WAYS OF EXPLAINING SEXUAL HARASSMENT:

MOTIVATING, ENABLING AND LEGITIMIZING PROCESSES

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1   INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of 2013 the magazine *Stern* published an article about Rainer Brüderle, then lead candidate of Germany's Free Democratic Party (FDP), which unleashed a nationwide debate about sexism and sexual harassment in Germany (Himmelreich, 2013). He is cited having suggested to the female journalist Laura Himmelreich, among other things, that she "could fill out a dirndl well" (Himmelreich, 2013, p. 47). This article was only the beginning that led thousands of women to share personal stories of humiliation, sexist discrimination, sexual harassment, and sexual violence under the *hashtag* "aufschrei", German for "outcry", coined by Anne Wizorek on Twitter (for a retrospective description of the sexism debate at Twitter and its circumstances, see e.g., Wizorek, 2014). Newspapers, television talk shows, all sorts of media joined the controversy. The overall high response rate demonstrated that the debate was long overdue, but many media portrayals stayed at a deplorably low discussion level, at which merely personal opinions were exchanged. Looking at the course and the contents of the debate, it becomes apparent that, although a public platform for personal experiences may be important, what is needed after all are explanations (Diehl, Rees, & Bohner, 2014). As we stated in our commentary on the sexism debate (Diehl et al., 2014), there is a lot of research on sexism and sexual harassment giving very clear answers to putatively controversial questions, which keep coming up in the public discussions. However, there are important questions that were given a push by the sexism debate, but remained open until today. First, there is an ongoing debate about what the motives for sexual harassment are: Is it just a failed attempt to flirt, or rather a demonstration of male power? Second, it is still not entirely clear which social circumstances may facilitate the occurrence of sexual harassment, and what the underlying processes are: Is sexualized

advertising, for example, okay for the sake of sales, and are critics just prudes? And third, in what way do justifying tendencies contribute to the persistence of sexual harassment?

The present dissertation aims to offer answers to these questions by providing an overarching model to explain the main social psychological processes that seem to crucially contribute to the etiology of sexual harassment: motivation to sexually harass, enabling processes, and the legitimization of sexually harassing behavior. Only a thorough understanding of these processes may render prospective incidences of sexually harassing behavior predictable, and may, subsequently, open new possibilities to prevent men from committing sexual harassment.

1.1   Explaining sexual harassment

The past 30 years of research on sexual harassment acknowledge that, then and now, this phenomenon is a serious problem in societies worldwide and forms part of a broader set of sexual violence - mostly against women. Solely focusing on sexual harassment at work, numbers of victimized women range between 30 to 50 per cent in Europe and North America (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2014; Ilies, Hauserman, Schwochau, & Stibal, 2003). Considering that these percentages only refer to sexual harassment at the workplace, omitting plenty of other possible occasions in private and public spaces, it becomes apparent that sexual harassment is not a rarely occurring problem of few, but common practice in virtually every society of the Western world. Research consistently shows that male sexual harassment of women is the most common (Berdahl & Moore, 2006; Cortina, Magley, Williams, & Langhout, 2001). Nevertheless, it is also known that men can be targets of sexual harassment as well (see Berdahl, Magley, & Waldo, 1996; Stockdale, Visio, & Batra, 1999).

Definitions of sexual harassment vary in their focus and breadth, but usually have in common that they cover unwanted sexually connoted behaviors that aim at or lead to reducing a target person to her or his gender, as well as behaviors involving gender-based devaluation and violation of a target person's dignity (Fitzgerald, Swan, & Magley, 1997). As sexual harassment always includes a clear reference to the target's gender, it is definitely a form of gender-based discrimination (Diehl, 2013; Thornton, 2002), although legal and popular definitions often separate sexual harassment from sexist discrimination, which can serve to disguise its systematical character (see Thornton, 2002).Within the set of sexually aggressive behaviors, sexual harassment may primarily be situated on a lower violence level compared to rape or sexual abuse, but these milder forms can also escalate into sexual violence (Müller, Schröttle, Oppenheimer, & Glammeier, 2005, p. 11), and have also overwhelming negative consequences for the targets.

