'  $\lambda = 0.94$ ;  $F(4, 203) = 3.29$ ;  $p = 0.0121$ . Further results showed that among the four dependent variables, Collegiality and Responsibility were affected by the interaction effects of four independent variables. The dependent variable Justified was affected by the interaction effects of two independent variables Gender and Policy, whereas the dependent variable Hostile Sexism was only affected by the main effect of RaterSex. More detailed analyses revealed some interesting findings.

Although four way interactions are infrequently reported, this study provides these analyses to showcase the complex interplay between civility policy and associated variables. These results are offered in the spirit of more fully understanding the profound interconnection among a variety of factors (see Table 1 for a summarization of the interaction and main effects).

*Collegiality.* (1) Interaction effects of independent variables Gender, Policy, RaterSex, and RaterRace were significant on the dependent variable of Collegiality:  $F(1, 206) = 5.99$  and  $p = 0.0151$ , with means = 7.78 and 4.00, and standard deviations 0.96 and 1.62, respectively. In other words, male persons of color rating men (Ed) indicated that those in the Policy scenario were more collegial.

(2) A second (surprising) four-way interaction revealed that male raters (persons of color) within the policy condition rated the man (Ed) as more collegial than did their female rater (persons of color) counterparts. In this interaction, means = 7.78 and 3.67, and standard deviations 0.96 and 1.73, respectively. Both interactions (1) and (2) are displayed in Figure 1.

(3) Collegiality was also significantly affected by the four-way interaction of Gender, Reaction, RaterSex, and RaterRace:  $F(1, 206) = 4.20$  and  $p = 0.0421$  with means = 7.17 and 4.73, and standard deviations 1.34 and 1.27, respectively. Results showed that male raters (persons of color) rated men (Ed) when he reacted as more collegial than did their female (persons of color) counterparts.

(4) *Responsibility.* The dependent variable "Responsible" was significantly affected by the interaction of Gender, Policy, RaterSex, and RaterRace with  $F(1, 206) = 5.37$  and  $p = 0.0211$ . The difference was found between male and female persons of color in the no policy condition, with means = 7.00 and 5.66, and standard deviations = 0.62 and 0.51, respectively. The interpretation is that male raters (persons of color) in the no policy condition rated Ed as more responsible for the bullying incident than their female (persons of color) counterparts.

(5) *Justified.* Analyses also indicated a significant interaction  $F(1, 206) = 4.19$  and  $p = 0.0421$  between the variables Gender and Policy on the dependent variable Justified. Further examination showed that the difference appeared in the policy versus the no policy condition. In the "no policy" condition (in which Ed was rated), supervisors were seen as more justified in their reactions compared to the policy manipulation. The means (and standard deviations) for the male rates in the no policy and policy conditions were 4.46 (0.38) and 3.72 (0.32), respectively.

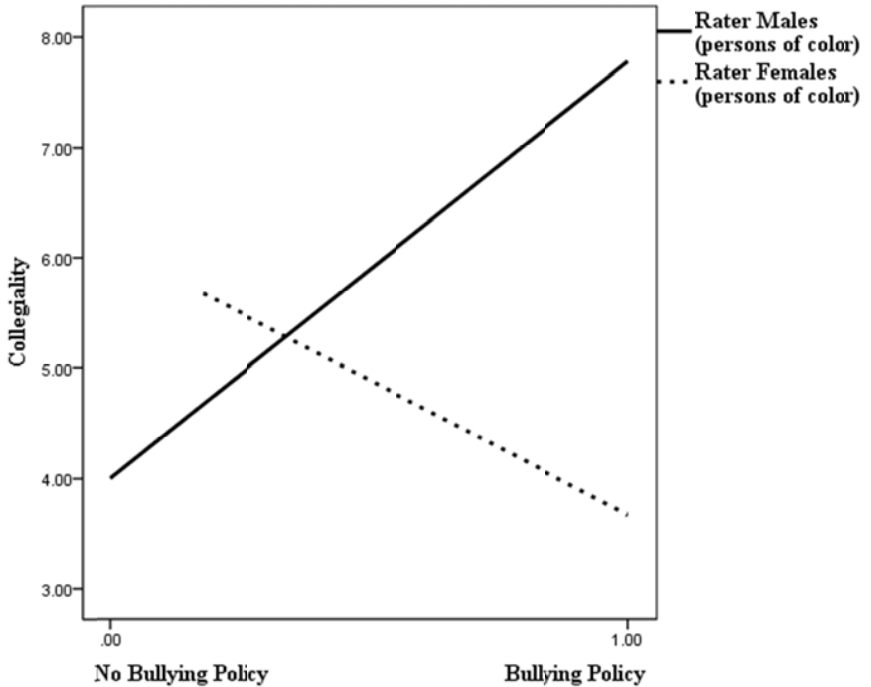
**Table 1**  
**Mean Comparisons of Collegiality, Responsibility, Justified, and Hostile Sexism**  
**based on Interaction and Main Effects**

