

‘Training the next generation HR Practitioners’: Reflecting on HRM Student experiences of Sexual Harassment Training

Abstract

Despite prohibitive legislation and organisational policies and training, high rates of sexual harassment persist in the hospitality industry, a situation which is concerning to organisations and researchers alike. As management educators, we embedded a sexual harassment lecture within the context of a human resource management degree, with the aim of developing the capacity of the future HR Practitioner workforce to address sexual harassment. The reflective journals of these students, collected over a 3-year period, reveal that while participants found the session improved their understanding of sexual harassment myths and remedies, many still questioned their ability to act within the context of wider organisational dynamics. Our analysis leads us to conclude, that sexual harassment training sessions are a valuable and necessary starting point for developing intolerance. However, if we are truly committed to eradicating sexual harassment, then a much broader and integrated approach is required that includes redressing the limitations of the current legal systems, broadening the scope of education within the wider community, and developing intolerant organisational climates.

Keywords: Sexual Harassment Training, Hospitality, Human Resource Practitioners Human Resource Management Students, Management Education, Reflective Journals,

Introduction

Some estimates suggest that as many as 50% of women will experience sexual harassment during their working lives (Vijayasiri, 2008). Sexual harassment rates within the hospitality industry are believed to be even higher (Lin, 2006; Madera, Priyanko and Dawson, 2018; Ram, 2018; Waudby and Poulston, 2017). Equally concerning, is the high rate of sexual harassment experienced by hospitality students serving internships (Mkono, 2010; Lin, 2006). Unsurprisingly, within an industry where flirtatious interactions with customers may be explicitly or implicitly encouraged (Gilbert, Guerrier and Guy, 1998), hospitality workers perceive sexual harassment to be more frequent (Agrusa, Tanner and Coats, 2000) and more tolerated (Poulston, 2008) compared to other industries. Indeed, within the hospitality industry, sexual harassment is complex, given that men, women, managers, employees and guests are both targets and perpetrators of sexually harassing behaviours (Klein and Poulston, 2011; Poulston, 2008).

As management educators working in the human resource management space, we are concerned with the persistence of sexual harassment, especially in light of the negative consequences of such behaviour. For example, victims of sexual harassment experience a range of physical and psychological harms (Baugh, 1997; Chan, Chow, Lam and Cheung, 2008; Chiodo, Wolfe, Crooks, Hughes and Jaffe, 2009; Gutek and Koss, 1993; Pina, et al., 2009). In addition, victims and organisations incur financial costs associated with decreased performance, increased absenteeism, job dissatisfaction, turnover, litigation and employee compensation (Antecol, Barcus, and Cobb-Clark, 2009; Pina et al., 2009; Popovich and Warren, 2010). We are equally concerned that sexual harassment remains persistent, despite decades of prohibitive

legislation, organisational policies and organisational sexual harassment training (Hertzog, Wright and Beat, 2008; McLaughlin, Uggen, and Blackstone, 2012).

In response to these concerns, we explore student reflections on a sexual harassment session taken within the context of an undergraduate human resource management course as part of a business degree. Specifically, *we aim to explore whether undertaking sexual harassment training impacts on students understanding of sexual harassment dimensions, and their perceived ability to respond to harassment*. At one level, the sexual harassment session is typical of any organisation-based training workshop (Pina et al., 2009) and presents a functional interpretation of individual and organisational issues arising from sexually harassing behaviour. From this functional perspective, and like any organisational training session, the aims of the session are to raise awareness about sexual harassment (Antecol, et al., 2003), to empower students to report incidences (McDonald, et al., 2011), and to help students recognise sexual harassment myths, if they are being harassed or if their behaviour constitutes sexual harassment. This course is intentionally taught from a critical feminist position, and as such also aims to locate sexual harassment within the broader socio-cultural context.

Interestingly, most studies examining the effectiveness of sexual harassment training focus on managerial or employee experience (Jiang et al., 2015; Perry et al., 2010; Perry et al., 2009). Yet, Perry et al., (2012) suggest a gap exists in HR Practitioner knowledge surrounding sexual harassment, thus their responses are not always appropriate, including within the hospitality industry (Madera, Guchait and Dawson, 2018). This gap in HR Practitioner knowledge is problematic, especially given that organisations can be held liable for their (in)action (Buckner et al., 2014) and because of the critical role HR Practitioners play in sexual harassment policy design and implementation and for creating intolerant organisation climates (Perry et al., 2012). In light of this perceived gap in HR Practitioner knowledge, an additional aim of presenting the session is to contribute to developing the capacity of the future HRM workforce to address sexual harassment across a range of sectors.

This article presents our research examining student experiences and learning outcomes from participating in the sexual harassment lecture. Specifically, this research is guided by the following questions: Does participating in the lecture enable students to recognise the behaviours that constitute sexual harassment, the cost and consequences of sexual harassment, and sexual harassment myths? Does participating in this lecture empower students to consider reporting personal experience of sexual harassment and equip them to consider ways to address sexual harassment in their future working lives?

