Episode 5 — Myth: Sexual Harassment is a Women's Issue and a Result of Sexual Desire

Overview:
Sexual harassment is often portrayed as an issue that only concerns women, where women are victims of harassment because they were "asking for it" through their behaviours or dress. This portrayal puts the onus on women to stop harassment by simply changing their actions. . Yet, sexual harassment is not a "women's issue" in the sense that victims can be of any gender and perpetrators tend to be men. This perception also ignores the reality that sexual harassment is often about having power and control over someone else. We bust this common myth to show that it is imperative that the social norms that drive harassment and toxic work cultures are addressed instead of blaming the actions of women.

Featured Guests:
Dr. NiCole Buchanan, *Michigan State University*
Dr. Rachel Ruttan, *University of Toronto*

Research Mentioned:

1. Angus Reid Institute (2014). Three-in-ten Canadians say they've been sexually harassed at work, but very few have reported this to their employers. https://angusreid.org/sexual-harassment/
2. Buchanan, N.T., Settles, I.H. and Woods, K.C. (2008). Comparing Sexual Harassment Subtypes Among Black and White Women by Military Rank: Double Jeopardy, the Jezebel, and the Cult of True Womanhood. Psychology of Women Quarterly 32(4), 347-361.
3. Buchanan, N.T. and Ormerod, A.J. (2002). Racialized Sexual Harassment in the Lives of African American Women. Women and Therapy 25(3-4).
4. Elting, L. (2018). A Hard Look at the Hard Numbers Of #MeToo. Forbes. https://www.forbes.com/sites/lizelting/2018/10/15/a-hard-look-at-the-hard-numbers-of-metoo/?sh=1c935c3779f9
5. Hart, C.G. (2019). The Penalties for Self-Reporting Sexual Harassment. Gender & Society 33(4), 534-559.
6. Institute for Gender and the Economy (n.d.). Masculinity. https://www.gendereconomy.org/masculinity/
7. McLaughlin, H., Uggen, C., and Blackstone, A. (2012). Sexual Harassment, Workplace Authority, and the Paradox of Power. American Sociological Review 77(4), 625-647.
8. Ontario Human Rights Commission. (n.d.). Sexual and gender-based harassment: know your rights (brochure). http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/sexual-and-gender-based-harassment-know-your-rights-brochure

Additional Resources:

Center for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children. (2021). Resources on Gender-Based Violence and the COVID-19 Pandemic. https://www.vawlearningnetwork.ca/our-work/Resources%20on%20Gender-Based%20Violence%20and%20the%20COVID-19%20Pandemic.html

Canadian Association of Social Workers. (n.d.). Domestic Violence Resources. https://www.casw-acts.ca/en/resources/domestic-violence-resources

Transcript

Myth: Sexual Harassment is a Woman's Issue and a Result of Sexual Desire

NiCole Buchanan: Sexual harassment: we often mistakenly think of it as something that's about attraction or perhaps flirting gone wrong, but the reality is that sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence are about power. They're about having power over others. And so, when we have a society that is focused on showing your masculinity at all times, never risking being vulnerable, not having empathetic connection to others and an investment in taking power over others as a way of demonstrating your masculinity, then sexual harassment is a natural consequence of that.

Alyson: That was Dr. NiCole Buchanan, speaking about how sexual harassment is connected to masculinity and power. Welcome to episode five of Busted, a podcast where we bust prominent myths related to gender and the economy. By teaming up with leading experts, we uncover the origins of each myth, find out what the research actually says and give you the tools to bust each myth yourself. I'm Alyson Colón and my pronouns are she and her.

Carmina: And I'm Carmina Ravanera and my pronouns are she and her.

Alyson: Today we're actually busting two myths that are related. The first is "sexual harassment is a women's issue." And the second is "sexual harassment is a result of sexual desire." Before we begin, I want to note that we will be engaging with topics of sexual harassment and gender and race-based violence throughout this episode, and this may be triggering for our listeners. In our show notes, we have included links to resources for support. So, Carmina, where do these myths come from?

