

# It Hurts Me Too: Examining the Relationship Between Male Gender Harassment and Observers' Well-Being, Attitudes, and Behaviors

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The goal of this study was to examine the costs associated with witnessing the sexual harassment of a male colleague. More specifically, we investigate (a) whether observed male gender harassment is related to psychological and physical health, and negative and positive job-related behaviors and attitudes, and (b) the mediating roles of discrete negative emotions (anger, fear) and identity-based evaluations (collective self-esteem). We explore these questions in a sample of men and women employed in “blue collar” professions. Our results show that the relationships between observed male gender harassment and psychological and physical health symptoms, withdrawal and workplace deviance, and affective commitment, were indirect and mediated via witness anger. Moreover, witnessing the gender harassment of a male colleague was also indirectly related to workplace deviance via collective self-esteem among women. Implications for theory, research, and practice are considered.

**Keywords:** male gender harassment, witnesses, vicarious consequences, employee well-being, negative emotions

To date, research on workplace sexual harassment (SH) has focused mainly on female-targeted mistreatment, on primary victims, and on direct harassment–outcome relationships. From this research, much has been learned about the costs that women experience when targeted with this form of aggression (Dionisi, Barling, & Dupré, 2012; Willness, Steel, & Lee, 2007), and to a lesser extent, the consequences that ensue following exposure to a female peer's victimization (Miner-Rubino & Cortina, 2004, 2007). Although there has been a gradual increase in focus on the consequences of SH for male victims (de Haas, Timmerman, & Höing, 2009; Street, Gradus, Stafford, & Kelly, 2007), little remains known with respect to the experiences of those who witness male SH more generally, and male gender harassment (GH) in particular. Thus, our goal in this study was to increase our understanding of (a) an understudied form of SH and (b) an understudied victim population, by exploring how observing male-targeted GH detrimentally impacts the psychological, physical, and job-related well-being of male and female witnesses. Moreover, we set out to determine whether females experience unique consequences when exposed to male mistreatment.

Exploring the far-reaching and indirect effects of male SH at work is important for several reasons. First, research highlighting

how different forms of workplace mistreatment vicariously impact employees who witness these behaviors is needed. Although we know that racial harassment (Chrobot-Mason, Rugins, & Linnehan, 2013) and female-targeted incivility and SH (Miner-Rubino & Cortina, 2007) detrimentally impact third parties, similar research has not focused on male SH. This is an important omission given the increasing identification of this form of workplace mistreatment by both academics (de Haas et al., 2009; Settles, Buchanan, & Colar, 2012) and within the popular press (Jamieson, 2011; Meredith, 2014). The question of what types of behavior (in this case GH targeted at males), as well as *who* might be impacted by this conduct (in this case those who observe male GH), will contribute to our theoretical understanding of this phenomenon, and from a practical perspective, will be critical to the development of appropriate and sufficient interventions. Moreover, consistent with calls for more research examining nonsexual forms of workplace SH (Dionisi & Barling, 2015), our focus on the workplace *gender* harassment experiences of male employees will contribute to the growing body of literature demonstrating the damage associated with *sexist* (as opposed to *sexual*) forms of this mistreatment (Fitzgerald, Magley, Drasgow, & Waldo, 1999).

Second, the unique nature of this form of mistreatment warrants particular attention. As previous research confirms, male and female GH are qualitatively distinct phenomena in many ways (Berdahl, Magley, & Waldo, 1996; Donovan & Drasgow, 1999). Although both males and females experience sexual coercion, unwanted sexual attention, and lewd comments as SH, men uniquely consider being punished for deviating from masculine gender roles as sexually harassing (Berdahl et al., 1996; Berdahl & Moore, 2006). The types of mistreatment we will explore in this study differ from those studied previously given not only that they are directed at males rather than females, but also given the social

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acceptability of this conduct. As males have traditionally derived a sense of kinship through the exchange of pornographic material, the celebration of behaviors that sexually objectify others, and the antisocial put-downs that occur between them (Flood, 2008; Thomae & Pina, 2015), and many forms of aggression are understood and accepted as part of the male “character” (Hamburger, Hogben, McGowan, & Dawson, 1996), the behaviors that reflect the form of mistreatment we explore in this study (Berdahl & Moore, 2006; Fitzgerald, Gelfand, & Drasgow, 1995) may be ones that, although upsetting to the victims (de Haas et al., 2009; Settles et al., 2012), are dismissed as normative by others in the environment, and in society at large. Cases of male-targeted GH being dismissed by the courts as instances of gender-appropriate male horseplay, locker room antics, or “boys being boys” (Franke, 1997; *Oncala v. Sundowner*), along with research highlighting how behavior of this nature is often encouraged and institutionalized in organizational settings (Gregory, 2009; Morgan & Martin, 2006), would support this conjecture.

Although the social acceptability of this conduct is itself concerning, from the perspective of this investigation, if negative vicarious consequences of this mistreatment are found, evidence confirming that even workplace behaviors potentially perceived as benign can be linked to harm among observers, will be gleaned. Moreover, these results would speak to the urgency of eliminating this form of mistreatment from the workplace, providing support for practitioners and managers seeking to combat this problem—a problem that likely poses unique challenges given the aforementioned normativeness of this conduct.

Third, as we will predict, vicarious exposure to male-targeted GH is unique in its potential to exert negative effects on female observers who are not the intended targets of the mistreatment. If support is found for this prediction, our research will offer additional insights into a form of gender-based female victimization that has not been explored before—one for which females are not the direct targets of mistreatment, nor one wherein the target even belongs to their gender. Thus, an additional set of misogynistic behaviors that should be targeted in the name of redressing female vulnerability at work, will be highlighted.

Last, exploring how discrete negative emotions and collective self-esteem mediate any negative effects of observed male-on-male GH will reveal more about the process-based nature of this phenomenon. Moreover, this focus could enable more informed choices about where to direct interventions and employee supports.

### The Male Face of SH Victimization

Although evidence supporting the damaging nature of SH continues to build, most of this research has been concerned with the impact of gender-based mistreatment directed at female employees (Berdahl & Moore, 2006; Buchanan & Fitzgerald, 2008)—an emphasis likely bolstered by the higher prevalence of this workplace problem among women (Cortina & Berdahl, 2008). However, males are also targeted and adversely affected by gender-based mistreatment (de Haas et al., 2009; Settles et al., 2012; Street et al., 2007), highlighting the need for more research on male SH and its workplace impact. In fact, in some studies, up to 37% of males ( $N = 2,201$ ; Stockdale, Visio, & Batra, 1999) report experiencing at least one episode of sexually harassing behavior within a 12-month period, and in 2011 upward of 16% of SH complaints

made in the United States were filed by men (United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2012). Rates of SH are even higher in male-dominated environments (Settles, Buchanan, Yap, & Harrell, 2014), with some recent reports citing up to 40% of men experiencing GH within the past 12 months (Department of Defense, 2015). In line with findings that males may be less likely to report their victimization than females (Department of Defense, 2015), it is plausible that the prevalence of male GH is higher than these statistics would suggest. Even so, the importance of any behavior is not dependent on its frequency. In particular, workplace behaviors that cause harm or threaten the well-being of employees are worthy of exploration in the name of protecting and providing aid to victims, regardless of how plentiful the number of victims is.

The SH of men is often characterized by conduct that punishes those who deviate from masculine gender roles. Male employees have filed legal complaints against coworkers for being called names that challenge their status as “prototypical” males (i.e., “dick sucker,” “sweetie pie,” “bitch”; *Martin v. Runyon*, 1994; *Vandeventer v. Wabash National Corp.*, 1995), and for being exposed to comments, questions, and conduct that reinforce patriarchal expectations of “proper” masculinity (i.e., being asked whether one “has gotten any ‘pussy’ or had oral sex”; being forced to view pictures of nude women; *Goluszek v. H. P. Smith*, 1988 as cited in Franke, 1997, p. 737). Symbolic conduct has also been the source of suffering for men, as was seen in the case of *McWilliams v. Fairfax County Board of Supervisors* (1996) where coworkers placed fingers in the plaintiff’s mouth to simulate oral sex, a condom in his food, and a broomstick to his anus.