The article is structured as follows. First, we begin by defining sexual harassment and reviewing several theories that attempt to explain why sexual harassment occurs. Next, the purpose of sexual harassment training, the content of the sexual harassment lecture, and our use of a critical feminist lens, is discussed. From here, we detail the method used and present the findings. The findings lead us to conclude that embedding sexual harassment training within the context of management degrees is valuable and necessary; however, redressing sexual harassment will require a broader and integrated approach.

Defining and Theorising Sexual Harassment

Within our national context of New Zealand, sexual harassment is codified in the Human Rights Act 1993 and the Employment Relations Act 2000. These Acts protect against *quid quo pro* and *hostile environment* sexual harassment. Hence, it is unlawful for employers or their agents to request sexual favours that contain an implied or overt promise or threat to

the employment status of the target. Employees are also protected from unwanted sexual attention from co-workers or customers, including verbal comments, visual displays, or physical behaviour of a sexual nature. Importantly, to constitute sexual harassment, the attention must be viewed as unwanted and offensive by the victim, and be repeated or so severe that it detrimentally affects employment, job performance, or job satisfaction.

Where legal definitions provide guidance on what constitutes sexual harassment, theoretical models offer explanations as to why sexual harassment occurs. Many of these explanations contain hetero-normative assumptions. The natural-biological model, for example, assumes that sexual harassment is an outcome of sexual attraction and an extension of an instinctive male-drive and willingness to use sexually aggressive behaviours to find a mate. Gutek and Morasch's (1982) conceptualisation of the sex-role spill over model suggests that broader socio-cultural norms, of men being deemed as sexual agents and women as sexual subjects, transfer to the work environment. Thus, a woman's gendered role takes precedent over her work role. In line with this, Brunner and Bever (2014: 465) argue that work 'routinely performed by women' falls somewhere on a continuum of sex-work requiring women to 'provide men with a performance of female heterosexuality'. With this frame in mind, Waudby and Poulston (2017) suggest that women within the hospitality industry who engage in flirtatious behaviour and dress provocatively enact these sex roles and by doing so, invite sexual harassment.

In contrast, the socio-cultural model frames sexual harassment as embedded in the 'broader patriarchal socio-cultural environment' (Kensbock et al., 2015: 42). Accordingly, the socio-cultural model explains sexual harassment as an outcome of gendered power differentials within society and as a technique to maintain these power differentials (Butler and Schmidtke, 2010). Kensbock et al., (2015) draw on the broader socio-cultural environment and embedded power imbalances to help explain the prevalence of sexual harassment among women room attendants working in five-star hotels. The organisation model considers the way in which skewed gendered work groups, job content, permissive cultural climates, and power differentials between staff affect the incidences of work-place sexual harassment. (Benavides Espinoza, and Cunningham, 2010; Butler and Schmidtke 2010; McDonald, 2012). Indeed, within the hospitality industry, employees are often young, casualised workers, embedded in hierarchal relationships between senior staff and customers (Poulston, 2008).

We agree with Popovich and Warren's (2010) view that sexual harassment is a function of power, and that these power differentials can be discerned at the social, organizational, interpersonal, and individual levels. Regardless of the theoretical approach taken, however, we also believe that sexual harassment needs to stop. It is to this end, that we present the session on sexual harassment within the context of a business degree, as discussed next.

Sexual Harassment Training within the HRM Classroom

Training is a prevalent organisational practice (Perry et al., 2010) used by management to declare zero tolerance for sexually harassing behaviour (O'Leary-Kelly, et al., 2004) and their commitment to addressing workplace sexual harassment (Buckner et al., 2014). The long-term aim of training is to address attitudes and behaviours of employees and managers regarding sexual harassment, and to create organisational cultural change (Hertzog, et al., 2008). Training thus has the potential to reduce ambiguity regarding the behaviours that constitute sexual harassment (Antecol, et al., 2003), empower targets to report incidences of sexual harassment (McDonald, et al., 2011), and to equip managers with the necessary skills to investigate complaints (Waxman, 1990). Certainly, those who understand sexual harassment are less likely

to harass and are more likely to contribute towards creating a positive workplace culture (Antecol et al. 2003).

Sexual harassment training outcomes, however, are affected by the actual or perceived organisational (in)tolerance for sexual harassment (Walsh, Bauerle, & Magley, 2013). Walsh et al. (2013) suggest that where organisational tolerance for sexual harassment exists, employees may feel pessimistic about sexual harassment training outcomes and managerial commitment to redress the situation. Training outcomes are also influenced by the extent to which trainees, managers or the organisation culture endorses sexual harassment myths. These myths include that sexual harassment is uncommon (Walsh et al, 2013), is trivial and/or inevitable when men and women work together, that perpetrators mean no harm, or that women ask for, enjoy, or fabricate claims 'to cover up for their own misdeeds' (Lonsway, Cortina, and Magley, 2008: 600). Hence, Walsh et al (2013) stress the importance of exploring these myths in training programmes to engage participants.