Carmina: This myth stems from the fact that statistically women are the primary victims of sexual harassment. For example, an Angus Reid Institute poll from 2014 found that 43% of women in Canada and only 12% of men have reported being sexually harassed at work. And keep in mind that these numbers may be higher due to under-reporting.

Alyson: Right. And we know that missing from this conversation is that the primary perpetrators of sexual harassment are men, whether it's towards women, other men or people who are non-binary or gender nonconforming.

Carmina: Yes. And this myth is connected to the second myth, which is that sexual harassment is a result of sexual desire. Sexual harassment is often blamed on the target. So, if someone is sexually harassed, people may assume it's because they were being sexually forward, or perhaps they were dressing too sexy or they're at fault because they were in the wrong place at the wrong time. But putting the blame on targets like this means that sexual harassment becomes viewed almost entirely through this lens of sex. And this leads to the idea that victims are simply bringing it onto themselves because of their behavior, their actions. But this view fails to take into account issues regarding masculinity and power that are really related to sexual harassment.

Alyson: So, before we listen to what research has to say about these myths, maybe we should define some of the terms we're going to talk about today.

Carmina: Sure.

Alyson: Okay, just so we're all on the same page, what exactly is sexual harassment?

Carmina: So since we're in Ontario, I'm going to use the definition listed in section 10 of the Ontario Human Rights Code, which defines sexual harassment as engaging in a course of vexatious comment or conduct that is known or ought to be known to be unwelcomed. And of course, this definition is super broad and subjective. Some examples of sexual harassment may include sexual solicitation and advances; gender-based harassment, such as targeting someone for not following their sex role stereotypes; or even sexual violence, such as assault and rape. But over time, this definition has been interpreted and expanded on by human rights case laws, as well as different organizations and institutions. And today it can be understood to encompass a wide variety of behaviors and actions from demanding hugs to making sexual propositions.

Alyson: Right. I think a lot of people are often confused about what sexual harassment entails.

Carmina: Definitely, and definitions can often be unclear. I talked with Dr. Rachel Ruttan, who is an Assistant Professor of Organizational Behavior and Human Resources here at the University of Toronto. Rachel's research focuses on compassion, pro-social behavior, values, and moral judgment. And she's currently working on a GATE funded project on sexual harassment and situational ambiguity. So I'll let her explain more.

Rachel: Historically, harassment has been thought of in these legal, quid pro quo kind of ways in which we think of this boss forcing a subordinate to do something, usually she, doesn't want to do in exchange for keeping a job, getting a promotion, et cetera. But there's a real range of possible circumstances and behaviors that could possibly be perceived of as harassment. For instance, Gallup did this poll of 3000 US adults and found that well, 75% of people agreed that something like unwanted touching at work is harassment. Only 38%, for example, agreed that compliments on appearance, and 41% agreed that dirty jokes constitutes harassment. Now this work has found that people are really, really good at finding justifications for unethical behaviors that they've done. Usually self-serving in nature. Now, this is especially true for situations that are ambiguous in nature. So, what I mean by this is where the rules or norms might be slightly ambiguous. So, imagine you go to dinner with a friend, and you maybe talk about work or business issues for 20% of the dinner. Now, can you expense that as a work dinner? If there are no clear rules around that, there's a lot of motivated distorting that people can do of these situations. And we thought that this would certainly apply to the case of sexual harassment. When it's clear that outside of these very strict legal cases, there is a lot of disagreement about what constitutes sexual harassment.

Carmina: Essentially, there is a huge range of behavior that could be categorized as sexual harassment, but not everyone is always on the same page about what it is. And these situations often tend to be more ambiguous than what people think.

Alyson: Another term that you mentioned previously, and I'm sure it's going to come up in this conversation, is masculinity. Can you define that?