In all of these cases, the content of harassment revolves around policing gender performances—or in other words, ensuring that men behave as “real men” by bullying them for their “inadequate” masculinity (Berdahl & Moore, 2006; Franke, 1997)—a form of behavior that is perhaps not surprising, when considering research that maintains manhood is elusive, tenuous, and must be proved through public demonstrations (e.g., aggression; Vandello & Bosson, 2013). Considering the categories or dimensions of SH originally presented by Fitzgerald et al. (1995), such conduct is best described as GH—or that which

refers to a broad range of verbal and nonverbal behaviors not aimed at sexual cooperation, but that convey insulting, hostile, and degrading attitudes (i.e. sexual epithets, slurs, taunts, and gestures; the display or distribution of obscene or pornographic materials; gender-based hazing; threatening, intimidating, or hostile acts). (p. 430)

However, given the unique focus of this harassment on the enactment of the traditional masculine gender role, this type of SH has also been referred to as “not man enough” harassment (Berdahl & Moore, 2006)—a form of SH that men uniquely indicate experiencing (Berdahl et al., 1996). Although male victims can also experience unwanted sexual attention or sexual coercion (Berdahl et al., 1996; Waldo, Berdahl, & Fitzgerald, 1998), GH appears to be the most prevalent form encountered (Stockdale et al., 1999; Waldo et al., 1998). Thus, in an effort to generate knowledge about an issue that has previously received little scholarly attention, we focus exclusively on male-targeted GH in this study. Further, as male targets of SH are most commonly victimized by other males (Stockdale et al., 1999), male-targeted sexist behavior (e.g., offensive remarks, repeated sexual stories or jokes, enforcement of the

male gender role) is more likely to be perpetrated by males (Gerrity, 2000; Waldo et al., 1998), and males are less likely to report the experience of female-perpetrated harassment as upsetting or bothersome (Stockdale et al., 1999), this study explores male-on-male GH in an effort to capture the lived experiences of the majority of male SH victims.

Importantly, it should be noted that GH is distinct from other forms of mistreatment that are often researched in the organizational literature. Given the unique sex-based nature of this conduct, and the understanding that GH represents an attack on one's social identity (Berdahl, 2007), this form of mistreatment is different than others such as workplace aggression that is not specific to gender, race, or any other social group (Hershcovis & Barling, 2010). GH also differs from other mistreatment constructs such as abusive supervision (Tepper, 2000) that focuses on one particular perpetrator (specifically one's leader), or interpersonal conflict (Spector & Jex, 1998) that measures a mutually stressful interaction between two or more employees (as opposed to one person being victimized at the hands of another). We argue that due to the specificity of GH in attacking employees because of their gender (or the way they enact gender), and by extension, the connection of this mistreatment to dynamics of power and social status in the workplace (Berdahl, 2007), GH will impact the emotions, identity-based concerns, and well-being of witnesses in unique ways, compared to more generalized, less oppressive forms of aggression that may not be as disturbing or personally identifiable to witnesses.

### Vicarious Consequences of Male GH

Exploring harm to others beyond the immediate targets of SH has been a relatively recent pursuit of scholars. Prompted by studies showing that organizational members are often aware of a colleague's SH (Bowes-Sperry & O'Leary-Kelly, 2005), researchers have investigated the indirect victimization of a SH target's peers (Miner-Rubino & Cortina, 2007). Their findings showed that witnessing gendered hostility toward women at work predicted poorer psychological and physical well-being, reduced job satisfaction, and increases in job burnout, withdrawal, and turnover intentions among men and women. The negative effects of observing another's mistreatment have also been echoed in other studies on female-targeted SH (Miner-Rubino & Cortina, 2004), bullying (Emdad, Alipour, Hagberg, & Jensen, 2013), incivility (Lim, Cortina, & Magley, 2008), heterosexism (Silverschanz, Cortina, Konik, & Magley, 2008), and racism (Chrobot-Mason et al., 2013).

To better explain the antecedents and consequences of indirect exposure to SH, Glomb et al. (1997) developed a model of ambient SH. According to these researchers, although SH can be conceptualized as a unique discretionary stimulus when it is experienced directly by a target, it can also manifest as an ambient stimulus that pervades the work context, becoming something to which all in its vicinity are exposed. As a result, an incident of SH can have the effect of creating a generally stressful work environment that ultimately impacts employees other than those who are directly targeted with this aggression (Glomb et al., 1997). Empirical support for the influence of ambient female-targeted SH on psychological, physical, and work-related well-being was provided by Glomb and colleagues (1997) in two diverse samples. Raver and

Gelfand (2005) also showed the impact of ambient female-targeted SH extends to group-level outcomes, revealing its detrimental effects on team conflict, cohesion, and financial performance. Finally, Richman-Hirsch and Glomb (2002) tested the generalizability of ambient SH among male witnesses and showed that males in groups characterized by ambient female SH reported lower job satisfaction, poorer psychological and physical well-being, and increased work withdrawal.

Although evidence now suggests that third parties are both aware of, and can be adversely affected by, various forms of mistreatment directed at others in the workplace, researchers have yet to explore whether those who witness the SH of a male peer are impacted, and if so, how any vicarious effects emerge. We posit that much like female-targeted SH, male-targeted SH can manifest as an ambient stimulus that pervades the work context, creates a generally stressful work environment, and thus affects all employees exposed to this mistreatment. As Glomb et al. (1997) noted, employees who witness or hear about the harassment of their coworkers may experience stress resulting from concerns of their own potential victimization, failure of their organization or coworkers to address the suffering of their peers, and/or their own personal inability or unwillingness to provide aid to the victim. Thus, just as direct exposure to SH represents a stressor (Fitzgerald, Drasgow, Hulin, Gelfand, & Magley, 1997) with negative job, health, and psychological strain-based outcomes for male victims (de Haas et al., 2009; Settles et al., 2012), bearing witness to the SH of a male colleague may produce negative psychological and physical health symptoms and negative workplace behaviors (viz., withdrawal and workplace deviance), and reduce positive job-related outcomes (viz., affective commitment and organizational citizenship behavior [OCB]), for individuals who are indirectly exposed to this harassment.

Previous research highlighting how other forms of male victimization negatively affect witnesses further supports this conjecture. For example, observers of bullying report more depressive symptoms and stress reactions than those not exposed to this mistreatment (Emdad et al., 2013; Vartia, 2001), and incivility directed at other males and females in one's workgroup negatively affects work and health outcomes of third parties (Lim et al., 2008). Similarly, being a third-party to hostility against male and female sexual minorities is associated with decreased well-being (Silverschanz et al., 2008). Importantly, we highlight the potential mediating role of emotion in this process—a notion that to date has received limited attention (Miner-Rubino & Cortina, 2007).

### Emotional Responses to Observed Male GH

#### Affective Events Theory and Mistreatment

The central organizing framework of this research is an extension of affective events theory (AET; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). AET argues for the importance of organizational events as the proximal cause of employees' affective experiences, which in turn predict organizationally relevant outcomes. According to AET, when employees are exposed to emotional events such as workplace violence or aggression, they experience any number of emotions in response, which then affect their attitudes and behaviors. Research findings generally support this notion. The influence of stressful events on affect in particular, and in turn on

interpersonal and job-related outcomes, has been a prevalent topic of exploration (Grandey, Tam, & Brauburger, 2002; Schweitzer & Gibson, 2008). Moreover, some studies investigating the mediating role of emotions to subsequent well-being have focused on workplace aggression and harassment specifically. For example, Ayoko, Callan, and Härtel (2003) showed that bullying was related to specific negative emotional reactions (e.g., anger, frustration), which then predicted employees' counterproductive behaviors (e.g., doing work incorrectly, damaging company property). Barling et al. (1996) also showed that negative work-related mood mediated the experience of SH on turnover intentions, psychosomatic problems, and coworker/supervisor dissatisfaction. The relevance of AET to a stressor–stress–strain framework (Pratt & Barling, 1988) derives from a long history of research demonstrating that one of the primary characteristics of organizational stressors is their impact on negative mood and emotion (Repetti, 1993). Importantly, as a key tenet of AET is its focus on discrete emotions, we suggest that observed male GH will lead to these consequences through anger and fear specifically.

### Anger and Fear Following Observed Male GH

Anger and fear are two basic emotions experienced across multiple situations and cultures (Ekman, 1992). As a social emotion, anger typically manifests in response to another's actions (often wrongdoing) and is usually directed toward others (Weiner, 1995). In fact, being attacked or treated unfairly by others and/or perceiving that their behavior is unjust (i.e., Weiner, 1995) are among the primary causes of anger. Fear occurs when individuals determine that a situation is counter to their goals, poses a threat to well-being, and/or will result in an outcome that is uncertain and beyond their control (Lerner & Keltner, 2000). Fear is typically accompanied by feelings of apprehension and helplessness (Rachman, 1991), often motivates avoidance and escape behavior (Epstein, 1972), and has developed to protect people against threats to their survival (Ohman & Mineka, 2001).