Dependent Variable	Factors	M	SD	Significant Difference
Collegiality	Men*react*rate	7.78	0.96	Policy > No policy * (1)
	Rate persons of color	4.00	1.62	
	Men*no policy*rate	7.78	0.96	Rater Males > Rater Females * (2)
	Rate persons of color	3.67	1.73	
	Men*react*rate	7.17	1.34	Rater Males > Rater Females * (3)
	Rate persons of color	4.73	1.27	
Responsible	Men*no policy*rate	7.00	0.62	Rater Males > Rater Females * (4)
	Rate persons of color	5.66	0.51	
Justified	Men	3.72	0.32	Policy < No policy * (5)
	Rate persons of color	4.46	0.38	
Hostile Sexism	RaterSex	2.62	0.26	Rater males > Rater Females ** (6)
	Rate persons of color	1.84	0.20	

Note: N = 238. M = Means; SD = Standard Deviation. Men refers to 'Ed' in the experimental manipulation.  
 Significant Difference: \* p < 0.05; \*\* p < 0.01



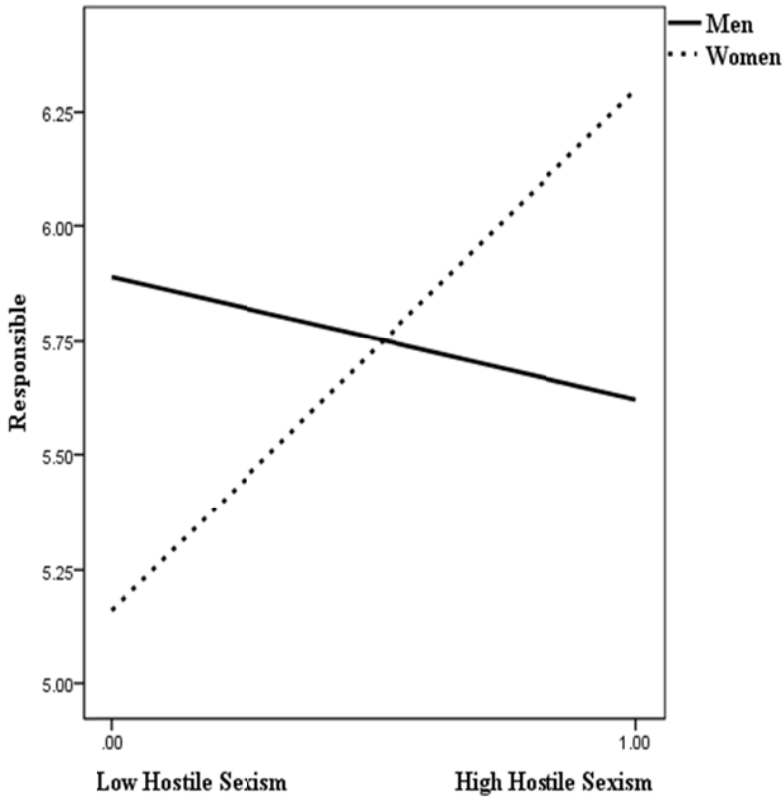
**Figure 1**  
**Four-way Interaction of Gender, Policy, RaterSex, and RaterRace on Collegiality**