Carmina: Sure. We talked a lot about this in episode one, so listeners can feel free to go back to that episode for more discussion on masculinity. Masculinity is basically a set of socially constructed attributes, behaviors, and roles that are typically associated with men's gender. For example, we tend to associate masculinity with work and careers, and femininity with home and taking care of the

family. It's important to note that views on masculinity can differ depending on many different factors, such as race or ethnicity, culture, class, place, and time. In Canada, for example, traits that are traditionally seen as masculine are aggression, self-assuredness, strength, power, and confidence, and a big part of masculinity is being anti-feminine. So this means not acting like a woman or not showing emotions. Masculinity can definitely lead to harmful behavior.

Alyson: Okay. So now that we're on the same page about these terms, let's move on to actually busting the myths. How did our experts explain that sexual harassment is not just a women's problem and that it's not just about sex?

Carmina: Well, I spoke to Dr. NiCole Buchanan, who is an Associate Professor of Psychology at Michigan State University. Her research has primarily focused on implicit bias and organizations, racialized sexual harassment, and the role of bias in perpetuating social inequality. NiCole spoke to me about how societal norms of masculinity facilitate harassment. She also confirmed how sexual harassment is an issue for everyone.

NiCole: And so what you often end up seeing is that sexual harassment is used as a way of gender policing. Looking at those individuals who are not performing masculinity or gender in a way that is deemed acceptable or normal or standard and using sexual harassment to police those behaviors and kind of coerce them back into their gender box. Sexual harassment is a way of having power, so having power over the target, demonstrating your power over the target. Often making sure that other people in the vicinity are also aware of the fact that you were the one in power.

Carmina: So as NiCole says, masculine gender roles encourage or facilitate men to act a certain way with women, as well as with other men and those who are non binary or gender nonconforming or trans.

Alyson: Yes. And NiCole also mentioned gender policing here. And this makes me think of a research study I've seen, which shows that women who are in positions of power, like managerial roles, are more likely to experience workplace sexual harassment than men or less powerful women. This is because women in power are not adhering to the gender norms of women being subjugated to men. And then on the flip side, research also shows that men who act feminine are more likely to experience harassment than men who do not. So based on this research, it's pretty clear that sexual harassment is less about sex and more about the roles people play in society.

Carmina: Exactly. And I also talked to Rachel about how her current project is focused on power relations and situational ambiguity. In particular, she and her colleagues found that certain kinds of power tend to lead to sexual harassment more than others.

Rachel: We can think of power as being either formal in nature or informal. So formal power would be something like this: my manager to whom I directly report. That's formal power and it's regulated by formal rank and roles. But power can also be informal in nature. So, this could be derived from someone's personal attributes, how central they are in a network or their professional reputation. So, you can imagine a situation in which you work in a law firm and there's a partner at another law firm in the same industry, or, sorry, the same type of law. That person, you don't directly report to them, but they certainly would matter for your own professional reputation and how you might be able to get jobs at other firms. And so here, we thought we would apply situational ambiguity, because it's a lot

less clear in terms of the rules and norms, in terms of how the person with informal power can exert power over you. And we hypothesized that harassment may actually be more likely to occur under these conditions of informal power relations rather than formal power relations. And conducting a series of experiments this is precisely what we found. That when people hold informal power, they're more likely to engage in behaviors that might be perceived as a sexual harassment. And the interesting part is that the lower power party in this case actually perceives these situations as equally coercive. So though the person in informal power is maybe not perceiving this behavior as problematic, the person on the receiving end of it still feels like they have to oblige this person. It's coercive regardless of the power type.

Carmina: To sum it up, what both researchers touched on here is that power is a huge factor in sexual harassment. This often includes informal forms of power that aren't always easy to perceive.

Alyson: So, considering how sexual harassment is related to power, I'm curious how sexual harassment impacts marginalized groups differently. For example, women of color. Did our experts talk about that?

Carmina: This relates directly to NiCole's research. She has examined how racialized women, particularly Black women, experience sexual harassment at work. She found that the form of sexual harassment that most racialized women experience includes both racial and gender elements together.