Building on these insights, we have embedded a sexual harassment lecture into the third-year human resource management course, Women and Management. Student cohorts in this course are generally approximately 75% female, 30% international students, and predominantly young adults, in their early 20s. This course aims to explore women's organisational experiences and employment outcomes, and is an, elective for human resource management students. The sexual harassment lecture begins by stressing that an understanding of sexual harassment might help class members recognise if they are being harassed or if their behaviour constitutes harassment, and as future HR Practitioners, to develop effective policies to manage sexual harassment. We then explore sexual harassment myths (Lonsway et al., 2008) and discuss our national legal framework governing sexual harassment as codified in the Human Rights Act 1993 and the Employment Relations Act 2000. In addition to defining sexual harassment (as noted above), these Acts stipulate organisational and victim responsibilities, and detail the complaints process. Organisations are responsible for developing a safe work environment, safeguarding against further victimization following reported incidences and, ideally, have policies detailing what constitutes sexual harassment, the complaints and formal grievance procedures, and victim rights and responsibilities. Victim responsibilities include informing the harasser that the attention is offensive and unwanted, keeping a detailed record of incidences, and refraining from defaming the (alleged) harasser. If harassment continues, the victim may initiate a formal complaint with their employer, and if unsuccessful, lodge a complaint with the Human Rights Commission or the Employment Relations Authority. Mediation is offered for accepted complaints. If mediation is unsuccessful, the complainant may lodge a personal grievance, which may incur remedies ranging from issuing an apology, restraining orders, recovery of lost wages, and/or compensation.

We conclude the session with a case-study detailing a sexual harassment complaint that was lodged with the Human Rights Commission. The case demonstrates the behaviours, and very real costs and consequences of sexual harassment to both victims and organisations. The case also illustrates the shortcomings of formal complaint processes identified by Scott and Martin (2006) that arise from a focus on procedure and technicalities over substantive issues, the reliance on legal expertise, the entrenchment of cover-up through confidentiality clauses, and the high cost of making a complaint. Alongside this content, a critical feminist lens is used to explore sexual harassment within the broader socio-cultural environment, as described next.

Sexual Harassment Training and the Critical Feminist Turn

Critical pedagogy is gaining traction within the hospitality and tourism classroom space (Barkathunnisha, Lee and Price, 2017; Bramwell and Lee, 2014; Ferraz, 2018; Fullagar and Wilson, 2012). Critical feminist pedagogy is concerned with transforming gendered 'relations of domination and oppression' (Titus, 2000: 24). The aims are to uncover how systemic processes culminate in gendered structural inequalities (Wagner 2014), to explore spaces of resistance and to empower students to imagine and actively create new ways of thinking and being in their everyday lives (Titus 2000). From a critical feminist standpoint, gender inequality is understood to be woven into intimate personal relationships (Wagner 2014) and structurally embedded in, obscured by and reproduced through uncritical collective adherence to cultural norms and institutional practices (Molla and Cuthbert 2014). Thus, critical feminist pedagogues seek to deconstruct and problematize gendered power relations, knowledge, social reality and taken-for-granted understandings, by challenging everyday practices that sustain patriarchy (Savigny 2014).

These critical feminist insights frame a reflexive analysis of the broader social context surrounding sexual harassment, such as sexism, the misuse and abuse of power, and hierarchal and gendered environments (Pina et al., 2009). This deeper exploration is facilitated by introducing the socio-cultural, organisational, (McDonald, 2012), and power-based explanations (Popovich and Warren, 2010) of sexual harassment. These multiple theoretical explanations enable a deconstruction of sexual harassment myths and the fostering of reflexive classroom discussions about how these myths serve to trivialise sexual harassment, cast blame on the target, and absolve the perpetrator of responsibility for their actions (Lonsway et al., 2008). This critical feminist analysis leads to deeper insights regarding the effect that sexual harassment has on women as a group by reinforcing gendered stereotypes and sexism and by upholding, reproducing and legitimising patriarchal power relationships within society (Baugh, 1997; Kensbock, Bailey, Jennings, and Patiar, 2015).

In line with our standpoint, critical feminist pedagogical processes involving small group discussions are embedded in the course design (Stake 2006). A key aspect of these discussions is to invite students to locate specific topics to personal experience and structural arrangements presented throughout the course, and to consider alternative ways of knowing and being. These critically informed classroom discussions are augmented by a formal reflexive journal assessment. These assessments form the data for the current study and are detailed in the following Method section.

Method

Reflexive Journals as Data

As part of a formal assessment, students are set a reflexive learning journal where they reflect on between five and eight topics presented throughout the course. As is typical of reflexive journaling (Hubbs & Brand, 2010), assessment instructions include that students draw on theory, lecture content and/or reading material to articulate their understanding of the topic, and to reflect on this material in relation to feelings, thoughts, values, and/or lived experience, workplace issues, or wider social processes. Students are free to choose which topics to reflect on, with each reflection being approximately 400 to 500 words.