As aggression elicits “the sense that the self (or someone the self cares about) has been offended or injured” (Lerner & Tiedens, 2006, p. 117), and threatens their safety and well-being (Ohman & Mineka, 2001), it is not surprising that targets of mistreatment experience anger and fear (Barling, Rogers, & Kelloway, 2001). However, research and theory also suggest that anger and fear may be emotions experienced by third parties exposed to the suffering of someone else. We propose that observing male GH will exert indirect effects on health, behaviors, and attitudes via the negative emotions it evokes among *witnesses* of this harassment, thus extending the tenets of AET to third parties.

The notion that perceptions of fairness are determined by the comparison of behavior (experienced or observed) to a set of moral and ethical standards held by society (Folger & Cropanzano, 1998) supports the prediction that third parties to male GH will experience the emotion of anger. As mistreatment represents a violation of moral and social norms concerning how the self and/or others ought to be treated (Folger & Skarlicki, 2008), employees may not only react with anger when they are treated unfairly, but may also experience the powerful, emotionally charged reaction of “deontic rage” when they witness someone else being harmed (Folger, Cropanzano, & Goldman, 2013)—in this case, gender harassed. This notion is supported by research showing how uncivil or

unkind behavior—which violates norms for respect in social interactions (Andersson & Pearson, 1999)—elicits anger among employees (Domagalski & Steelman, 2005; Grandey et al., 2002).

Witnesses of male GH may also experience negative emotions in response to what they observe, as harm to someone belonging to the same social category (i.e., gender; Tajfel & Turner, 1986) is experienced as *personally* threatening and upsetting (Stürmer, Snyder, Kropp, & Siem, 2006). Likewise, both anger (Mackie, Devos, & Smith, 2000; Yzerbyt, Dumont, Wigboldus, & Gordijn, 2003) and fear (Dumont, Yzerbyt, Wigboldus, & Gordijn, 2003) emerge among those who encounter harm against perceived in-group members, even if they do not personally experience the mistreatment. Thus, male employees who witness the GH of a male colleague are likely to experience anger when perceiving that a member of their gender has been treated unfairly, and fear given the personal sense of threat fostered by the recognition that members of one's in-group (and thus potentially the self) are being targeted with mistreatment (Dumont et al., 2003).

Moreover, as harassment and victimization have historically been a concern for women within the patriarchal social system (MacKinnon, 1979), the suffering of a male colleague may also produce anger or fear for female witnesses in light of “self-referencing”—the process of using oneself as a referent when perceiving SH (O'Connor, Gutek, Stockdale, Geer, & Melançon, 2004; Wiener & Hurt, 2000). In essence, “situational similarity” (either personal or on a larger social scale) enables women to put themselves “in the shoes” of a target—even when the target is a male, or when observers themselves have not personally experienced mistreatment (O'Connor et al., 2004; Stockdale, Gandolfo Berry, Schneider, & Cao, 2004). Thus, whether harassment is something that female observers have personally experienced or is something that they have been socially conditioned to fear (Gordon & Riger, 1991), the harassment of a male peer may trigger anger and fear within these witnesses, as they are particularly likely to identify with this type of victimization.

Finally, as individuals' emotions can be transmitted between people, ultimately resulting in affective convergence (Barsade, 2002; Bartel & Saavedra, 2000), it seems plausible that witnesses of male GH will experience anger and fear. More specifically, when individuals are exposed to the emotional expressions of others, these expressions can be automatically and unconsciously mimicked (Hatfield, Caciopo, & Rapson, 1994), resulting in the actual experience of the emotion (Duclos et al., 1989; Hatfield et al., 1994). When applied to the context of observed male GH, the anger and fear experienced by direct victims of mistreatment (Barling et al., 2001; Domagalski & Steelman, 2005) may create a “ripple effect” (Barsade, 2002) among witnesses, leading observers to personally adopt these negative emotions.

When taken together, AET, combined with the aforementioned research, leads us to expect that observing the GH of a male peer will be related to a host of negative consequences. Moreover, such negative outcomes will be the indirect result of feelings of anger and fear experienced by witnesses.

*Hypothesis 1:* Observed male-on-male GH will be positively related to (a) anger and (b) fear of SH.

*Hypothesis 2:* Observed male-on-male GH will be positively and indirectly related to (a) psychological health symptoms, (b) physical health symptoms, (c) negative job-

related behaviors, and negatively and indirectly related to (d) positive job-related behaviors and attitudes, through observer anger.

*Hypothesis 3:* Observed male-on-male GH will be positively and indirectly related to (a) psychological health symptoms, (b) physical health symptoms, (c) negative job-related behaviors, and negatively and indirectly related to (d) positive job-related behaviors and attitudes, through observer fear of SH.

### The Unique Suffering of Female Witnesses

#### The Patriarchal Nature of Male GH

Although male and female witnesses of male GH may experience anger and fear, and in turn, declines in psychological, physical, and job-related well-being following vicarious exposure to this mistreatment, we expect that the patriarchal messages communicated by male GH will be *uniquely* harmful to women with respect to their gender esteem. By reinforcing and perpetuating hypermasculine, patriarchal ideals, male GH communicates messages of male superiority and female subordination to those who encounter it (Franke, 1997). For example, feminizing a man to punish him for deviations from “proper” masculinity (e.g., by labeling him a “bitch”) necessarily casts females into the role of the undesirable “other,” diminishing the value of their gender. Similarly, gender-harassing conduct that encourages hypermasculinity by casting females into the role of “sexual object” (e.g., when a man is forced to look at pornographic materials) further degrades women and reinforces the patriarchal social order. Even heterosexual harassment that conveys hostile and offensive attitudes about sexual minority identities (i.e., homophobic slurs; Konik & Cortina, 2008) bolsters heteronormative, patriarchal ideals; “heterosexism . . . is one of the ways in which strict adherence to gender role stereotypes is enforced, and gender oppression maintained” (Kitzinger, 2001, p. 277). In all of these cases, the value of women and/or all things “feminine” is demeaned when male targets are being mistreated. As such, we suggest that exposure to male-on-male GH will result in unique attitudinal consequences for female witnesses, which may also help explain psychological, physical, and job-related well-being consequences among this group.

#### Male GH and Collective Self-Esteem

We hypothesize that individuals exposed to conduct that implicitly or explicitly derogates their gender group, will in turn experience low levels of collective self-esteem. Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) argues for the importance of social group memberships to how people come to view themselves as individuals. More broadly, social identity reflects individuals’ perceptions of the social groups to which they belong (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992), which may include any number of memberships such as those based on race, nationality, sexuality, and of course, gender. How individuals feel about themselves is dependent on the extent to which these social groups are valued and compared favorably with others. Moreover, collective self-esteem reflects these personal judgments

that individuals make about the value of their social group memberships (i.e., private collective self-esteem), along with how they perceive others evaluate their social groups (i.e., public self-esteem; Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992). This is consistent with the tenets of symbolic interactionism (Cooley, 1956), which maintains that individuals come to see themselves as they believe others see them—a phenomenon referred to as “reflected appraisals” or “the looking glass self” (Cooley, 1956).

As previous research has demonstrated how situational factors can impact collective self-esteem (Walker, 1999), it seems plausible that male GH and its patriarchal messages will detrimentally affect females’ sense of their social identity. Thus, we predict that the implicit (and often explicit) devaluation of the female gender inherent in male GH, may result in more negative judgments about the value of being a woman among female witnesses of male GH.

*Hypothesis 4:* Observed male-on-male GH will be negatively associated with (a) private collective self-esteem and (b) public collective self-esteem for female witnesses.

Recognition that one’s social group is devalued can result in poor well-being. For example, sexual minority women exposed to recent negative sexist and heterosexist events (which reinforce the devaluation of this group) displayed higher levels of psychological distress (Szymanski, 2005). Similarly, being exposed to negative views of homosexuality for sexual minority employees was both directly and indirectly related to decreases in psychological and physical health and increases in different forms work withdrawal (Waldo, 1999). Importantly for our study, exposure to events that demean and objectify women has also been linked to psychological distress and somatic symptoms among females (Moradi & Subich, 2004; Swim, Hyers, Cohen, & Ferguson, 2001).