NiCole: So, when we think about the way sexual harassment unfolds, it has nuances that become specific to the individual identities of the person being targeted. So if it's a woman, you will see that she's targeted based on things about being a woman. If a person is targeted as a man, it's often likely to be “not man enough” harassment, because it's targeting their identity as a man. But when we were looking at people who embody multiple marginalized identities, such as women of color, then you see some additional nuances where the sexual harassment they receive is fusing both race and gender simultaneously. And what does that end up looking like? Well, in the research that I did with professional Black women, they talked about a whole host of experiences and ways in which the sexual harassment they received was very different from what we had already seen in the research literature because of the racialized elements. So they had experiences that combined race and gender simultaneously, like being called a "Black whore" or a "Black bitch." Body parts that are often sexualized about Black women were used in the sexual harassment. So, talking about her "sexy Black ass", as an example. The comments that they received would sometimes conjure images that reflected back to their sexual subjugation and slavery; there were often ways in which people would do things to try to put them in their place as Black women. So again, remember these are professional Black women. So, they often had subordinates that were like a secretarial staff or something like that. And often common behaviors that the secretaries would do in the past for their former white male bosses, they now would refuse to do with a Black female boss. So something that's a little more akin to gender harassment, but it's also this way in which it's specific to them being Black and female. Women also talked about other individuals coming up and asking them sexual questions, asking them for sexual advice as if, by virtue of the fact that they were both Black and female, they must be experts about sex. And also engaging in behaviors with them that implied that they were dirty or they were nasty, touching their hair, asking them repeated questions about their hygiene. And again, this is in a work context. We don't typically have those kinds of conversations with our colleagues, let alone with our bosses. And so women of color will typically talk about something I have come to refer to as racialized sexual harassment. It's not merely sexual, it's not merely racial, it's inherently both. And it's

both within that same moment in a way that they can't disentangle: which part of this was about gender, which part of this was racial. All of it was about both.

Carmina: And NiCole has also explained that although data shows white women tend to experience higher rates of sexual harassment in the workplace, racialized women experience higher rates of the more severe types of sexual harassment, such as sexual coercion or physical touching.

NiCole: And so some other things that we know about the victimization of women of color is that they tend to have higher rates of the most severe types of sexual victimization. So, if you look at just total scores for harassment, we've often shown that white women have higher levels of harassment. And in my work, I felt like there was something missing in that analysis. And so, I looked to the sexual harassment subtypes. So, gender, where people are denigrating comments about women in general, implications that women don't belong in the workplace. These are very damaging over time, but they're considered more of the garden variety type of sexual harassment. And as such, it's very, very frequent and it's what happening the most in a workplace. And so, what I found was white women did indeed have higher rates of gender harassment compared to other groups of women. And that was elevating their total score of sexual harassment to make it so that they had higher rates of sexual harassment overall. But the interesting pieces happened when you looked at the other types of sexual harassment. So, if you looked at unwanted sexual attention, this could be individuals repeatedly asking you out and dates, but also physically touching your body, maybe trying to kiss you, groping your butt or even kind of more disgusting behaviors. Or if you look at sexual coercion, what the legal term quid pro quo, where I'm making either benefits at work or punishments at work, suggesting you can get a promotion or suggesting I'll fire you, making those contingent on your compliance with sexual behaviors. Those kinds of behaviors, the unwanted sexual tension and the sexual coercion were actually highest among women of color. So it really points to a very different picture of what sexual victimization in the workplace looks like when you are both Black and female, or if you are a marginalized, racial marginalized person.

Alyson: So, because we're in a business school, I'm interested in talking about organizations. How do organizations themselves play a role in facilitating or preventing sexual harassment? Especially since organizations are often structured based on hierarchies.

Carmina: I asked Rachel about this and she had a great answer as to how organizational culture is really important to preventing sexual harassment. In fact, organizational norms affect what targets of sexual harassment experience and how the organization perceives it.