Extensive research on the outcomes of sexual harassment has documented various negative effects on targets' psychological and physical health (Fitzgerald, Drasgow, Hulin, Gelfand, & Magley, 1997; Rospenda, Richman, & Shannon, 2009) as well as on job-related capabilities (Shannon, Rospenda, & Richman, 2007). The relationship between exposure to sexual harassment and impaired job-related, psychological and physical health was also confirmed by longitudinal and cross-sectional studies (Glomb, Munson, Hulin, Bergman, & Drasgow, 1999; Munson, Hulin, & Drasgow, 2000), as well as by several meta-analyses (Bowling & Beehr, 2006; Chan, Chun, Chow, & Cheung, 2008; Nielsen & Einarsen, 2012). The high prevalence and the severe consequences of sexual harassment necessitate valid explanations of its underlying processes.

Although a number of theories have been influential in sexual harassment research (for an overview see Pina, Gannon; & Saunders, 2009; McDonald, 2012), such as socio-cultural

theory, which locates sexual harassment in the broad societal system of asymmetrical power relations between men and women (see e.g., Samuels, 2004; Thomas, 1997), or evolutionary theory, also referred to as natural-biological theory, which traces sexual harassment back to natural gender differences in socio-sexual behavior (see e.g., Browne, 1997; Studd, 1996), none of those has been able to explain the phenomenon entirely. Other theories tried to cover further aspects, such as the likelihood of targets' responses to sexual harassment (see e.g., Blackstone, Uggen, McLaughlin, 2009, who argue for theories of legal consciousness), or the influence of workplace culture on the occurrence of sexual harassment (see e.g., Chamberlain, Crowley, Tope, & Hodson, 2008; Gruber, 1998). Undoubtedly, the mentioned theories were very advantageous in order to guide research and to generate highly relevant and practically applicable findings. However, most of them are rather limited to their specific perspectives on sexual harassment, appear to be too simplistic, neglect humans' individual differences or else situational variables, or have been barely empirically tested (see Pina et al., 2009, for a detailed critique). Pina and colleagues (2009) argue that, when aiming at explaining such a complex phenomenon as sexual harassment, it is indicated to rather use a multi-factor theory than single-factor theories, such as sociocultural theory or evolutionary theory. As multi-factor theories are able to consolidate individual and sociocultural, in fact diverse factors, which are only separately considered in single-factor theories, they have the power to unify previously isolated research findings. They further have the potential for a better external validity and, thereby, offer the capability to develop a broad but accurate explanation of a complex phenomenon.

The only existing multi-factor theory of sexual harassment was proposed by O'Hare and O'Donohue (1998), who assumed four basic factors that are required for sexual harassment to occur: (a) motivation to harass, (b) internal inhibitions that have to be

overcome, as well as (c) external inhibitions, and (d) victims' resistance. With their theory they were able to account for previously isolated factors in one model, which was an important step in sexual harassment research. However, in the empirical test of their theory, O'Hare and O'Donohue (1998) did not consider all of their proposed factors equally, so that there are still open questions left. Having a closer look at the first factor, i.e. motivation to harass, it is rather clear that, although the authors listed power, control, and sexual attraction as possible motives for sexual harassment, they empirically examined only sexual attraction. Furthermore, due to their sample consisting of only female participants, they were not able to give information about the second factor, which is referring to internal processes on the perpetrators' side. The two highlighted problems of the four-factor model by O'Hare and O'Donohue (1998) are actually symptomatic of most current attempts to explain sexual harassment. Large parts of this field of research are heavily shaped by an unequally strong focus on factors at victims' and organizations' side, while sexual harassers' motivations and further individual dispositions are consistently neglected (see Pina et al., 2009, who call attention to this gap in the current knowledge about sexual harassment).

The goal of this dissertation is to propose a new, comprehensive framework in order to close this explanatory and empirical gap by especially but not solely addressing psychological processes on the perpetrators' side, which are particularly relevant to understand their behavior. For this purpose, I suggest a three-factor model to explain sexual harassment. This model brings together three main components, which are assumed to largely contribute to an overarching explanation of sexual harassment: *motivation* (e.g., power or sexuality*), enabling processes* (e.g., through diverse situational cues), and *legitimization* (e.g., by applying myths about sexual harassment). I argue that these components cover the most influential social-psychological processes in the context of sexual harassment.