Research has highlighted the role of collective self-esteem specifically, in individual well-being. Katz, Joiner, and Kwon (2002) showed how the perceived devaluation of one’s gender group is associated with depression and anxiety, particularly among women. Moreover, low collective self-esteem accounted for unique variance in depressive symptoms beyond the effects of personal self-evaluations. Similarly, collective self-esteem is negatively associated with depression, anxiety, somatization (Corning, 2002), and burnout (Butler & Constantine, 2005). Moreover, the effects of collective self-esteem on well-being may be particularly critical among those who belong to minority groups (Crocker, Luhtanen, Blaine, & Broadnax, 1994). We thus suggest that for female witnesses, exposure to male GH will not only be associated with lower collective self-esteem, but this gender-based self-perception will in turn, mediate the negative effects of observed male GH on well-being attitudes, and behaviors.

*Hypothesis 5:* Observed male-on-male GH will be positively and indirectly related to (a) psychological health symptoms, (b) physical health symptoms, (c) negative job-related behaviors, and negatively and indirectly related to (d) positive job-related behaviors and attitudes, through collective self-esteem among female witnesses.

## Method

### Sample and Recruitment

Participants for this two-wave study<sup>1</sup> were recruited through Qualtrics Panel Service—an online survey software tool that offers a service allowing researchers to connect with individuals willing to participate in online survey research (Qualtrics, 2010). At Time 1, participants were sent a link via Qualtrics to an online questionnaire and were compensated with \$2.00 and a chance to win a \$35.00 Starbucks gift card for their participation. Participants provided data on observed male-on-male GH, their feelings of anger and fear, collective self-esteem, and relevant demographic data at Time 1. Four months later, participants were sent a second link to an online questionnaire, and a chance to win another Starbucks gift card for participating, this time for \$50.00. At Time 2, information pertaining to the dependent variables was collected. This study received institutional ethics review board approval.

Data were gathered at Time 1 from 329 full-time or part-time employees in the United States working in blue-collar professions as defined by type of occupation (e.g., automotive, construction, manufacturing, physical and/or manual labor). The decision to limit the sample to those employed in blue-collar industries was made in light of the higher number of men (and thus potential victims) in such environments (Browne, 2006), the higher prevalence of male SH within masculine job-gender contexts (Stockdale et al., 1999), and the higher likelihood that the types of sexually harassing behaviors being investigated might be condoned in these environments. As such, the blue-collar environment is one that may capture a particularly vulnerable population of employees, highlighting an employment sector that may be especially in need of male-targeted SH intervention. The 206 participants who provided data at both Time 1 and 2 comprised the final sample for this study ( $M_{\text{age}} = 44.45$  years,  $SD = 12.17$ ,  $\text{range} = 18\text{--}71$  years; 53.4% male; 78% Caucasian; 95.6% heterosexual). Of this sample, 42% of participant workplaces were dominated by men, 25% by women, and 33% were roughly gender equal.

### Measures: Predictor Variable

**Observed male-on-male GH.** Items from the Sexual Harassment of Men scale (Waldo et al., 1998) were revised to assess observed male GH. Specifically, the 11 items from the GH subscale were modified to assess the extent to which participants had *witnessed* the GH of a male peer by another male at work, on a scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*many times*). This procedure has been used in previous research on vicarious harassment experiences (Hitlan, Schneider, & Walsh, 2006). Sample items include “During the past 12-months, how often have you observed or heard about a male supervisor or coworker . . . pressuring another male coworker into doing things he did not want to do, by accusing him of not being a ‘real man?’ and ‘. . . saying crude or gross sexual things to a male coworker that appeared to bother him?’”.

### Measures: Mediating Variables

**Anger.** Similar to previous research (Twenge & Campbell, 2003), participants’ anger was assessed using the six hostility items of the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule–Expanded

Form (Watson & Clark, 1999). Participants indicated the extent to which adjectives such as “angry” and “hostile” described how they felt during the 4 months since completing Time 1 surveys, in light of work-related events on a scale ranging from 1 (*very slightly or not at all*) to 5 (*extremely*).

**Fear of SH.** Participants’ fear of SH was assessed using a modified version of Barling et al.’s (2001) scale. This nine-item measure asked participants to indicate their agreement with statements such as “I am afraid that someone at work . . . will display, use, or distribute sexist or suggestive materials (e.g., pictures, stories, or pornography)” and “. . . will make offensive remarks about my appearance, body, or sexual activities.” Responses were measured on a scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

**Collective self-esteem.** Collective self-esteem was assessed using two of Luhtanen and Crocker’s (1992) four-item scales. The Private Collective Self-Esteem scale measures participants’ personal judgments about the value of their gender group (e.g., “I’m glad to be a member of the female/male gender”). The Public Collective Self-Esteem scale assesses participants’ perceptions of how others view their gender group (e.g., “Others respect the female/male sex”;  $r$  between scales = .51). Responses were measured on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

### Measures: Outcome Variables

**Psychological health symptoms.** Psychological health symptoms were assessed using Goldberg’s (1972) General Health Questionnaire. Participants responded to 11 items such as “How often have you felt under strain” and “How often have you felt that you could not overcome your difficulties” on a scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 7 (*always*), in reference to the 4 months since completing Time 1 surveys. Higher scores reflect poorer psychological health (i.e., greater psychological health symptoms).

**Physical health symptoms.** Physical health symptoms were assessed with the 12-item Physical Symptom Inventory (Spector & Jex, 1998). Items measure somatic issues such as sleep, headaches, dizziness, and problems of digestion. Participants were asked how often during the 4 months since completing the Time 1 survey they had experienced symptoms such as “an upset stomach or nausea” or “tiredness or fatigue.” Responses were provided on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*every day*). Higher scores reflect poorer physical health (i.e., greater physical health symptoms).

**Withdrawal.** Barling et al.’s (2001) and Kammeyer-Mueller and Wanberg’s (2003) Withdrawal and Neglect scales were combined to produce 15 items to measure work withdrawal. Sample items include “Over the past 4 months, I stayed out of sight to avoid work” and “Over the past 4 months, I failed to attend scheduled meetings,” with responses collected on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 7 (*all of the time*).

**Workplace deviance.** Workplace deviance over the 4-month period since completing the Time 1 survey was measured using Bennett and Robinson’s (2000) 19-item scale. Participants indicated the extent to which they had engaged in behaviors such as “said something hurtful to someone at work” and “taken property

<sup>1</sup> Data were collected in two waves given concerns with survey length.

from work without permission” on a scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 7 (*daily*). This measure assesses both interpersonal and organizationally deviant behaviors and is useful when assessing deviance as a more general phenomenon (Bennett & Robinson, 2000).

**Affective commitment.** Affective commitment was measured using Allen and Meyer’s (1990) eight-item scale. Participants indicated on a scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) the extent to which they agreed with statements such as “I would be happy to spend the rest of my career with my current employer” and “I feel as if this company’s problems are my own.”

**Organizational citizenship behavior.** Lee and Allen’s (2002) 16 items were used to measure the extent to which witnesses engaged in OCBs during the 4 months since completing the Time 1 survey. This measure assesses both OCBs aimed at helping other individuals and the organization. Sample items include “Give up time to help others who have work or non-work problems” and “Offer ideas to improve the functioning of the organization.” Participants responded to each item using a 7-point scale anchored by 1 (*never*) and 7 (*always*).

Finally, given (a) trait affectivity impacts how people respond to situations of aggression (Douglas & Martinko, 2001), and (b) the need to isolate the role of context-specific emotion in the proposed relationships, participants completed the eight-item Life Orientation Test (Scheier & Carver, 1985), which measures generalized expectancies for positive versus negative outcomes. Statements such as “In uncertain times, I usually expect the best” and “Things never work out the way I want them to (R)” were rated on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

**Results**

Descriptive statistics, intercorrelations, and reliabilities for all study variables appear in Table 1. Tests of indirect effects were conducted using ordinary least squares regression analysis as implemented in Hayes (2013) SPSS PROCESS modeling macro. To avoid problems associated with nonnormal distributions, we used bootstrapping, which is a resampling method that produces an estimation of the sampling distribution through confidence intervals (CIs). As bootstrapping makes no inferences about the shape of the sampling distribution, the CIs produced by this method are more precise than those using standard methods (Hayes, 2013). In these tests, indirect and moderated effects are significant if the 95% bias-corrected CIs do not include zero (Hayes, 2013). All analyses were tested using 5,000 bootstrap samples. Moreover, analyses were conducted using parallel multiple mediator models—a method that allows for more than one mediator variable to be entered into the same model simultaneously, although still testing for the indirect effect of each individual mediator variable controlling for all others in the model (Hayes, 2013). One parallel mediation model was created to test predictions pertaining to emotions, and thus included anger and fear. Given the requirements of the PROCESS modeling macro, this model was run one outcome variable at a time. A second parallel moderated mediation model was created to test all predictions pertaining to collective self-esteem and the moderating role of gender, and thus included private and public collective self-esteem. Once again, this model was run one outcome variable at a time.