(6) Finally, the only dependent variable with no significant interaction effect was Hostile Sexism. In other words, rater sex was a main effect of Hostile Sexism  $F(1, 206) = 8.60$  and  $p = 0.0040$ ;  $F(1, 206) = 8.60$  and  $p = 0.0040$ . The results showed that male subject raters displayed more hostile sexism than female subject raters (across all experimental conditions). The means (and standard deviations) for RaterSex in this main effect for men and women were 2.62 (0.26) and 1.84 (0.20), respectively.

From the prior literature review, Hostile Sexism can be considered as both an independent and dependent variable. It may be differentiated by demography, and it may also impact how individuals are perceived. The role of hostile sexism as an independent variable was explored using a two way ANOVA, with the variables of Gender and Hostile Sexism as independent variables, and Responsibility as a dependent variable. Using a median split to dichotomize hostile sexism, results displayed a significant interaction effect between Gender and Hostile sexism on the perception of responsibility, with  $F(1, 230) = 6.54$  and  $p\text{-value} = 0.01$ , suggesting that under conditions of high hostile sexism, women were considered more responsible for the bullying incident than men. This interaction is displayed in Figure 2.

**Figure 2**  
**Interaction of Hostile Sexism and Gender on Responsibility**



*Qualitative Analyses.* In an effort to provide analyses from multiple perspectives and methodologies, a qualitative analysis was conducted in a small, southeastern city to assess how men and women were viewed within conflict situations at work. This follow-up study consists entirely of working adults, and is included to provide more of a “real world” element to the research findings. Specifically, the methodology is modeled after Tepper (2000), who used random digit dialing. Of the 387 individuals contacted, 55 were not eligible for the study because they were not working full time (nor had a supervisor), and 265 declined participation. Of the 67 who agreed to participate, eleven returned usable questionnaires in an enclosed business envelope, for a response rate of 16.4%. The average respondent age was 48, and the average full time work experience was 24 years. All but one individual reported some type of advanced degree course work, and all respondents were white. Only three reported that a “bullying policy” was in force at their workplace. The sample was comprised of six women and five men.

Subjects were asked to respond to two questions: (1) Who is bullied at work: men or women? Who do you think are worse bullies? (2) Who do you think is more likely to defend themselves when bullied at work: men or women? In both instances subjects were asked to provide a rationale for their responses. Based on a review of the relevant literature, results were categorized into subsets representing four distinct theoretical streams:

(1) Androgynous. Stereotypical expectations (while not overtly communicated) are still prominent, despite increasing numbers of women in managerial positions (Barreto *et al.*, 2009). One exception is Dickman and Eagly (2000) who found an increase in gender androgyny.

(2) Hierarchical dominance. Across cultures and ethnicity, men have been assumed to have greater latitude in behavioral expression; this supposition has even been supported in frequency of bullying reports. In their study of position status and workplace aggression, Lee and Brotheridge (2011) found that men at work reported using both indirect and direct forms of aggressive behavior more than women.

(3) Internalized sexism. "Internalized sexism refers to women's incorporation of sexist practices, and to the circulation of those practices among women, even in the absence of men" (Bearman *et al.*, 2009: 11). Bearman *et al.* (2009) suggest that sexist treatment women receive is reflected in self-denigrating attitudes and interactions with others. Similarly, Babcock and Laschever (2003) report negative reactions from both genders in their research on perceptions of women initiating negotiations for higher compensation.

(4) "Walk the line." Executive women in the Ragins *et al.*'s (1998) study suggested the following behaviors to counter male resistance: "Do not make waves. Do not disagree and be correct (kiss of death!). [Working] longer, harder, smarter means nothing if you have a mind of your own and express your own ideas and opinions" (Ragins *et al.*, 1998: 30). These women were careful not to "upstage" men, and to walk a fine line in terms of response to their peers. The qualitative analyses are represented in Tables 2 and 3.