In the following, I will give a brief description of each of the three factors (Section 1.2 - 1.4). Thereby, I will delineate how they contribute to explaining sexual harassment independently, but also considering their interplay (Section 1.5). After a compilation of the expected advantages of the three-factor model overall (Section 1.6), I will integrate the present research in the model, explain where it is located and how it contributes by delivering first evidence for the model (Section 2.1 - 2.3).

1.2   Motivating processes

The first factor I will use to explain sexual harassment is motivation. Investigating the mental processes and especially the motivation underlying male sexual harassment is an urgent and important matter, in order to identify valid predictors of future sexually harassing behavior. Two broad fields of research that aim to explain the instrumental function of sexual harassment give a hint to two motives that may underlie sexual harassment:

Socio-cultural theory proposes *power* as the prevailing motive. It says that sexual harassment serves to maintain political and economic male dominance by suppressing women on an interpersonal and on a societal level meaning that harassment not only negatively affects individual women but also impair the social status of women as a group (Samuels, 2004; Thomas, 1997). Accordingly, male perpetrators intended to intimidate women, for instance at the workplace, and especially those who leave their traditional roles and compete with men in "their" domains. That means that sexual harassment is a structurally committed instrument in the battle of the sexes and clearly motivated by power.

Evolutionary theory proposes *sexuality* as the prevailing motive. Sexual harassment is perceived as a natural conflict between men and women, due to their inherent socio-sexual behavior, with men typically following a short-term mating strategy and women following a long-term strategy (Browne, 1997; Studd, 1996). These different mating strategies are

supposed to be adaptive for the different parental investments of men and women, even though they may lead to so-called misunderstandings from time to time (Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Trivers, 1972). No discriminating or in any other manner hurtful intention is assumed. Because the primary intention is assumed to be the initiation of sexual contact, sexual harassment is interpreted as an exceptional incident between individual persons and clearly motivated by sexuality.

There is evidence for both, usually competing, approaches (for the evolutionary account, see Kenrick, Trost, & Sheets, 1996; for the socio-cultural account, see Eagly & Wood, 1999), but up to now only few studies have compared them (for an exception, see Bourgeois & Perkins, 2003). Nevertheless, it seems very likely that sexual harassment is not motivated by only one general motive but by different motives or intentions. The fact that sexually harassing behavior is not always the same but occurs in different forms supports this assumption: According to a classification system proposed and tested by Gelfand, Fitzgerald, and Drasgow (1995) sexually harassing behavior is differentiable into the three dimensions sexual coercion, gender harassment, and unwanted sexual attention, whereby the two latter dimensions are especially interesting when it comes to its underlying motivation. Gender harassment includes hostile and degrading gender-related behavior toward women in general, which seem to be conducive to establish or to maintain a male power position over women that might be deemed to be legitimate. Correspondingly, its underlying motivation seems to be power. Unwanted sexual attention, in contrast, includes more ambiguous but also offensive and unrequited sexually connoted behavior, typically targeting an individual woman. Exclusively this latter type of behavior seems to be (only just) suitable if the underlying motivation is sexuality. Thus, dependent on the particular form of sexual harassment, it seems to be plausible that perpetrators' motivation may be different.

Somewhat in contrast to this idea that different motives may underlie sexual harassment and may presumably lead to different forms of sexual harassment, other researchers argued that there exists a close association between power and sexuality, and that the two are inseparable regarding their impact on sexual harassment (Bargh, Raymond, Pryor, & Strack, 1995; Pryor & Stoller, 1994). Pryor and Bargh claimed that particularly men with a high propensity to sexually harass may possess an automatic mental association between the two concepts (Bargh et al., 1995; Pryor & Stoller, 1994), with the result that situations containing power-related cues activate sex-related thoughts and behaviors, and situations containing sexual cues activate power-related thoughts and behaviors. In line with this assumption, Bargh and colleagues (1995) showed that verbal priming of the concept of power led men who were high in the likelihood to sexually harass to find subordinate women more attractive. Following their argument, both motives would always occur together and lead to the same outcome. Siebler, Bohner and Heidebruch (2006), however, criticized this assumption as not sufficiently plausible. They argued that there are situations where power-related cues are present, but "where sexuality is not an issue for most men, for instance when they interact with a <u>male</u> subordinate" (Siebler, et al., 2006, p. 5), and where an automatic activation of the concept of sexuality would lead to a "false alarm" and costs in terms of cognitive resources. As an alternative, more resource-efficient, psychological mechanism, which explains the apparent evidence for a link between power and sex more plausibly, Siebler and colleagues (2006) suggested the automatic allocation of cognitive resources on the condition that both, power and sexual cues are present. They argued that this more exclusive triggering condition is needed in a first step, in order to elicit sexual harassment. In a second step, cognitive resources (e.g., attention) will be automatically allocated if men are high in the likelihood to sexually harass. Indeed, they show empirical evidence supporting the idea of a