In this course, reflexive journaling provides students the opportunity to debrief from difficult topics, and to keep the dialogical work to deepen understanding. Reflexive journals enhance developing a critical worldview and foster deep and authentic learning (Brown, McCracken & O'Kane, 2010; Dyer and Hurd, 2016). Journals also provide a safe, therapeutic

space for students to tease out contradictions between course content and lived experience (O'Connell & Dymont, 2011). Journals are also recognised as a record of student learning, and therefore, a source of empirical material detailing the learning process (O'Connell & Dymont, 2011). In our experience, students are often initially reticent about a process not seen as traditionally 'academic', yet quickly become engaged in the process, and in general produce work which integrates both theoretical and experiential understandings.

Consistent with university Ethics Approval gained, at the end of the course, students were invited to submit their learning journals as data for a larger project investigating student experiences of the course.

Sample

Over the three-year period of the research, 62 of the 86 enrolled students agreed to participate in the research by submitting their assignment as data. Of these 62 participants, 43 reflected on the sexual harassment lecture. Table 1 compares the composition of the full sample of 62 participants with the subset sample of the 43 participants who reflected on sexual harassment in terms of their gender and nationality. Significantly, nearly all the International Chinese-student participants and two thirds of the New Zealand participants reflected on the sexual harassment lecture. The prevalence of reflection amongst the Chinese students was of particular interest, as this enabled us to examine Liu, Kwan and Chiu's (2014) assertion that the interpretation and reporting of sexual harassment is problematized by Chinese cultural norms of saving face, and because both sexual harassment and the hospitality and tourism industry transcend national and cultural boundaries.

INSERT TABLE 1 HERE Sample

Thematic Analysis

The thematic analysis was conducted according to Braun and Clarke's (2006) process. Thus, the initial reading to become familiar with the empirical material was followed by a deeper thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) involving a line-by-line reading of each reflection (Charmaz, 2005), the development of open codes, looking for repeated patterns, and organising these patterns into themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Table 2 presents the 22 open codes emerging from this reading.

INSERT TABLE TWO HERE Open Codes

A constant comparison of these 22 codes coalesced in to three themes. Theme 1, '*Raising Awareness, Myth Endorsement and Ambiguity*' was evident in 33 participant reflections. Theme 1 particularly captures our interest in understanding whether participating in the sexual harassment lecture raises awareness about the behaviours, costs, consequences and myths surrounding sexual harassment. Theme 2, '*Sexual Harassment and Cover-ups as Normal and Complex Practices*' emerged from 20 participant reflections on personal experiences of sexual

harassment. Theme 2 especially provides insight in to the ways in which participants have normalised sexual harassment as an everyday part of life. Moreover, sexual harassment experience was threaded through 35 participant reflections that manifest in Theme 3, '*Strategies to Redress Sexual Harassment*'. Specifically, Theme 3 sheds light on the kinds of strategies participants perceive are necessary and /or are willing to implement to redress sexual harassment. We now turn to the Findings, where we can see that participants engaged in both functional and critical reflections within each of the three themes.

Findings

In this section, we draw on theoretical insights from the extant literature to present the themes to emerge from participant reflections, using pseudonyms to protect participant identity. Where appropriate, we highlight the differences to emerge between the New Zealand and Chinese participants.

Raising Awareness, Myth Endorsement and Ambiguity

In line with our first research question, we found that participating in the lecture developed most participants' ability to recognise sexually harassing behaviours. For example, and similar to Charlesworth et al.'s, (2011) assertion, as their starting point, participants readily identified quid pro quo behaviour and physical contact, such as '*slapping someone on the bum*', as sexual harassment, but were less familiar with hostile environment behaviours. Thus, raising awareness about verbal and visual forms of sexual harassment led many participants to describe the lecture as '*helpful*', '*informative*', or '*productive*'.

This new awareness about the range of behaviours that constitute sexual harassment was experienced in a number of ways. For example, Faith felt that the lecture '*taught me to trust my instincts as you know what is inappropriate or what actions are crossing your personal boundaries*'. Whereas, Robert reinterpreted prior experiences of '*widespread ... name calling and general gossip about female employees by their male counterparts ... as sexual harassment*'. Indeed, many of the participants concluded their reflections by categorically expressing that both quid pro quo and hostile environment behaviours would make them feel sexually harassed.

The lecture also had a particularly profound effect on raising awareness about the costs and consequences of sexual harassment especially in terms of the psychological, physical and financial harm experienced by victims, the reluctance of witnesses to intervene, and the variety of tactics used by harassers and their supporters to silence or devalue victims (Scott and Martin, 2006). Many drew on the case study to conceptualise sexual harassment in terms of power-relations, as captured by Karen:

The fact that she was so powerless ... This really highlighted the lack of authority women have in the workplace, and the reinforcement of the 'women stereotype' was clear to see.