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**Table 2**  
**Categorical Representation of Targets and Bullies by Gender**

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Who is bullied at work, men or women? Who do you think are worse bullies?

Androgynous

Bullies are looking for weak people, or easily intimidated. The sex seems secondary. Speaking as a professional I have seen both sexes bully - they just do things in a different manner. (F)

I work in an elementary school. Most employees are women. Only 3-4 men in the building daily. Most bullying occurs with student body (children K-5<sup>th</sup> graders). (F)

I am a teacher. I don't feel bullied by anyone. Years ago there was one female who bullied me and others. She didn't last long though. I'm not sure bullying is gender related. I think it is more personality, character, or even genetic related. (F)

No male/female difference as long as intimidation without that of physical violence is considered bullying (e.g., that of poor performance rating or exclusion from an activity). (M)

### Internalized sexism

I'm not sure what you would define as "bullied" as it applied to adults. I can say that I have known all my life that women are the hands down worst back-biting, sabotaging, passive-aggressive gender from infancy on. This is not better in adulthood or in the workplace. I have only two or three female friends. I have always preferred to hang out with and talk to males. (F)

In education it's mostly women in the early grades. Women bully other women - over clothing, hair, educational level, power making decisions, student rolls, seniority. All leads to power and control issues. (F)

### Hierarchical dominance

Men are to provide their dominance and/or because they are mentally unstable (specific instance with the worst offender). (M)

Men are "worse" bullies due to increased likelihood of physical threat/intimidation as part of bullying. (M)

I have run into more women bullies who seem to have a need to prove themselves up front in order to gain respect and get other people to do what they need later in the project. (M)

The perennial problem with males . . . is their insecurity around smart strong females. Their reactions have always been some form of put-down and dismissiveness. (F)

I think women are more bullied at work, but that both genders are equally bad bullies. Most bullies, regardless of their gender, are more likely to view women as vulnerable and less likely to defend themselves. Consequently men and women bullies target more women than men. (M)

Women – this is the South, it still remains a man's world. I am a nurse – men always have a higher salary – even if classified as peers doing the same job. This causes conflicts and men are not disciplined the same. In most medical settings women are in charge and they tend to take out their frustrations on other women. They are intimidated by men. Women do not have a hierarchy like men and they do not stick together even for a common goal. (F)

“Walk the line” orientation

I believe that men have more issues. Testosterone is a bigger trouble maker than estrogen. Men are more like to be bullies but I believe when women are bullies they can be much worse. They seem to be more methodical about bullying and less likely to quit. Also they appear to have a better ability to be careful about it to avoid getting caught. (M)

**Table 3**  
**Categorical Representation of Defense by Gender**

Who do you think is more likely to defend themselves when bullied at work, men or women?

Androgynous

Men won't necessarily defend themselves – they just don't engage in my line of work. (F)

I think both are equally likely to defend themselves. It depends on the individual. (M)

Women – they have a stronger advocacy organization (via EEOC). And are more likely to take advantage of that facility. The men are afraid of repercussions later because the bully is never removed, just relocated within the organization. (M)

Internalized sexism

Women are absolutely more likely to defend themselves but they do it by going behind your back, criticizing you, without cause, to your superiors and spreading negative gossip to undermine your status. (F)

As a whole I would have to say men. They are leaders and will “fight” for their cause or rights. Women as a whole don't like tension and will give in to make peace. (F)

Hierarchical dominance

Men – it is a man's world – always has been and always will be especially in the South and in the Bible Belt. (F)

Men would seem to be more defensive and more likely to retaliate. Women show more emotion and “vent” their feelings as to where men “bottle” it up and they let go in a retaliatory form. (F)

Men more likely to defend themselves as they are more likely to “externalize” and women are more likely to “internalize.” (M)

Men. Of course I can only evaluate what I have seen in my profession. In health care women are generally “in charge.” Men generally intimidate women in the workplace. (F)

Women. Men are not as emotional and can take more in stride, while still setting small boundaries. (M)

“Walk the line” orientation

I would say women; they are more likely to handle it through the proper channels. Men don’t want to be a “tattle tale” which makes you seem weak. They will resort to violence but will typically try to avoid it to keep their job. (M)

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The above categorizations are consistent with themes identified earlier in the literature review. Men for example were reported as more likely “to provide dominance,” and to engage in “put downs and dismissiveness” of strong, smart females, while at the same time engaging in “externalization” and “retaliation.” Women were more likely to use the formal reporting channels in place, while at the same time engaging in subtle, covert retaliation, that more befitting with gender role expectations of “niceness.” They also displayed overt denigration of their own gender, congruent with the notion of internalized sexism.

## DISCUSSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Results of this study showed that male raters displayed more hostile sexism than female raters (across all experimental conditions), despite the fact that the average age of men was 22.98 years. In addition, hostile sexism negatively impacted how women were perceived. These findings confirm previous research, which found that when women display “atypical” behaviors (that is, when they violate societal gender norms), they may suffer negative repercussions (Babcock and Laschever, 2003; Eagly and Sczesny, 2009; Glick and Fiske, 1996). This difference is still evident, despite the fact that more women than men are enrolled in undergraduate (and in some graduate) programs (Barreto *et al.*, 2009), and despite changing roles of men and women in both personal and professional spheres (Eagly and Sczesny, 2009). The gender disconnect signals there is still work to do in terms of sensitivity training to create empathy, and in providing education on the destructive nature of gender stereotypes (and the importance of replacing these with valid “sociotypes”). Future field studies could examine if civility policies are more effective in companies that already have procedures in place to promote equity (such as diversity management programs), and

in states and municipalities that have passed anti-bullying legislation. Relatedly, cross-cultural research could explore whether countries in which bullying is illegal fare more favorably (in terms of perceptions) than those in which there is no anti-bullying legislation. The fact that bullying is not illegal in the United States makes it easier for managers to ignore (Namic, 2003; Hankins, 2007).

These findings also indicate that in the male “no policy” condition, supervisors were seen as more justified in their reactions compared to the policy manipulation. In this case, anti-bullying policies do appear to have a positive impact, in that overbearing and “irrational” actions of the supervisor (and of the co-workers who sat idly by) may not have been considered good form. It is also both surprising (and somewhat disconcerting) to note that policy did not appear to have an impact for women – in other words, supervisors were considered equally justified in their reactions to women regardless of whether an anti-bullying policy was in place. The fact that policy appears to be “selective” in its helpfulness affirms previous research findings regarding the acceptability of harsher punishment for female offenses (e.g., Aday and Krabill, 2011).

We discuss the four-way interaction findings with the hope of stimulating more scholarly work and research in the area of policy implementation. Our initial results showcase male raters (persons of color) who (1) in the Policy scenario, rated Ed as more collegial than female (persons of color) counterparts; (2) rated Ed as more collegial when he reacted (than female persons of color counterparts), and (3) in the no policy condition rated Ed as more responsible for the bullying incident. It is possible that based on their history of discrimination, persons of color may be especially sensitive to attempts at “balancing the scales,” in the case of inequity. Davidson and Friedman (1998: 156) argue that “...minority group members (such as African-Americans), as well as others in traditionally less-powerful groups, might interpret accounts and react to injustices in ways that are systematically different from others.” Those who are consistently on the receiving end of unfair treatment may thus consider policies to eliminate it more beneficial.

An interesting line of future research could examine if hostile sexism displayed by men is greater regarding women of color (who are the recipients of both sexism and racism (Bell, 2004; Gregory, 2003)) than for white women. Glick and Fiske posit that the “...resentful tone evident in hostile sexism may be similar to prejudice directed toward socioeconomically successful minorities who are perceived as a competitive threat” (2001: 116). Researchers may consider examining the joint impact of hostile sexism and bullying on women of color to investigate whether any differences between that group and white women exist.