Table 1  
Descriptive Statistics, Reliabilities, and Correlations for All Study Variables

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1. Sex <sup>a</sup>	1.47	0.50	—													
2. Age (years)	44.45	12.17	-.05	—												
3. Trait affect	4.46	0.75	.08	.11	.88											
4. Observed male gender harassment	1.29	0.60	-.15 <sup>b</sup>	-.24 <sup>**</sup>	-.14 <sup>*</sup>	.94										
5. Anger	1.79	0.76	-.11	-.34 <sup>**</sup>	-.41 <sup>**</sup>	.45 <sup>**</sup>	.87									
6. Fear of SH	1.86	1.25	-.15 <sup>b</sup>	-.21 <sup>**</sup>	-.07	.66 <sup>**</sup>	.33 <sup>**</sup>	.96								
7. Collective self-esteem—Private	6.00	1.10	.06	.14 <sup>*</sup>	.32 <sup>**</sup>	-.30 <sup>**</sup>	-.24 <sup>**</sup>	-.36 <sup>**</sup>	— <sup>b</sup>							
8. Collective self-esteem—Public	5.04	1.01	.01	.05	.35 <sup>**</sup>	-.25 <sup>**</sup>	-.27 <sup>**</sup>	-.24 <sup>**</sup>	.51 <sup>**</sup>	— <sup>c</sup>						
9. Psychological health	2.85	1.10	-.02	-.31 <sup>**</sup>	-.59 <sup>**</sup>	.21 <sup>**</sup>	.47 <sup>**</sup>	.20 <sup>**</sup>	-.30 <sup>**</sup>	-.28 <sup>*</sup>	.88					
10. Physical health	1.83	0.61	-.03	-.24 <sup>**</sup>	-.16 <sup>*</sup>	.12	.30 <sup>**</sup>	.25 <sup>**</sup>	-.15 <sup>*</sup>	-.12	.41 <sup>**</sup>	.87				
11. OCB	3.97	1.24	-.09	.10	.28 <sup>**</sup>	.02	-.09	.05	.07	.05	-.14 <sup>*</sup>	.09	.94			
12. Affective commitment	3.07	0.89	.03	.22 <sup>**</sup>	.41 <sup>**</sup>	-.12	-.32 <sup>**</sup>	-.04	.10	.16 <sup>*</sup>	-.46 <sup>**</sup>	-.13	.40 <sup>**</sup>	.88		
13. Withdrawal	1.90	0.97	-.23 <sup>**</sup>	-.32 <sup>**</sup>	-.26 <sup>**</sup>	.36 <sup>**</sup>	.49 <sup>**</sup>	.34 <sup>**</sup>	-.14	-.10	.45 <sup>**</sup>	.48 <sup>**</sup>	.02	-.27 <sup>**</sup>	.94	
14. Workplace deviance	1.46	0.89	-.26 <sup>**</sup>	-.23 <sup>**</sup>	-.17 <sup>*</sup>	.44 <sup>**</sup>	.43 <sup>**</sup>	.42 <sup>**</sup>	-.10	-.04	.30 <sup>**</sup>	.33 <sup>**</sup>	.09	-.13	-.76 <sup>**</sup>	.95

Note. Internal consistency (α) data appear in boldface on the diagonal; N = 206; SH = sexual harassment; OCB = organizational citizenship behavior.

<sup>a</sup> 1 = male, 2 = female. <sup>b</sup> α = .78 (males), α = .87 (females). <sup>c</sup> α = .59 (males), α = .79 (females).

\* p < .05. \*\* p < .01.

Table 2  
Attrition Analysis

Variables	Time 1 only ( <i>N</i> = 123)		Time 1 & Time 2 ( <i>N</i> = 206)		<i>t</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Age (years)	38.19	12.80	44.45	12.17	-4.32**
Trait affect	4.40	0.67	4.46	0.75	-0.80
Observed male gender harassment	1.45	0.76	1.29	0.60	2.14
Anger	1.89	0.86	1.79	0.76	1.13
Fear of SH	1.88	1.19	1.86	1.26	0.14
Collective self-esteem-Private	6.00	1.18	6.00	1.10	0.00
Collective self-esteem-Public	4.96	1.10	5.04	1.01	-0.65

Note. SH = sexual harassment.

\*\*  $p < .01$ .

Moreover, to show the unique effects of both affective (i.e., anger and fear) and attitudinal (i.e., collective self-esteem public and private) mediators, we included the alternative set of variables as covariates in the respective models. For example, when estimating the model with anger and fear as mediators, we controlled for private and public collective self-esteem (and vice versa). When PROCESS is run in this way, the unique effects of the focal mediators are generated.

Before conducting any analyses, we also assessed whether attrition could threaten the validity of results. To do so, we conducted *t* tests on all Time 1 study variables comparing participants who responded at both time periods with those who only provided data at Time 1. The Bonferroni correction factor was used to control for the number of comparisons made (in this case, .05/7 tests). Results indicated that participants who responded at both time periods ( $M = 44.45$  years,  $SD = 12.17$ ) were significantly older than those who responded at Time 1 only ( $M = 38.13$  years,  $SD = 12.78$ ),  $t(303) = -4.32$ ,  $p < .01$ . Results from these analyses appear in Table 2. As a result, age was controlled in all analyses.

We also computed a chi-squared test to assess gender differences in attrition. Males were significantly more likely to respond at both time periods, whereas females were significantly more likely to respond only once ( $\chi^2 = 5.67$ ;  $p < .05$ ). As a result, gender of the observer was included as a control variable in all

analyses, with the exception of those involving collective self-esteem where gender served as a moderator.

### Observed Male GH and Anger

Observed male-on-male GH was positively related to anger ( $b = .44$ , 95% CI [.28, .60]), supporting Hypothesis 1a (Table 3). Moreover, observed male-on-male GH indirectly predicted psychological and physical health through employee anger, thereby supporting Hypothesis 2a and 2b. Employees who witnessed male-on-male GH were more likely to experience anger, which itself was positively associated with psychological health symptoms ( $b = .35$ , 95% CI [.15, .55]) and physical health symptoms ( $b = .17$ , 95% CI [.04, .31]). Bias-corrected bootstrap CIs for the indirect effect of observed male-on-male GH on psychological health symptoms ( $b = .15$ , 95% CI [.06, .29]) and physical health symptoms ( $b = .08$ , 95% CI [.01, .17]) via anger did not include zero. Results from these analyses appear in Table 4.

Observed male-on-male GH indirectly predicted negative job-related behaviors through employee anger. As noted above, employees who witnessed the GH of a male colleague were more likely to experience anger. Experienced anger was then associated with higher levels of withdrawal ( $b = .39$ , 95% CI [.20, .59]) and workplace deviance ( $b = .23$ , 95% CI [.07, .41]).

Table 3  
Direct Effects of Observed Male Gender Harassment on Emotions

Variables	Anger				Fear of sexual harassment			
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	LLCI	ULCI	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	LLCI	ULCI
Observed male gender harassment	.44	.08	.28	.60	1.22	.12	.98	1.45
Sex	-.12	.09	-.30	.06	-.18	.14	-.44	.09
Age	-.01	.00	-.02	-.01	-.01	.01	-.02	.01
Trait affect	-.28	.07	-.42	-.15	.21	.10	.01	.41
CSE private	.04	.05	-.06	.14	-.26	.07	-.40	-.11
CSE public	-.06	.05	-.16	.05	-.03	.08	-.19	.12
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.37				.50			
<i>F</i>	17.50**				30.55**			

Note. LLCI = lower limit confidence interval; ULCI = upper limit confidence interval; CSE = collective self-esteem.

\*\*  $p < .01$ .