joint-activation mechanism, but not an automatic association of power and sexuality (Siebler et al., 2006). However, neither Pryor and Bargh nor Siebler examined power and sexuality in terms of specific motivational structures at the personal level, where they possibly are differentiable and precisely not associated. Thus, whether there exist those differentiable dispositions at the motivational level, and whether they independently contribute to the prediction of (possibly different) forms of sexual harassment, needs to be empirically tested.

When investigating the contribution of motivating processes to the explanation of sexual harassment in my dissertation, I will focus on *power* and *sexuality* as the two main motives for sexually harassing behavior. There may be other motivations to harass, but the two mentioned are clearly the best substantiated by theoretical approaches and supported by empirical evidence. Nevertheless, the proposed model does not exclude to take other potential motives into account and to test them as well. For now, the present research evaluating the proposed model might conduce as a further step to disentangle the contributions of power and sexuality to the explanation of sexual harassment.

1.3   Enabling processes

A certain motivation may encourage particular behavioral tendencies, but is not sufficient to effectively accomplish these purposes. Instead, a suitable opportunity is necessary beyond the motive force. The second component of the proposed model covers situational factors that may be relevant for the occurrence of sexual harassment. The interaction between individual and situational factors has been frequently discussed in the last twenty years, with the aim to explain the occurrence of sexual harassment and other forms of aggression at the workplace, such as bullying (Aquino & Bradfield, 2000; Zapf, 1999). Especially relevant in the context of sexual harassment is work done by Pryor and colleagues,

who proposed a person x situation model to predict sexually harassing behavior (Pryor, Giedd, & Williams, 1995; Pryor, La Vite, & Stoller, 1993). They conceptualized sexual harassment as social behavior that certain people do under certain circumstances. Accordingly, their model postulates an interaction of personal factors (individual dispositions to sexually harass) and situational factors (which enable sexually harassing behavior), both contributing to sexual harassment, indeed being jointly required for the occurrence of sexual harassment.

As an important situational factor, Pryor and others could show local norms to influence the incidence of sexual harassment: Sexual harassment seems to be more likely to occur in sexualized work environments (Gutek, 1985); the more *permissive local norms* with regard to sexual behavior are, the more sexually harassing behavior is observable (Fitzgerald, Hulin, & Drasgow, 1994; Pryor, et al., 1993). Indeed, supporting organizational theory and approaches focusing on workplace culture (e.g., Chamberlain et al., 2008; Gruber, 1998), more recent research considers the organizational climate and work policies the major factors influencing the occurrence of sexual harassment (for an overview, see McDonald, 2012; Pina & Gannon, 2012).

Among other factors, priming processes in particular may explain how situational features of the environment influence the perception and the behavior of humans. Perceiving certain *situational cues* has been repeatedly shown to increase the cognitive accessibility of associated constructs (for a review see Higgins, 1996), and thereby to activate interpretative schemata guiding social perception and behavior (Bargh, Chen, & Burrows, 1996; Higgins, Rholes, & Jones, 1977). Yao, Mahood, and Linz (2009), for instance, found that playing a video game in which female characters were sexually objectified primed males' sex-related thoughts, encouraged them to view women as sex objects, and led to higher self-reported

likelihood to sexually harass. Thus, there is evidence that situational cues trigger sexually harassing behavior.