Rachel: Culture is absolutely critical to the issue of sexual harassment. A big one is creating a culture linking back to our work where these seemingly ambiguous or mild behaviors are called out for what they are. This will cut down on moral ambiguity. So even something like a compliment on appearance, if we make a very clear set of norms around,"this is something that we don't necessarily find appropriate" that will help cut down on these instances. Another big one is that we know that very few cases of harassment come forward. I think a big part of this is culture around retaliation. So, this fear of coming forward, if I'm experiencing harassment at work, and here's where facilitating norms that support intervention either bystander intervention or reporting are super important. Liane Young and Adam Waytz have done this really interesting research on how something like whistleblowing is perceived. So, whistleblowing can either be perceived of as, um, an act of justice and like a morally appropriate thing to do, or it can be viewed as disloyal to the company. And I think here is where shifting our norms toward bystander intervention or whistleblowing as being something that's

ultimately for the greater good of the organization will be a really important thing to do. And leaders also play a really big role here. Leaders are a huge part of shaping culture, but when we see these reports going forward and there's either very weak or non-existent sanctions that occur, then this sends a really strong signal to the rest of the organization that this is just something that we do not care about.

Alyson: So Rachel mentioned here how organizational culture can determine whether targets of sexual harassment report it or not. Let's talk in more detail about this fear of reporting. What else do we know about whether targets of sexual harassment choose to report or not?

Carmina: Yes, we know that under-reporting of sexual harassment is a major issue. An interesting outcome of the #MeToo movement is that we actually saw an increase in reporting harassment. HR Acuity, which is an employee relations technology company, told Forbes magazine in 2018 that 54% of companies surveyed experienced an increase in harassment claims since 2017. This is thought to be a result of increased visibility and decreased social stigma regarding reporting sexual harassment. However, the same survey found that over 30% of companies surveyed made no changes to their sexual harassment policies or their preventative training programs. And only 41% of companies require mandatory investigations into reports of sexual harassment. So, it's important to remember that a lack of reporting is not only a result of social stigma regarding harassment, but it's also a result of targets feeling like their organizations just won't take action.

Alyson: And as Rachel touched on, many women also fear backlash in their careers if they report sexual harassment. I'm thinking of a study I've seen which found that employees who self-reported sexual harassment faced a significant penalty in terms of promotion opportunities, because their coworkers perceived them as violating social norms. But when the victim's co-worker reported their sexual harassment, the target did not receive a penalty.

Carmina: Yes. So having that bystander support and organizational support is crucial for reporting sexual harassment. Here's what NiCole had to say about under-reporting.

NiCole: One of the things that I'm often asked is, well, why didn't, you know, a woman report? “If this happened to me, I would report it.” We all kind of believe we would do that. And the way I turned it around is really, when you look at the data, why would any woman in her right mind report that she's been sexually harassed? We know that when people report sexual harassment, it often exacerbates their negative outcomes. It makes things far worse for them than it would have been, had they not reported. And it doesn't have to be the case, that doesn't have to be the way it unfolds. But unfortunately for most people today, that's exactly what happens. And this is because organizations have not done enough to create a climate where sexual harassment is not tolerated, where it is not acceptable and it is not behavior that they will allow in their workplace. And they have not done enough to comply with the best policies, as well as the law, for what they need to do in order to address harassment.

Carmina: And Rachel talked about the importance of having communities of support.

Rachel: I think it's also important to not view this as an individual issue. Someone coming forward really shouldn't feel like they're doing this on their own. And we should really be creating communities of support around people facing these issues. Here's where allies really matter. Here's where it really

matters to have people feel like they're in really psychologically safe climates where I can tell my peers and colleagues, and I can feel like they're going to help me deal with this very, very tough issue. Again, culture and norm setting is so important here. Having strong mentors in place, feeling like I can talk to somebody about this and I'm not going to experience retaliation and the people around me will be there and supporting me, I think is super important.

Alyson: So other than encouraging bystanders to report sexual harassment, what are some concrete actions organizations can take to prevent sexual harassment?

Carmina: NiCole told me a few things that organizations should do, so I'll let her answer.

