Ratings of Sexual Harassment as a Function of Status and Gender

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**Method**

**Participants**

Younger adults (26 females, 3 males, Mage = 19.24, SD = .91, age range: 18-22 years) were recruited from a small liberal arts university (see Table 1). Participants completed this experiment as a requirement for class. Participants were systematically assigned to one of four conditions.

**Materials and Procedure**

Each participant was distributed a condition (see Appendix A). They were also distributed a rating scale (see Appendix B). Four scenarios were created depicting sexual harassment performed by a male or female student or professor on a student. All scenarios were heterosexual. The scenarios and rating scales were collected and analyzed.

**Results**

Overall rating scores were calculated by a sum of the ratings which produced a number between 4 and 20. A 2 way between subjects ANOVA revealed a significant effect for status, *F*(1,25) = 15.64, *p* < .001. The test revealed no effect for sex, *F*(1,25) = .090, *p* < .766. The test also revealed no significant interaction, *F*(1,25) = 1.12 *p* = .300. The significant main effect revealed professor (*M* = 16.73, *SD* = 2.73) was significantly higher than student (*M* = 11.35, *SD* = 4.38). The means and standard deviations for each condition can be found in Table 1.

**Discussion**

Our data partially supported our hypothesis in that status significantly effected opinions of sexual harassment. I believe since the professor has a position of authority, sexual harassment coming from them is perceived to be more serious. Although it is not significant, there was a sampling error in condition 2. All of the participants for this condition were women, which may have effected the results. This is especially because this condition was about a female student harassing a male student, and the females did not want to be seen as someone who would do that. This study could be redone to assess the opinion of sexual harassment when the conditions were homosexual. This same study could also be done using professors as participants.

Table 1

*Numbers That Describe the Conditions*

Professor Student

Sex *n* Age *M*(*SD*) *M*(*SD*) *n* Age *M*(*SD*) *M*(*SD*)

Female 8 19.13(.84) 17.29(1.97) 7 19.29(.76) 10.42(4.19)

Male 7 19.00(.82) 16.25(3.33) 7 19.57(1.27) 12.28(4.68)

Totals 16.73(2.73) 11.35(4.38)

*Figure 1*. This graph shows the marginal means of the significant findings.

Appendix A

Conditions

1. Brad is a 19-year-old college sophomore. The following incident happened to

him. One day after art class, his female professor indicated he could not gain a

passing grade on his sculpture project unless he would go out on a date with her.

Brad was offended by his professor’s behavior and filed a grievance against her

with the University Review Board for sexual harassment. The review board has

agreed to hear his case, but no ruling has been made to this date.

1. Brad is a 19-year-old college sophomore. The following incident happened to

him. One day after art class, a female student indicated he could not gain a

passing grade on his sculpture project unless he would go out on a date with her.

Brad was offended by this student’s behavior and filed a grievance against her

with the University Review Board for sexual harassment. The review board has

agreed to hear his case, but no ruling has been made to this date.

1. Sandra is a 19-year-old college sophomore. The following incident happened to

her. One day after art class, her male professor indicated she could not gain a

passing grade on her sculpture project unless she would go out on a date with him.

Sandra was offended by her professor’s behavior and filed a grievance against

him with the University Review Board for sexual harassment. The review board

has agreed to hear her case, but no ruling has been made to this date.

1. Sandra is a 19-year-old college sophomore. The following incident happened to

her. One day after art class, a male student indicated she could not gain a passing

grade on her sculpture project unless she would go out on a date with him.

Sandra was offended by this student’s behavior and filed a grievance against him

with the University Review Board for sexual harassment. The review board has

agreed to hear her case, but no ruling has been made to this date.

Appendix B

Rating Scale

1. To what extent does the student/professor’s behavior constitute sexual harassment? (Circle the number that best reflects your judgment)

1-------------------------2-------------------------3-------------------------4-------------------------5

Not at All Somewhat Very Much

1. How justified do you think Sandra/Brad’s action was in this case? (Circle the

number that best reflects your judgment)

1-------------------------2-------------------------3-------------------------4-------------------------5

Not at All Somewhat Very Much

1. If you were Sandra/Brad, would you have filed a complaint? (Circle the number that best reflects your judgment)

1-------------------------2-------------------------3-------------------------4-------------------------5

Definitely NO Probably NO Not Sure Probably YES Definitely YES

4. If the review board rules that this was in fact harassment, it should be

considered a serious violation. (Circle the number that best reflects your

judgment)

1-------------------------2-------------------------3-------------------------4-------------------------5

Strongly Disagree Not Sure Strongly Agree