Certain *target characteristics* may trigger sexual harassment in a similar way. There was some research done on particular characteristics of sexual harassment victims in order to identify risk factors that make women especially vulnerable (e.g. Fitzgerald et al., 1994; O'Connell & Korabik, 2000). Certainly, beyond a reasonable reluctance to blame the targets, it is simply impossible to categorize women in vulnerability groups, as experiences of sexual harassment vary from case to case and are very complex. However, although there is no systematic study of these characteristics, it seems to be verified that especially young women (O'Connell & Korabik, 2000), and those without professional qualification, or those who are new to a particular workplace are more likely to be targets of sexual harassment (Müller et al., 2005). Furthermore, previous research has shown that women holding feminist attitudes might be at a greater risk to be sexually harassed (Berdahl, 2007; Dall'Ara & Maass, 1999; Mass, Cadinu, Guarnieri, & Grasselli, 2003; Siebler, Sabelus, & Bohner, 2008). Maas and her colleagues argued that men might perceive a feminist woman as a challenge to their male identity and instrumentally use sexual harassment to reestablish male hegemony (Maas et al., 2003). This argumentation seems to be especially plausible for men whose behavior toward women is in general driven by a power motivation (see Section 1.2). Consequently, this research shows that different target characteristics are relevant when it comes to sexual harassment, and that they may contribute to a better understanding of sexual harassment – perhaps especially in interaction with motivational processes at the perpetrators' side.

But not only diverse social triggers, also the *lack of external inhibitors* is contributing to the occurrence of sexual harassment. Permissiveness to sexual harassment does become apparent not only in local norms at work, but also in reactions to sexual harassment cases and

complaints about sexual harassment. Previous research shows that people are often lenient and tolerant toward harassers (Herzog, 2007), which may prevent perpetrators from being condemned. Instead, this permissiveness by the public may lead to secondary victimization of targets who bring sexual harassment to light (for research about secondary victimization of rape victims, see Campbell & Raja, 1999). This may explain why the large majority of victims is actually reluctant to complain. Research repeatedly shows that only very few targets dare to directly confront or to complain about a perpetrator, because they fear negative consequences (Shelton & Stewart, 2004; Swim & Hyers, 1999). Other reasons not to report are, for instance according to theories of legal consciousness, that many targets are not aware of what actually happened to them, or that they do not know which formal steps they have to take in order to make an official complaint (e.g., Blackstone et al., 2009). Either way, the lack of external inhibitors facilitates sexual harassment and contributes to the fact that most harassers remain unpunished.

In summary, opportunities for sexual harassment can arise from many situational constellations. The primary enabling factors that I suggest here are *permissive local norms*, *situational cues*, *target characteristics*, and the *lack of external inhibitors*. Although there is some evidence for each of these situational cues potentially enabling sexual harassment, there is no research relating these enabling factors to a broader, explanatory context.

1.4   Legitimizing processes

As the third, central component contributing to the explanation of sexual harassment, I suggest legitimization. Especially overtly and hostile forms of sexually harassing behavior have become socially unacceptable and partly outlawed. Most Germans, for example, would probably agree that sexual harassment is not acceptable. That many Germans believe that sexual harassment is hardly ever happening in today's society is another story ("Umfrage:

Sexismus auch für Männer ein Problem," 2014). Consequently, perpetrators (but also others) need to justify their behavior. Justification can be achieved by applying myths that legitimize males' sexually harassing behavior. *Myths about sexual harassment* are system-justifying ideologies related to the construct of rape myths, which was introduced by Burt in 1980. Recently, Lonsway, Cortina, and Magley (2008) defined myths about sexual harassment as "attitudes and beliefs that are generally false but are widely and persistently held, and that serve to deny and justify male harassment of women" (p. 600). Typically, they deny the incidence of harassment or downplay its consequences, or else excuse perpetrators' behavior, while ascribing contributory guilt to the targets, and thereby lead to a shift of responsibility. Looking closer at single myths about sexual harassment, it becomes apparent that many of them contradict each other in their strategy of argumentation. They still can exist in parallel, because they seem to be used for the legitimization of different sexual harassment cases. Thus, dependent on the specific situation, the respective matching mythos is applied (see Bohner, 1998; Lonsway et al., 2008). However, all myths are united on their function to convey the impression that incidents of harassment are a matter of rarely occurring and distinct misunderstandings. Sexual harassment as a societal problem is denied. That shows that the legitimizing function of myths not only rescues perpetrators from negative consequences, but fits general, system-maintaining interests of a society that still is predominately patriarchic (Brownmiller, 1975; Burt, 1980). Interestingly, and possibly for similar reasons, also women endorse sexual harassment myths. In relation to rape, there is evidence that women might use myths to distance themselves from the group of potential victims, establishing a strong belief in a just world, or in a just society, and thereby creating an illusion of invulnerability (see Bohner, 1998; Bohner, Eyssel, Pina, Siebler, & Viki, 2009; Bohner & Lampridis, 1994). This explanation seems to be adaptable for sexual harassment.