Participant perceptions regarding who is most likely to be sexually harassed were also challenged. The New Zealand participants initially perceived that victims were more likely to be '*young, pretty and scantily clad women*'; while the Chinese participants perceived a cultural difference in the tolerance for harassing behaviour, noting that '*Western women are brave and*

capitalist societies... intolerant of sexual harassment'. Thus it came as a surprise to many that sexual harassment can occur, irrespective of the age, ethnicity, or perceived attractiveness of the target.

Nevertheless, the presence of victim myths did persist across the reflections, as illustrated by Paula who reflected that women invite sexual attention by *'wearing revealing clothing or [acting] flirty and [only] claim sexual harassment to ensure their own reputation'*. Indeed, Waudby and Poulston (2017) suggest this kind of behaviour and dress standard similarly invites sexual harassment within the hospitality industry. Yet, this position frames women as doubly culpable for inviting sexual attention and then manipulating sexual harassment policies to deflect attention away from their own initiating behaviour (Lonsway et al., 2008).

Moreover, 12 participants experienced a sense of ambiguity in distinguishing what consisted harassing behaviour. Some experienced this ambiguity at the personal level when trying to define the line between inoffensive or offensive behaviours, and again when trying to decide at what point to report offensive behaviours. This ambiguity was captured by Mary when she reflected that she can *'usually laugh off'* sexual comments, but felt that being touched *'crossed the boundary'*; however, as she goes on to explain *'the behaviour would need to be more extreme and on ongoing than [touching], before I would consider reporting an incident'*. Charlesworth et al., (2011: 153) provide insight here, where they found both a behavioural and affective threshold must be crossed before someone is willing to report sexual harassment.

Others experienced ambiguity between the legal definition of sexual harassment and cultural or individual (mis)perceptions regarding acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Fen, for example, dismisses her discomfort about being repeatedly touched by a senior male manager. Rather than name this unwanted behaviour as sexual harassment, she assumes personal responsibility for culturally misinterpreting the situation by reflecting that *'maybe Kiwi people touch each other to show respect or something, I really didn't know'*. John further illustrates this ambiguity as he teases out the line he perceives exists between sexual harassment and collegiality. He similarly dismisses sexual harassment by suggesting that *'touching, offensive jokes, intrusive questions and body gestures are debateable'* as it depends on individual or cultural interpretation, and because *'workplace friends and colleagues become very close [and] start to joke around'*.

Sexual Harassment and Cover-ups as Normal and Complex Practices

Alarmingly, 20 participants in our study had experienced unwanted sexual attention ranging from inappropriate sexual comments, requests for sex, touching, and stalking. These experiences were encountered in a variety of spaces and relationships. A range of incidences encountered within the wider community, for example, reflected the socio-cultural explanation that locates sexual harassment within the context of patriarchal environments (Kensbock et al., 2015) and as an outcome of, and a technique to uphold gendered power relations (Butler and Schmidke, 2010). Here then, a number of women described their sense of fear and helplessness when experiencing unwanted sexual and harassing attention during consults with male medical professionals, when being stalked by a former male partner, when called a 'slut' by strangers while walking down the street, and when groped on public transport.

Tash's experiences while supporting families with young children, and Rebecca's experiences while working as a 'promo-girl' within the hospitality industry particularly resonate with the sex-role spill over explanation of sexual harassment (Kensbock et al., 2015).

During home visits, Tash described how *'a few fathers made more than passes at me'*; thus her professional knowledge was conflated to the provision of motherly duties, and by extension, interpreted as her availability to perform sexual wifely duties. As a 'promo-girl' serving alcoholic shots in bars, Rebecca's body was explicitly eroticized, commercialised, and commodified (Brunner and Bever, 2014) by her *'tight fitting singlet and shorts'*. Arguably these jobs fall at polar ends of the sex-work continuum (Brunner and Bever, 2014), and indeed, both Tash and Rebecca were well aware that their job performance was interpreted as sexualised by some, resulting in frequent feelings of powerless or discomfort while at work. Yet, both rejected these sexualised framings of themselves. However, Tash reflected on the difficulty of developing an alternative performance - *'you can't put up a force field'* - because this would undermine the needs of the women and their children she was caring for.

Consistent with the organisational model (Benavides Espinoza, and Cunningham, 2010; Butler and Schmidtke 2010; McDonald, 2012), we also found that skewed gendered work groups, permissive cultural climates, and power differentials were interwoven in a number of the work-place experiences of sexual harassment. Some participants, for example, had witnessed sexual harassment of women who were young, vulnerable new recruits; and in skewed gendered work groups, such as in situations of *'traditionally female jobs with less authority'*. Or as observed by Sally, in relation to a woman who *'luckily adapted to the crass behaviour and lewd photos'* that predominated in an otherwise all male work team. This experience is often explained as women's reluctance to label behaviour as sexual harassment in male dominated workgroups, for fear of suffering the potential consequences to their career (Charlesworth et al., 2011; Hertzog et al., 2008).