Table 4  
*Direct and Indirect Effects of Observed Male Gender Harassment on Psychological and Physical Health via Anger and Fear of Sexual Harassment*

Variables	Psychological health symptoms				Physical health symptoms			
	b	SE	LLCI	ULCI	b	SE	LLCI	ULCI
Anger	.35	.10	.15	.55	.17	.07	.04	.31
Fear of SH	.06	.07	-.08	.19	.15	.05	.06	.24
Sex	.06	.13	-.20	.31	-.01	.09	-.18	.16
Age	-.02	.01	-.03	-.00	-.01	.00	-.02	-.00
Trait affect	-.67	.10	-.87	-.48	-.03	.07	-.17	.10
CSE private	-.05	.07	-.19	.09	.02	.05	-.08	.11
CSE public	-.03	.07	-.17	.12	-.03	.05	-.13	.07
R <sup>2</sup>	.44				.16			
F	17.43**				4.28**			
Direct effect	-.10	.14	-.38	.18	-.24	.10	-.43	-.05
Indirect effect via anger	.15	.06	.06	.29	.08	.04	.01	.17
Indirect effect via fear of SH	.07	.09	-.12	.23	.18	.10	-.01	.37

Note. LLCI = lower limit confidence interval; ULCI = upper limit confidence interval; SH = sexual harassment; CSE = collective self-esteem.

\*\*  $p < .01$ .

Bias-corrected bootstrap CIs for the indirect effect of observed male-on-male GH on withdrawal ( $b = .17$ , 95% CI [.08, .32]) and workplace deviance ( $b = .10$ , 95% CI [.03, .21]) via anger did not include zero. Thus, results support Hypothesis 2c (Table 5).

Partial support emerged for the indirect effect of observed male-on-male GH on positive job-related outcomes through employee anger (Hypothesis 2d). Employees who witnessed the GH of a male colleague were more likely to experience anger (see the earlier text), which itself was negatively associated with affective commitment ( $b = -.19$ , 95% CI [-.40, -.00]). A bias-corrected bootstrap CI for this indirect effect did not include zero ( $b = -.09$ , 95% CI [-.20, -.00]). Witness anger, however, did not predict OCB ( $b = .07$ ; 95% CI [-.23, .36]; Table 5).

### Observed Male GH and Fear of SH

Observed male-on-male GH was positively related to fear of SH ( $b = 1.22$ , 95% CI [.98, 1.45]), thus supporting Hypothesis 1b (Table 3). Although fear of SH was not significantly related to psychological health symptoms ( $b = .06$ , 95% CI [-.08, .19]), it was significantly and positively related to physical health symptoms ( $b = .15$ , 95% CI [.06, .24]). However, as the bias-corrected CI for the indirect effect on physical health symptoms ( $b = .18$ , 95% CI [-.01, .37]) included zero, no support emerged for either Hypothesis 3a or 3b (Table 4).

No support emerged for the indirect effect of observed male-on-male GH on negative and positive job-related outcomes through observers' fear of SH (Hypothesis 3c or 3d). Although employees who witnessed the GH of a male colleague were more likely to experience fear of SH (see the earlier text), fear of SH was not significantly related to withdrawal ( $b = .13$ , 95% CI [-.01, .23]), affective commitment ( $b = .05$ , 95% CI [-.08, .18]), or OCB ( $b = .03$ , 95% CI [-.16, .23]). Moreover, although fear of SH was significantly and positively related to workplace deviance ( $b = .17$ , 95% CI [.05, .29]), the bias-

corrected CI testing for the indirect effect of observed male-on-male GH on workplace deviance via fear of SH included zero ( $b = .21$ , 95% CI [-.02, .49]; Tables 5 and 6).

### Observed Male GH and Collective Self-Esteem

To test for the unique effects of observed male-on-male GH on collective self-esteem among women, sex of observer was used as a moderator variable. A significant interaction emerged between observed male-on-male GH and observer sex in the case of public ( $b = -.70$ , 95% CI [-1.20, -.21]) but not private ( $b = -.50$ , 95% CI [-1.01, .02]) collective self-esteem. Probing the former interaction, bootstrap CIs revealed that observed male-on-male GH was negatively related to public collective self-esteem for female ( $b = -.71$ , 95% CI [-1.21, -.22]) but not male ( $b = -.01$ , 95% CI [-.33, .32]) witnesses. As such, although no support emerged for Hypothesis 4a, support was found for Hypothesis 4b and the unique effect of observed male-on-male GH among women (Table 6; Figure 1).

Neither private nor public collective self-esteem was significantly related to the psychological or physical well-being of women or men. Thus, no support emerged for Hypothesis 5a or 5b (Table 7).

Finally, a significant indirect effect through collective self-esteem among women did emerge in the case of workplace deviance. More specifically, bias-corrected bootstrap CIs revealed that observed male-on-male GH exerted an indirect effect on workplace deviance via public collective self-esteem for females only ( $b = -.08$ , 95% CI [-.21, -.01]). The indirect effect in the case of males was nonsignificant, as the bias-corrected CI included zero ( $b = -.00$ , 95% CI [-.04, .04]). However, as neither private nor public collective self-esteem was significantly related to withdrawal, affective commitment, or OCB among female (or male) witnesses, and the indirect effect between observed male-on-male GH and workplace deviance via public collective self-esteem among females

**Table 5**  
*Direct and Indirect Effects of Observed Male Gender Harassment on Negative and Positive Job-Related Behaviors and Attitudes via Anger and Fear of Sexual Harassment*

Variables	Withdrawal			Workplace deviance			Affective commitment			Organizational citizenship behavior		
	b	SE	ULCI	b	SE	ULCI	b	SE	ULCI	b	SE	ULCI
Anger	.39	.10	.20	.07	.09	.41	-.19	.10	-.40	.07	.15	-.23
Fear of SH	.13	.07	-.01	.05	.06	.29	.05	.07	-.08	.03	.10	-.16
Sex	-.37	.12	-.62	-.16	.12	-.60	.01	.12	-.23	-.28	.19	-.64
Age	-.02	.01	-.03	-.00	.01	.00	.01	.01	.00	.01	.01	-.01
Trait affect	-.13	.10	-.32	.07	.09	.12	.42	.09	.24	.46	.15	.18
CSE private	.05	.07	-.09	.19	.06	.05	-.10	.07	-.23	.03	.10	-.17
CSE public	.05	.07	-.09	.20	.06	-.03	.04	.07	-.10	-.06	.11	-.27
R <sup>2</sup>	.34			.35			.23			.08		
F	11.34**			12.21**			6.55**			1.99*		
Direct effect	.10	.14	-.18	.04	.12	.52	-.08	.14	-.35	.01	.21	-.40
Indirect effect via anger	.17	.06	.08	.03	.05	.21	-.09	.05	-.20	.03	.07	-.10
Indirect effect via fear of SH	.15	.12	-.04	-.02	.13	.49	.06	.08	-.09	.04	.13	-.23

Note. LLCI = lower limit confidence interval; ULCI = upper limit confidence interval; SH = sexual harassment; CSE = collective self-esteem. \*\* p < .01.

was in the opposite direction than predicted, no support for Hypothesis 5c emerged (Table 8).

**Discussion**

We investigated the relationship between witnessing male-on-male GH and observers’ psychological and physical well-being, their negative and positive work-related behaviors and job attitudes, and whether these relationships could in part be explained by discrete negative emotions, and in some cases, identity-based evaluations. The results of this study showed that observing male GH is positively related to the experience of anger and fear of SH, and negatively to collective self-esteem, in the latter case particularly among females. Further still, the positive relationship between observed male GH and psychological health symptoms, physical health symptoms, withdrawal and workplace deviance, and the negative relationship between observed male GH and affective commitment, were indirect and transmitted via witness anger. Witnessing the GH of a male colleague was also indirectly related to workplace deviance via collective self-esteem among women. These findings point to both the potentially far-reaching and indirect consequences of an understudied form of workplace SH, and in so doing, contribute to a more nuanced understanding of *who* is being harmed by male SH, *what* this harm looks like, and *how* this harm is produced. In contrast, fear of SH did not help to explain the association between observing male GH and witnesses’ well-being, behaviors, and attitudes.

**Theoretical Implications**

One primary contribution of this research is the conceptualization of the vicarious impact of male SH. Although the negative effects of other forms of work mistreatment (e.g., misogyny) on third parties have been previously identified (see earlier text), we still know little about how witnesses’ psychological, physical, and job-related well-being suffer as a result of their exposure to male-targeted GH. The current study’s findings are particularly informative in light of the increasing concern being shown for this type of harassment in both academic and public forums (Meredith, 2014; Settles et al., 2012), and the unique nature of male compared with female SH (Donovan & Drasgow, 1999). Moreover, in line with calls for more research into the nonsexual forms of workplace SH (Dionisi & Barling, 2015), our study is the first to suggest the indirect damage to third parties produced by behaviors conveying hostile, degrading, and insulting attitudes against nontraditional displays of masculinity. The current findings thus represent an important contribution to both the SH and vicarious mistreatment literatures.