Eventually, examining legitimizing processes is highly relevant, considering that a widely held tendency to justify sexual harassment will allow sexual harassment to happen again and again (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2014; Ilies, et al., 2003).

To date, there is only little research showing empirical evidence for the purposeful use of legitimization in the context of sexual harassment, while there is a lot more evidence in the context of rape (for a review, see Bohner et al., 2009). For instance, rape myth acceptance was shown to affect men's rape proclivity (Bohner, Pina, Viki, & Siebler, 2010; Gerger, Kley, Siebler, & Bohner, 2007), as well as the processing of rape-related information (Eyssel & Bohner, 2011; Krahé, Temkin, & Bieneck, 2007; Süssenbach, Bohner, & Eyssel, 2012; Süssenbach, Eyssel, & Bohner, 2013). As the general mechanisms of sexual harassment myths are comparable to those underlying rape myths (Lonsway et al., 2008; Vanselow, Bohner, Becher, & Siebler, 2010), it would be an important next step to empirically show that sexual harassment myths are used to legitimize actually committed sexual harassment.

1.5 Interplay of the three processes

The capability of the proposed model to account for a versatile interplay of the three processes is supposed to be one of its main strengths in comparison to single-factor theories. In this section, I will present all theoretically justifiable relationships (e.g., mediation and moderation models) and feedback loops between the three processes, motivation, enabling processes, and legitimization. For a schematic overview see Figure 1. Below in Section 2, I will describe which sub-models within the complete model have already been tested by the present research.
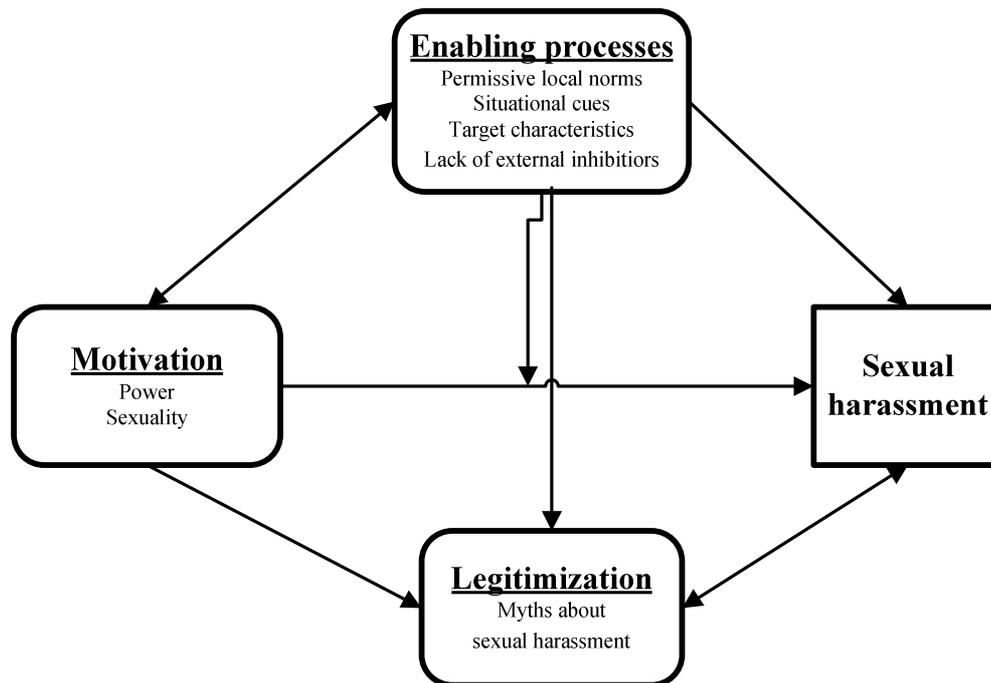
Figure 1. **Conceptual framework of the three-factor model, showing all theoretically justifiable relationships between motivation, enabling processes, and legitimization in the prediction of sexual harassment.**