Sarah and Sharon's experiences reflected permissive cultural climates (Butler and Schmidtke 2010). Sarah's all-women workgroup tolerated sexual harassment by their Area Manager who, during weekly site visits, regularly tried to *'squeeze our nipples and pinch and slap our bums'*. Highlighting the difficulty in developing a sense of class-consciousness amongst women even in situations of overt harassment (Brunner and Bever, 2014), Sarah reflected that the women, including the female-site manager, were too afraid to make a formal complaint. In Sharon's case, the permissive climate manifest in no action being taken against a *'much respected'* senior male manager who requested sex from a young woman employee while on a business trip. Instead, the line-manager talked the victim out of making a formal complaint because it *'would ruin [the harassers] career and family; the woman subsequently left the firm'*. In contrast, as the reporting manager, Helen felt too *'embarrassed and scared'* to talk to a male staff member about his harassment of a much younger female colleague. Thus, while the sexual harassment was taken seriously, Helen felt ill-equipped to manage the situation, and deferred the incident to her reporting manager. Even though the harasser was sanctioned, this victim also left the organisation. Helen reflects on her discomfort in this way:

My Area Manager actually told me what I should say to the male staff, but I did not do that and just asked him to do it. After that issue happened, I realized that it is more difficult for female managers than male managers to solve sexual harassment issues. I guess this will be a real challenge in my future career.

Reflecting Popovich and Warren's (2010) theorization of sexual harassment, power differentials between the harasser and the harassed, and the sense of powerlessness were embedded in all 20 reflections. These power differentials were encountered at the social, organizational, interpersonal, and individual levels with participants experiencing

powerlessness regardless of whether the harassment occurred in the wider community, or within the confines of supervisor-subordinate or co-worker relationships.

Furthermore, these 20 participant reflections highlight that covering-up sexual harassment is both a normal and power-laden practice. The harassers engaged in cover-up by ensuring there were no witnesses, and their supporters did so by dissuading victims from complaining (Scott and Martin, 2006). The participants covered up sexual harassment by remaining silent and/or removing themselves from the situation, including by changing medical professionals and quitting their jobs. Charlesworth et al., (2011) and Hertzog et al., (2008) suggest that non-reporting might reflect women's attempts to appear non-gendered to avoid the disadvantages flowing from a feminine identity. In contrast, these participants expressed their sense of powerlessness and fear, or their concern for others, as their reasons for engaging in cover-ups. This sense of powerlessness and the target-initiated cover-ups, by remaining silent or leaving, were embedded in some of the participant strategies for redressing sexual harassment.

Strategies to Redress Sexual Harassment

The majority of participants (35) reflected on a range of strategies that they thought were necessary and/or were willing to implement to redress sexual harassment. These strategies varied depending on the criticality or functionality of their analysis, and on whether the participant focused on macro-, meso- or micro-level solutions to end sexual harassment. Participants engaging in a macro-level analysis argued that socio-cultural attitudes towards women within the community will need to change in order to stop sexual harassment. These participants advocated for broader educational programs targeting cultural practices, and social norms and attitudes that legitimize male agency and female passivity. Others deconstructed the current legal framework and advocated for clearer definitions of the behaviors that constitute sexual harassment to redress ambiguity arising from individual or cultural perceptions regarding acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Moreover, some expressed deep concern regarding the legal requirement of repeated behavior because this meant that by the time a complaint could be made, *'the victim had already suffered the consequences of sexual harassment'*. Moreover, the lack of *'detering consequences for harassers'* and the lack of *'justice for victims'* resulted in many advocating for improved reporting process, the development of *'severe'* consequences for harassers (*'currently they just get away with it'*), and more meaningful outcomes for victims (*'they just lose everything'*).

At the meso-level, participants focused on the need to develop zero-tolerance organization climates by designing proactive sexual harassment policies, implementing sexual harassment training, clarifying unacceptable behaviour, introducing strong consequences for harassers, and creating safe reporting processes for victims. Some suggested that these policies should be incorporated in to *'employment contracts to ensure that all staff are made aware of and sign up to'* the organizational position on zero-tolerance for sexual harassment. Significantly, and reflecting one of our key aims for the session, a small number of participants considered how they might, in their future roles as HR Practitioners, *'develop organizational policies'*, ensure that they were *'approachable to staff'*, and *'manage incidences'* of sexual harassment. In this sense, these participants were developing insight into the mechanisms that might enable targets to exercise formal voice (Good and Cooper, 2014) and make a complaint.

At the micro-level, participants reflected on what they might do if they were sexually harassed. Similar to Blackstone et al.'s (2009) findings, we found that the sexual harassment lecture only slightly increased participant willingness to report harassment. Rather, participant

willingness to speak out was a guarded and tentative decision. Instead, many *'hoped'* they would speak out but *'in reality'* they were unsure *'what their reaction would be'*. Indeed, those who had experienced sexual harassment reflected how *'very difficult it is to make a complaint'*.