As an “exploratory study,” these findings are tentative and preliminary in nature. The aim of this manuscript was to examine a previously uninvestigated area (e.g., civility policy and the nexus of hostile sexism), to raise important points, and to provide a platform for future research. Despite the success of similar designs in previous studies (e.g., Gilbert and Stead, 1999; Heilman *et al.*, 1992), this research did not yield the expected results in all instances (e.g., the dearth of main effects). An intriguing possibility is that Generation Z individuals (born between 1994 and 2004) may respond more positively to approaches that are better tailored to their habitual mode of learning. As those “born with an extra digital chromosome” (Liska, 2005):

“...they are able to acquire only short-term knowledge and do not manage to reach reflection because their brains are constantly overloaded by the digital lives they live” (Ivanova and Smrikarov, 2009). MacQuarrie (2011) argues that using videos instead of lectures will help to keep these generational learners more focused. A richer and more engaging presentation (consisting of a video enactment, as opposed to a paper and pencil scenario) may motivate students to do better work. Considering the sample demographic, some of our contradictory paper and pencil results may thus be the result of a cohort that is more accepting of visual instruction.

Qualitative results affirm that gender stereotypes are prevalent in workplace settings, and that the 1998 findings of Ragins *et al.* may still be true today. The prevalence of men at the organizational apex may set the stage for behavioral expectations across genders, solidifying stereotypical patterns of interaction. Women are still significantly underrepresented in major leadership positions in U.S. businesses, even though they earn more than half of the bachelor’s, master’s, and doctorate degrees awarded in the U.S. (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013). Although women occupy management positions, the elite (or top) positions are for the most part held by men. Notably, women represent 3.8% of Fortune 500 CEOs, hold only 16.6% of the Fortune 500 board seats, and 14.3% of the Fortune 500 executive officer positions (Catalyst, 2012). Opposing expectations (e.g., “masculine and tough,” but “not too manly”) for women may result in the perception that they are not suited to upper echelon spots within organizations (Eagly and Karau, 2002).

Relatedly, research suggests that a successful female garners some of the most vitriolic reactions, including envy and animosity (Cortina, 2008). Future inquiry could investigate if civility policies eliminate negative perceptions by varying the level of achievement among study “employees.” Under conditions of a more “civil” workplace, would there be no difference in the adjectives used to describe high performing women versus those that depict high performing men? Furthermore, are there other organizational and cultural characteristics or policies (e.g. leadership styles, decision-making processes, codes of ethics) that may prevent bullying in the workplace?

Research with larger sample sizes comprised of diverse employees could provide corroborative evidence with this study’s findings. The preliminary qualitative results represent a potentially promising line of research, as they provide an honest interpretation of how individuals feel on the job. Larger samples (in disparate regions of the country) could reveal if internalized sexism varies across hierarchical levels, or if regional differences exist.

Examination of civility is a necessary first step in influencing employee behavior. Identifying ramifications associated with bullying prevention (by enforcing a policy and/or defending a target) may thus help researchers and practitioners in constructing policy and understanding perceptions. Ultimately, continued analyses of the causes and consequences of uncivil actions can lead to fostering a more collegial work environment.



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## Exploratory Study

<i>Gender, Conflict, and Workplace Bullying: Is Civility Policy the Silver Bullet?</i> .....	79
Jacqueline A. Gilbert, Deana M. Raffo, and Toto Sutarso	

This research examined whether a culture of civility affected how employees were viewed within workplace conflict scenarios. The purpose was to investigate perceptions of female and male targets that defended themselves when verbally attacked, and whether the existence of an anti-bullying or “civility” policy made a positive difference. In a laboratory experiment exploring the impact of policy on work-related variables, 238 undergraduate business students answered questions after viewing a candidate vita and employment performance profile. In a departure from previous studies, the results implied that analyses conducted with paper and pencil surveys may not be as appropriate for a generation that responds to a visual style of learning (MacQuarrie, 2011). In a follow-up qualitative analysis conducted via mail, participants completed a survey to examine perceptions of workplace bullying from a more in-depth perspective. The preliminary results indicated that office incivility is considered a serious problem, and should be studied in a manner that is best able to capture its potential impact. The study concluded that psychological work abuse is indeed a complex phenomenon that can impact a variety of organizational stakeholders

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