NiCole: So some things we know organizations can do to, to make sure that the reporting process doesn't become another institutional betrayal and actually is an example of institutional courage. One, they can have a variety of ways for individuals to report that sexual harassment is occurring and that targets have some choice and how that process is going to unfold. Also, I should say that they [companies] have an easy way for whistleblowers to report that sexual harassment has happened and that when they do so they're not punished, they're not experiencing retaliation, that they're actually rewarded because they've done the organization an incredible favor by coming forward and talking and reporting that this is happening. It gives the opportunity for the organization to protect themselves. So, it's a wonderful thing when you have a whistleblower come forward. They can also do things to completely change the culture of the organization, if they do more to make it clear from leadership on down because leadership always sets the tone. So if the leaders of the organization make it clear, both in their words and their policies and in their behavior, that they will not tolerate sexual harassment, and that if a case of sexual harassment comes forward, retaliation against the victim is unacceptable and will be punished. And if they are consistent in reacting as such when it, when it does happen, they will create an environment where more people trust that the system will treat them well and they'll come forward.

Carmina: And Rachel gives them similar suggestions for what organizations can do as well.

Rachel: Sending out information that harassment isn't just this one legal thing that we're thinking of in these quid pro quo cases. And [inaudible]has done this great work suggesting that we should frame harassment as an ethical, rather than illegal issue. So rather than just trying to avoid sanction and responsibility, this is something that we really care about here. And one suggestion for why there's been research finding that these sexual harassment training programs are often ineffective, is because they focus so much on compliance and legal issues rather than to really focus on creating meaningful cultural change about how we think of issues. Some of the programs that have been found to be effective, in line with this theme of creating ethical cultures rather than legal ones, pertain to bystander intervention training. So, what do I do when I see something that may be inappropriate in the workplace or someone who clearly may look uncomfortable in this situation? How do I speak up and when do I speak up? That has been found to be more effective than this checkbox approach to sexual harassment training. There's also been work finding that something like civility training can actually be more effective. So, here's just where we learn how to promote respect and dignity in the workplace. How do I treat my colleagues with respect? These are more in-person one-on-one and ongoing training sessions, rather than just spending 15 minutes, again, click box, learning about the rules and regulations of sexual harassment. Returning to this theme, again, of really deep cultural change, rather than just informing people of rules and procedures. And the final one I think also really matters, and there's research to support this, is that more diverse representation in leadership really

helps. So if I see people like me in a leadership role, I'll both feel more comfortable coming forward, and we'll also be more likely to create cultures of change in supportive directions.

Carmina: To sum it up, they suggested having a variety of clear methods of reporting, giving targets and bystanders the power to report without fear of retaliation. And framing harassment as an ethical, rather than a legal or compliance issue. As well leadership responsibility is super important and more diverse representation in leadership can help create a culture of change.

Alyson: So if someone was to say to me, hey Alyson, sexual harassment is a women's issue. Women just need to change their appearance or behavior to prevent harassment. What should I say to convince them otherwise?

Carmina: NiCole had some great advice and talking points to respond with. Here's what she said.

NiCole: Well one, I think it's incredibly important that when we hear these kinds of myths, things like, sexual harassment is a woman's problem, sexual harassment is the result of the woman behaving provocatively. It is essential for all of us that we commit to responding to these things. We know that bystander interventions are the most effective when people act as an ally, when they confront these kinds of things, they tend to have a higher likelihood of being believed, of being seen as non-biased, and actually the highest likelihood of creating change in the perpetrator. So, it is incredibly important that we all commit to speaking up. But what do you do in that moment when someone has said that, so one of these myths, when they've said that women are actually the cause of sexual harassment with their behavior? Or they say, ah, well, sexual harassment really isn't a problem that men need to deal with. It's a problem women need to fix. We need to remember that we all have skin in the game. That every single one of us pays a price for sexual harassment. So, we can look at this as an organization. So, organizations spend billions of dollars every year. We know that in the US, the federal workforce, it costs them billions of dollars a year for sexual harassment. And it's not in the easy, direct ways, like what were the legal costs that they had to pay? It's in the loss of productivity, it's in people having higher incidences of depression and anxiety or physical illness. And so, they're missing work. It is in co-worker loss of productivity. So, when sexual harassment happens, not only is the person targeted, impacted, but you see decreased morale, decreased productivity and higher intentions for people to leave that job. Not only for them, but for the entire work group. So there's a high price for every single person paid. But if you go even a step further, we see people, people don't take what happens at work and leave it at work. So women who are sexually harassed take that home and they find it more difficult to be an effective partner, effective parent, they may be experiencing depression and anxiety that again, travels with them at home. They may even have risen to the level of having post-traumatic stress symptoms. And so, this impacts their interactions outside of the workplace, as well as within the workplace. So, whether we look at it as a financial issue, if we look at it as a humanity issue, men are deeply impacted as well. And men need to take responsibility for challenging the gender norms and the stereotypes that perpetuate toxic masculinity, as well as perpetuate the idea that they can have power over women in the workplace.