Surprisingly, a number of participants declared that rather than make a complaint they would remain silent and/or leave; a strategy that is particularly prevalent within the hospitality industry (Good and Cooper, 2014). The New Zealand participants particularly drew on what they had learned about the costs and consequences of sexual harassment to victims to emphatically declare that, rather than *'put up with'* sexual harassment, or expose themselves to *'inadequate formal complaint processes'*, they would remain silent and *'just leave'* an organization. Within New Zealand's neoliberal context (Cheyne, O'Brien and Belgrave 2000) and the ensuing construction of atomized, agentic individualism (Gill and Scharff 2011), these participant acts, of remaining silent and leaving, can be interpreted as rational, meaningful and informed choices. The Chinese participants who declared a preference for remaining silent explicitly reflected on the disciplinary effects of traditional Chinese values (Tang, Yik, Cheung, Choi, and Au, 1995) and the tight labour market on Chinese women's ability to speak about sexual harassment (Rong and Xiao, 2002). As poignantly described by Mei *'a women's reputation is very important. Chinese men always want women [who] are chaste. [If a woman] spoke out, she will be judged differently'*. Similarly, Zhuoyu reflected that *'in China women not dare tell others or use legal solutions ... because they are afraid to lose their jobs [and] reputation'*. Zhuoyu continued to argue that, given the combination of the high cost of living and competitive Chinese labour market, job loss would cause financial hardship for women and their families. As Mei concluded *'Chinese women live in Chinese society, they need to consider their future'*. Hence, these Chinese participants reflected that families need to become more supportive and women need to take responsibility to safeguard themselves against sexual harassment, for example, by *'dressing correctly'* or avoiding risky situations such as *'working late'*. While remaining silent, leaving and/or monitoring personal behaviour presented logical solutions to these participants, their strategies reinforce the view that targets are responsible for resolving or deterring sexual harassment. As such, their strategies do little to redress systemic cultural or *'organisational practices and norms'* underpinning sexual harassment (Charlesworth et al., 2011: 157).

Sadly, five New Zealand participants wove in either a socio-cultural, organizational, or biological explanation in their reflections to conclude that *'nothing could be done'* to deter or eliminate sexual harassment. Rather, these participants reflected that men would always harass women, either to *'maintain power'* or because they are *'biologically driven'* to do so, and that men would always band together to cover-up sexual harassment. Like Charlesworth et al. (2011) found, these participants were skeptical about the effectiveness of harassment policies that place responsibility on women victims to report incidences, as is required under New Zealand law, particularly within the context of organizational hierarchies dominated by men. Their skepticism was summed up by Sam, who concluded his reflection by asking: *'if the harasser is a male-manager, who are you going to tell?'*

Discussion

Despite prohibitive legislation and organisational policies and training, high rates of sexual harassment persist in the hospitality industry (Lin, 2006; Madera, Priyanko and Dawson, 2018; Ram, 2018; Waudby and Poulston, 2017), a situation we believe needs to stop. To this end, we purposely embedded a sexual harassment lecture within the context of a human resource management degree with the hope of developing the capacity of the future HR Practitioner

workforce to address sexual harassment. The lecture provides both a functional and critical interpretation by reviewing current legal definitions and requirements and by locating workplace sexual harassment within the broader socio-cultural context. In this article, we examined whether this approach to sexual harassment training raises awareness about the behaviours, cost consequences and myths regarding sexual harassment, empowers participants to report incidences, and equips participants to consider strategies to redress sexual.

Participant reflections reveal the lecture does raise awareness especially in relation to hostile environment behaviours, the cost and consequences to victims, and the myths surrounding sexual harassment. This knowledge did empower participants to identify unwanted sexual attention. Despite this, some continued to experience ambiguity regarding the behaviours they perceived would be sexually harassing. Moreover, some participants continued to embed 'familiar discourses of female culpability' (Brunner and Dever, 2014: 464) and sexual harassment myths (Lonsway, et al., 2008) in their reflections to suggest that women are at fault. A position we find concerning given that these participants are specialising in human resource management, and may be responsible for designing and implementing sexual harassment policies in their future working lives.

More concerning, and following Scott and Martin's (2006) analysis, many of the participant reflections reveal that sexual harassment and the covering up of sexual harassment were already experienced as normal, complex, and power-laden processes. One positive outcome from the sexual harassment lecture was that some participants deconstructed these normal, complex, and power-laden processes and advocated for the need to address macro-level social norms and legal frameworks and meso-level organisational policies to redress the ambiguity in definition, the inadequacies of reporting processes and outcomes for victims, and gendered power imbalances inherent in sexual harassment. Significantly, some even considered how they might redesign organisational policies in their future working lives.

However, only a small number of participants felt empowered to make a formal complaint should they be harassed. Similar to Walsh et al. (2013) assertion in relation to organisationally based sexual harassment training, the outcomes of the lecture were affected by a sense of pessimism regarding the broader context of permissive socio-cultural and institutional norms and organisational commitment to redress sexual harassment. This sense of pessimism is certainly supported by the frequency and by the diversity of spaces and relationships that sexual harassment was experienced by participants in the study, and by the fact that some participants continued to frame sexual harassment in terms of female culpability. This pessimism led the Chinese students to express their resignation to sexual harassment, and this informed their strategy to remain silent and monitor their own behaviour to avoid harassment. In contrast, the New Zealand participants reframed this pessimism by expressing a sense of empowerment gained from understanding the effect of inadequate complaint processes, and the cost and consequences of sexual harassment on targets. Yet, a surprising and unintended outcome of the lecture was that this knowledge empowered them to refuse to be a target by removing themselves from a situation of sexual harassment. Yet, as Butler and Schmidke (2010, 199) point out, unless sexual harassment is reported, 'organizations cannot take appropriate measures to stop it'.