Second, by showing the relationship between discrete negative emotions (i.e., anger and fear of SH) and observed male GH, as well as the mediating role played by anger between this observed mistreatment and numerous psychological, physical, and job-related costs, this study emphasizes the centrality of emotions in understanding the effects of witnessing male GH. Although researchers have speculated about the role of emotions in the vicarious harassment process (Miner-Rubino, & Cortina, 2007), until now little empirical research has addressed this suspicion. As such, we learn more about the affective, process-based nature of observed male SH from our results. Moreover, given that anger but

Table 6  
Conditional Direct Effects of Observed Male Gender Harassment on Collective Self-Esteem by Sex

Variables	Collective self-esteem (private)				Collective self-esteem (public)			
	b	SE	LLCI	ULCI	b	SE	LLCI	ULCI
Observed male gender harassment (OMGH)	.53	.36	-.17	1.23	.69	.34	.02	1.37
Sex	.62	.36	-.08	1.32	.74	.34	.06	1.42
OMGH × Sex	-.50	.26	-1.01	.02	-.70	.25	-1.20	-.21
Age	.00	.01	-.01	.02	-.01	.01	-.02	.01
Trait affect	.49	.10	.28	.69	.46	.10	.26	.66
Anger	.09	.12	-.14	.32	-.07	.11	-.29	.15
Fear of SH	-.30	.08	-.44	-.15	-.13	.07	-.27	.01
R <sup>2</sup>	.27				.23			
F	9.66**				7.86**			
Conditional direct effect								
Males	.03	.17	-.30	.37	-.01	.17	-.33	.32
Females	-.46	.26	-.98	.05	-.71	.25	-1.21	-.22

Note. LLCI = lower limit confidence interval; ULCI = upper limit confidence interval; CSE = collective self-esteem; SH = sexual harassment.

\*\*p < .01.

not fear of SH mediated the relationships of concern, more support for differentiating between discrete negative emotions (Lerner & Keltner, 2000), and theorizing about their unique nature and role in the mistreatment process, is obtained. For example, these differences may reveal more about the coping responses that witnesses of male GH take. The positive relationships found between the experience of anger and the behavioral responses of withdrawal and deviance among witnesses of male GH, serve to suggest that anger may evoke more emotion-focused forms of coping among observers (i.e., attempts to manage emotional distress often through maladaptive means such as counterproductive workplace behavior, denial, or distraction; Krischer, Penney, & Hunter, 2010; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). In contrast, as fear was not related to either of these reactions, this emotion may be linked to other responses that were not explored in this study, for example problem-focused coping strategies (i.e., efforts to modify the problem at hand, generating options to solve the problem; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Thus, future research may consider how different emotional experiences reveal insights pertinent to how male GH witnesses manage and respond to this observed mistreatment.

Third, although the mediating role of collective self-esteem, particularly among women, was not consistently supported in this

study, the findings pertaining to collective self-esteem nonetheless contribute to an understanding of the potential effects of witnessing male GH. Although scholars have long maintained that SH is rooted in gender or sex-based identity concerns (Berdahl, 2007; Franke, 1997), little empirical research has investigated the effects of SH on gender or sex-based identity outcomes. Our findings suggest that exposure to behavior meant to diminish the gender-based status of certain groups (e.g., women, “nonmasculine” men) and/or individuals (e.g., targets belonging to such groups) is indeed related to gender-based self-perceptions, even among third parties. Thus, the current findings support the idea that male GH communicates powerful gender-relevant messages that are perceived by women and men alike. Furthermore, although numerous adverse consequences have been linked to both direct and vicarious SH, these results showing an association between observed male GH and poorer collective self-esteem, suggest that much can still be learned about the broad scope of SH outcomes.

Fourth, we asserted that observed male GH would be uniquely associated with females’ collective self-esteem in light of the patriarchal messages communicated by this behavior. By reinforcing and perpetuating hypermasculine, patriarchal ideals, male GH communicates messages of male superiority and female subordination to those who encounter it, thus presenting what we believed to be a unique form of suffering for female witnesses. Assessments of public collective self-esteem indeed showed that only women who were exposed to the GH of a male peer were more likely to report others viewed their gender negatively. Although caution must be exercised when interpreting these results given the low alpha of the collective self-esteem (public) scale, these findings lend support to the notion that even when directed at men, GH communicates implicit and pervasive patriarchal messages that are uniquely damaging to women.

Importantly, although for females, observing male GH was related to perceptions that others devalue their gender (as was expected), the predicted indirect effect between observed male GH and workplace deviance via public collective self-esteem was

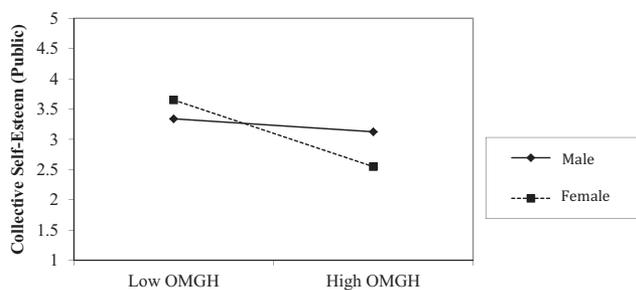


Figure 1. Interaction between observed male gender harassment and witness gender on public collective self-esteem.

Table 7  
*Conditional Indirect Effects of Observed Male Gender Harassment on Psychological and Physical Health via CSE, as Moderated by Sex*

Variables	Psychological health symptoms				Physical health symptoms			
	b	SE	LLCI	ULCI	b	SE	LLCI	ULCI
CSE private	-.05	.07	-.19	.09	.02	.05	-.08	.11
CSE public	-.03	.07	-.17	.11	-.03	.05	-.13	.07
Age	-.02	.01	-.03	-.01	-.01	.00	-.02	-.00
Trait affect	-.67	.10	-.86	-.47	-.04	.07	-.17	.10
Anger	.34	.10	.14	.55	.17	.07	.04	.31
Fear of SH	.05	.07	-.08	.19	.15	.05	.06	.24
R <sup>2</sup>	.44				.16			
F	19.99**				4.91**			
Direct effect	-.10	.14	-.38	.18	-.24	.10	-.43	-.05
Conditional indirect effects								
CSE private (male)	-.00	.02	-.06	.03	.00	.01	-.02	.03
CSE private (female)	.02	.05	-.03	.18	-.01	.03	-.12	.04
CSE public (male)	.00	.01	-.02	.04	.00	.01	-.01	.03
CSE public (female)	.02	.06	-.08	.16	.02	.04	-.03	.13

Note. LLCI = lower limit confidence interval; ULCI = upper limit confidence interval; CSE = collective self-esteem; SH = sexual harassment.

\*\*  $p < .01$ .

negative. In other words, the more that females observe their male peers being harassed at work, the less likely they are to engage in counterproductive workplace behavior, given a damaged social identity. Although contrary to expectations, previous research utilizing the group value model of social identity (Smith & Tyler, 1997; Tyler, DeGoe, & Smith, 1996) may help shed some light on this unexpected result. According to this theory, one's social identity is made up of both pride (whether one's social group as a whole is a worthy group of which to belong—i.e., an evaluation of one's group more generally) and respect (whether the person him/herself is a valuable and respected member of the group—i.e., a more specific, individually focused evaluation). Extrapolating from this, if a person's positive social identity is jeopardized in light of low levels of pride, it could be the case that the individual attempts to insulate feelings of self-worth by protecting the perception that others have of them personally (i.e., respect). Hence, females who observe male GH and in turn experience lowered levels of public collective self-esteem (i.e., lowered pride), may respond behaviorally by refraining from the enactment of deviant workplace behavior—conduct that could reflect poorly on them personally, but over which they have some control. As this rationale is of course speculative, future research may wish to investigate this theoretical possibility further.

Last, the results of this study show that observing the GH of a male colleague is indirectly and positively related to some negative job-related behaviors (i.e., workplace deviance, withdrawal), is indirectly and negatively related to some positive job-related attitudes (i.e., affective commitment), and in some cases, is unrelated to workplace conduct (i.e., OCB). These findings suggest that the nature of work-related outcomes matters in understanding the indirect effects of witnessing male GH. More specifically, given our results, it may be the case that observed male-targeted workplace mistreatment and its associated negative emotions have little connection to prosocial forms of behavior at work, but may be related to counterproductive, antisocial responses. In essence, al-

though vicarious male GH may not discourage employees from "doing good," it may in fact, encourage them to "do harm" in either active or passive ways. Thus, the importance of continuing to differentiate and investigate *specific* job-related consequences of both a constructive and deleterious nature is emphasized.