Carmina: And Rachel talked about how important it is to have men allies in the struggle against sexual harassment.

Rachel: There's also been really interesting research suggesting the huge benefits of having male allies in these cases. So, this should not be something that women are facing on their own. There was a really fascinating study finding that when we look at cases of sexism, it's more likely to be taken

seriously if a man is calling it out than a woman, which is both a sad piece of data, but also points to the benefits of everyone coming together on this issue. And we're not going to change it unless it's viewed as an issue for everybody, for the organization as a whole, for all people, rather than just labeling it a woman's issue, which can be very othering and isolating. So I think this combination of recognizing that this harms all of us, this harms entire organizations and the actual bottom line aspects of business, but also how we're engaging with each other is, is very important to recognize.

Carmina: In other words, sexual harassment is anything but just a woman's issue. It's really an issue that affects everyone because of the gender norms and roles in our society. So, we should all be working on changing it.

Alyson: So as an individual, what can I do to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace or to help someone who's experiencing it?

Carmina: It sounds quite cliche, but if you see something, say something. If you see someone acting inappropriately towards another co-worker or you overhear something, be sure to report it immediately. And if it's appropriate, approach your co-worker to offer support. And make sure you know the policies that are in place at your workplace and follow them. And when there is an anti-sexual harassment training, be an active participant. It's also important to examine how your own behavior may be upholding a workplace culture that allows masculinity and sexual harassment to flourish. For example, we should all be asking ourselves: have you laughed when someone told a sexually inappropriate joke or said something that could be deemed as gender policing? Did you treat a co-worker differently after they reported an incident of sexual harassment? Have you commented on someone's physical appearance in a sexual way? These are really important questions that everyone should be asking themselves. And NiCole has some really important final thoughts on the responsibility of organizations to prevent this type of behavior.

NiCole: This is really something that organizations need to take more seriously. That organizations that move not simply to stop sexual harassment, but they work to create positive work environments where all the employees can thrive. This goes beyond merely thinking about any individual person. We need to actively transform the way organizations work to make sure sexual harassment does not occur. And then we need to go a step further to create then positive environments where employees thrive. Organizations that do this, they reap the benefits tenfold.

Alyson: I think we've shown today how research suggests that sexual harassment is not just a women's issue and it's definitely not just about sex. It's also about power. We encourage you to learn more about your rights and protections regarding sexual harassment at work. If you live in Ontario, you can do so by looking at the Ontario Human Rights Commission's website, or by finding your local equivalent. Finally, this is our last episode of Busted, for now. So, we want to take a moment to thank all of the experts who have offered their valuable insights. If you haven't listened to the other episodes, please go back and listen to them. And I'd like to thank my co-host Carmina Ravanera for joining me on this journey.

Carmina: We hope you will continue having these conversations with us by visiting our website at gendereconomy.org or finding us on Twitter @gendereconomy. And we're also on LinkedIn as the Institute for Gender and the Economy.

Alyson: Until next time, happy mythbusting.

Sarah: I'm Sarah Kaplan and I'm the director of the Institute for Gender and the Economy. If you like this podcast make sure to review it and subscribe, it's how we get the word out. If you're interested in learning more about how to analyze the gendered assumptions built into your work, check out our five course specialization on Coursera called "Gender Analytics: Gender Equity Through Inclusive Design", head to Genderanalytics.org for more information.