As feminists working in the human resource management education space, these individualised strategies give us cause for deep concern. That is, while these acts of resignation and self-discipline, and/or refusal and leaving, offer a sense of individualised protection, these strategies relieve organisations of their responsibility to manage sexual harassment. These acts also deflect responsibility away from the perpetrator. Therefore, these strategies perpetuate

tolerant climates, and the costs and consequences of sexual harassment to victims, organisations, and society remain intact.

We are, however, cognisant that one session, within the context of a myriad of educational, societal and workplace experiences, is unlikely to be enough to prompt wider change. Indeed, even as feminist scholars, we find it difficult to include sexual harassment content alongside the many other curriculum pressures. However, we certainly advocate that sexual harassment be included in a more comprehensive manner across mainstream tertiary and trade education. Specifically, our findings reveal that embedding sexual harassment within the context of human resource management education is a necessary first step to raise awareness about sexual harassment among the future HR Practitioner workforce and does offer the opportunity to start developing their ability to consider ways to address sexual harassment. This finding gives us hope that when these participants enter the organisational space as HR Practitioners they may be willing to design and implement effective sexual harassment policies across a range of sectors.

However, our findings also reveal that being aware of the complexity of sexual harassment can entrench individualised, protectionist strategies that leave the conditions for sexual harassment to occur intact. These strategies, with the embedded assumption that nothing can or will be done, has significant implications for those involved in training, and for those working in industries, such as hospitality and tourism, where sexual harassment is rife. The pessimism regarding organisational responses and the expressed willingness to leave rather than be subjected to the negative consequences of sexual harassment, challenges organisations and their HR teams to seriously address sexual harassment if they wish to avoid the organisational costs and consequences of unacceptable behaviour.

Conclusion

The aim of this research was to examine participant reflections on the sexual harassment lecture presented in the context of a human resource management course that focuses on the gendered issues encountered by women in work organisations. While sexual harassment can, and does, occur in many relationships and regardless of gender, the evidence shows that hetero-normative male-female sexual harassment predominates in the workplace. As such, raising the issue as part of a Women in Management course provides a space to discuss sexual harassment as a gendered exercise in power, rather than as a sex/attraction act.

These reflections reveal the value and necessity of embedding sexual harassment training within the context of a human resource management program. This value and necessity was particularly apparent in terms of raising awareness surrounding the behaviours, cost and consequences of sexual harassment, and as a space for developing intolerance for sexual harassment. This reading offers hope that embedding sexual harassment training within the context of business degrees will help participants, as future HR Practitioners, to develop responsive policy initiatives.

However, the reflections also revealed the shortcomings of sexual harassment training within socio-cultural environments that already support gendered power relationships, and where sexual harassment and the covering up sexual harassment is already normalised. An unintended outcome of raising awareness about victim vulnerability and the complexity of sexual harassment within this broader context, manifest in some participants continuing to view victim initiated cover-up as an appropriate strategy, even though they were aware that doing so perpetuates sexual harassment and reproduces gendered power relationships. Thus, our

analysis leads us to conclude, that sexual harassment training sessions are a valuable and necessary starting point for developing intolerance.

Therefore, we conclude that if we are truly committed to eradicating sexual harassment, then a much broader and integrated approach is required that includes redressing the limitations of the current legal systems, broadening the scope of education within the wider community, and developing intolerant organisational climates.

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Table 1: Full and Sub-Sample Comparison by Gender and Nationality

Nationality and gender	Full Sample	Sub-sample
New Zealand Women	36	24
International Chinese Women	17	15
New Zealand Men	6	3
International Chinese Men	3	1
Tally	62	43

Table 2: Open Codes

Victims leaving work	Students found the video shocking
Power play by harasser	Victims keep silent
Sexual harassment effects victim's reputation	Sexual harassment has mental and physical effects
Individuals interpret sexual harassment differently	Stereotypes influence sexual harassment
Employers are responsible to provide a safe workplace	Surprised that women of all ages and attractiveness are harassed
Harassers are predominantly men	How they would respond if they were a manager
Suggest organisational strategies to put in place	Shocked at current reporting processes and laws
Suggestions for prevention of sexual harassment at an individual level	Belief that sexual harassment is an important issue

Understands that a woman's career is effected by sexual harassment	The student overall reiterates the lecture
The student is thankful for the lecture	The student presents a sense of victim blaming
The student presents a belief that sexual harassment can be easily discouraged/solved	Personal experiences of sexual harassment