### Practical Implications

This study has potentially important practical implications for organizations and their leaders. These results could guide the development of more appropriate and sufficient interventions, highlighting the need for organizational supports aimed not only at direct targets of male GH but also targets' peers who might witness this mistreatment. For example, offering counseling services specifically to observers of male GH, may help these individuals cope with the psychological and/or physical distress they have been found here to experience. Further, explicitly educating employees about the availability of reporting channels for instances of male GH, as well as the procedures for taking such action, may go far in helping to combat the experience of fear following an observed instance of male mistreatment. Facilitating the reporting process for witnesses of male GH may also help alleviate a number of the negative secondary and/or tertiary outcomes suggested by this study (e.g., anger, withdrawal, reduced affective commitment), by providing employees with a positive opportunity to help redress the injustice they have witnessed. Given the vicarious costs uncovered with this research, organizations may further wish to consider whether group-based as opposed to individual forms of intervention following the discovery of male GH are more appropriate. As the former may provide greater opportunities for social support, decreased feelings of isolation, and an increased sense of empowerment among multiple witnesses of male GH, we suggest that peer support programs provide a valuable opportunity for organizations.

Table 8  
Conditional Indirect Effects of Observed Male Gender Harassment on Negative and Positive Job-Related Behaviors and Attitudes via CSE, as Moderated by Sex

Variables	Withdrawal			Workplace deviance			Affective commitment			Organizational citizenship behavior		
	b	SE	ULCI	b	SE	ULCI	b	SE	ULCI	b	SE	ULCI
CSE private	.05	.07	-.10	.19	.06	-.06	.19	.07	-.23	.03	.10	-.18
CSE public	.07	.07	-.07	.21	.06	-.01	.24	.07	-.10	-.05	.11	-.26
Age	-.01	.01	-.02	-.00	.01	-.01	.01	.01	.00	.01	.01	-.01
Trait affect	-.15	.10	-.35	.05	-.07	-.24	.10	.42	.09	.44	.15	.16
Anger	.42	.10	.22	.62	.09	.08	.44	.19	.10	.09	.15	-.21
Fear of SH	.14	.07	.01	.28	.19	.07	.31	.05	-.08	.05	.10	-.15
R <sup>2</sup>	.30			.31			.23			.07		
F	11.21**			11.65**			7.52**			1.94		
Direct effect	.11	.14	-.17	.39	.13	.04	.54	.14	-.35	.02	.21	-.40
Conditional indirect effects												
CSE private (male)	.00	.02	-.02	.05	.02	-.03	.05	.02	-.06	.00	.03	-.05
CSE private (female)	-.02	.05	-.12	.13	-.03	-.19	.01	.05	-.02	-.01	.06	-.21
CSE public (male)	-.00	.01	-.04	.02	-.00	-.04	.04	.01	-.04	.00	.02	-.03
CSE public (female)	-.05	.06	-.21	.03	-.08	-.21	-.01	-.03	-.16	.03	.09	-.11

Note. LLCI = lower limit confidence interval; ULCI = upper limit confidence interval; CSE = collective self-esteem; SH = sexual harassment. \*\* p < .01.

As females may experience unique vicarious consequences (e.g., reduced public collective self-esteem), organizations may also need to tailor interventions to specific demographic groups, while still being careful not to be seen to favor any particular group of employees. Findings that the mistreatment of a male peer was uniquely and negatively associated with gender identity-based effects for women also suggests that organizations consider how seemingly unrelated workplace behaviors may be contributing to a misogynistic workplace environment.

Finally, communicating the unacceptability of male GH through organization-wide training initiatives specifically incorporating material to dispel myths surrounding the “boys will boys” mentality, will also be important in combatting the prevalence of this workplace problem (Pearson, Andersson, & Porath, 2000), as will be the creation of policies and organizational norms discouraging this conduct (Willness et al., 2007). Leadership development (Kelloway & Barling, 2010) that includes education about the nature and consequences of male SH specifically also offers a tangible way to target this problem, while at the same time equipping leaders to address the concerns that their employees may express upon witnessing such an occurrence.

**Future Directions and Study Limitations**

Several directions for future research can be suggested, and in some cases, are based on limitations inherent in this study. First, these data are cross-sectional, thus limiting causal inferences. Although previous longitudinal studies on personal SH have suggested that similar health and job-related outcomes result from this mistreatment (Chiodo, Wolfe, Crooks, Hughes, & Jaffe, 2009; Glomb, Munson, Hulin, Bergman, & Drasgow, 1999), and previous research has suggested that emotions contribute to declines in well-being (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996), reverse causal ordering cannot be excluded. For example, employees suffering from psychological or physical health symptoms may experience anger as a result, which might sensitize them to perceiving threatening environmental stimuli (i.e., the SH of a male peer; Van Honk, Tuiten, de Haan, van de Hout, & Stam, 2001). Thus, future research should replicate these findings with a longitudinal or experimental methodology. How the vicarious effects of male SH change over time could also be explored; although observing male GH may at first elicit anger, prolonged exposure could desensitize witnesses to this mistreatment or result in emotions like guilt, particularly if witnesses remain silent. By examining the dynamic nature of the perceptions and emotional reactions to male SH, a better understanding of its vicarious impact will be obtained.

Second, we relied solely on single-source, self-report data. Although we controlled for negative affect (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003), mono-source bias remains a concern. However, given the personal and perceptual nature of observed GH, self-reported data from focal participants themselves was required. To avoid mono-source bias in future research, we suggest using external sources of data for outcome variables where possible. For example, obtaining more objective measures of employee health (e.g., number of sick days taken) or assessments from leaders of employee withdrawal or deviance, might be beneficial.

Third, our sample consisted of male and female employees from “blue collar” organizations, perhaps limiting the generalizability of findings to organizations with similar characteristics. Future re-

search should now determine whether similar results are obtained among samples consisting of “white collar” employees, or within more gender-egalitarian workplaces. To test the generalizability of this study’s findings, future research should also focus on the vicarious effects of other forms of male-on-male SH (e.g., unwanted sexual attention).

Fourth, although the aim of this study was to determine how observing male GH vicariously impacts witnesses’ well-being via negative emotions and collective self-esteem, future research could focus on variables that may moderate these relationships. For example, whether witnesses are socially connected to, or share a relationship with either the perpetrator or the victim (e.g., friendship, leader-subordinate relationship), may affect the degree to which observed harassment is anger- and/or fear-evoking. Moreover, the impact of observing male GH may also depend on who perpetrates the mistreatment. Although we focused on male-on-male GH, it remains to be seen whether similar results emerge for female-on-male GH. Previous research showing that men and women evaluate SH differently depending on perpetrator gender (Katz, Hannon, & Whitten, 1996) also suggests that interactions between perpetrator and observer gender may be relevant. Given previous research demonstrating that men who report a frightening personal encounter with SH experience higher levels of distress, role limitations, and less work satisfaction compared with women (Settles et al., 2014), future studies could consider the role of observer gender in moderating the relationship between experienced emotions and other psychological and/or job-related outcomes of this experience. This might be particularly important given our failure to replicate the mediating role of fear among observers of male GH to the tertiary outcomes of interest. Finally, given the role of workplace climate and/or perceived organizational tolerance for mistreatment in harassment’s vicarious outcomes (Chrobot-Mason et al., 2013; Miner-Rubino & Cortina, 2007), exploring the moderating role of environmental factors (e.g., organizational norms, policies and practices, the existence of employee supports) could yield important findings.

### Conclusion

Although knowledge about male SH is increasing, understanding the effects of observed male GH has lagged behind. Our findings suggest that exposure to the harassment of a male colleague may produce far-reaching and indirect effects on psychological and physical well-being, negative job-related behaviors, and positive job-related attitudes through the anger associated with observed mistreatment, and in some cases, declines in collective self-esteem. Moreover, observed male GH could also result in fear among observers. Although the need to replicate these findings with longitudinal methodologies, determine their generalizability within multiple workplace settings, and extend the focus to include additional moderators remains, important conceptual, empirical, and practical contributions for both SH and vicarious mistreatment research have been identified.

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