Beyond the hypothesized direct effects of each of the three components on the occurrence of sexual harassment, as they were outlined above, several interdependent effects between them are conceivable. *Motivation* and *enabling* processes, to start with, may influence each other in both directions: Preexisting, motivational structures may influence men's perception of situational cues, for instance, by leading them to selectively search for specific information, similar to people who have been shown to search for information that supports their stereotypes (Johnston, 1996) and attitudes (Lundgren & Prislin, 1998), or by leading them to interpret new information following a certain attitude heuristic they have built (Pratakins, 1988). On the other hand, certain enabling factors may also trigger specific motives. Target characteristics, for example, may trigger specific motives to sexually harass,

which would explain why certain women are at a greater risk to be harassed, as suggested by previous research mentioned earlier (Berdahl, 2007; Dall'Ara & Maass, 1999; Mass et al., 2003; Siebler et al., 2008). Social cognition research conclusively shows that priming with environmental stimuli can activate and increase the cognitive accessibility of certain concepts, including motivations (Higgins, 1996), and thereby in return can influence social perceptions (Bargh et al., 1996; Higgins et al., 1977). Thus, two mediation models that include motivation and enabling processes are theoretically justifiable: Motivation may influence enabling processes, which in turn affect the resulting behavior, and enabling factors may influence motivation, which in turn affects the behavior as well. Importantly, both processes are hypothesized to lead to an increase in sexually harassing behavior, each mediated by the respective other process.

Besides their mediating role, enabling processes are furthermore assumed to have a moderating role in the model, by interacting with motivation in the prediction of sexual harassment: It is not only plausible that enabling processes influence a person's motivation and his/her behavior, but also that they affect the path between motivation and resulting behavior. In other words, enabling processes may determine the relative impact a certain motivation has on corresponding behavior. This is assumed to happen, for instance, by increased accessibility and salience of the underlying motivation, which reinforces its impact on behavior, as Schwarz and Strack (1981), and Bohner and colleagues argue (Bohner, Jarvis, Eyssel, & Siebler, 2005; Bohner, Reinhard, Rutz, Sturm, Kerschbaum, & Effler, 1998). Similarly, the impact of permissive norms or of a lack of external inhibitors may lie in their provision of a suitable opportunity to act out preexisting motivations, which end in sexually harassing behavior (Chamberlain et al., 2008; Gruber, 1998; Pryor et al., 1983). In this case, no increase in sexually harassing behavior is hypothesized, nor an increase in the underlying

motivation, but a reinforcement of the link between the two. Motivation and enabling factors are not supposed to covary but to interact by mutually intensifying their effect on behavior. This hypothesized mediating and moderating roles of enabling processes seem to be plausible, not only because this model component covers various sub-processes, which may diverge in their roles within the model. Eventually, an empirical test of the multifaceted interplay of motivational and enabling processes will clarify which the predominant relationships are.

Besides motivational and enabling processes, also *legitimizing processes* are assumed to work as a mediator in the proposed model. Two more mediation models are suggested: Either motivation or enabling factors are predicted to influence legitimization, which in turn affect the resulting behavior. Looking at legitimizing processes as a mediator appears to be reasonable, because legitimization may be required due to different reasons, which are reflected in the two other components of the model: Either internal needs to justify may arise, which, among other things, basically depend on how acceptable the underlying *motivation* for the shown behavior seems to be. Or *external conditions* may necessitate justification, which might basically depend on the extent to which sexual harassment is enabled or facilitated in a specific situation. A third reason seems to lie in the shown *behavior* itself: Particularly obviously aggressive behavior may have to be neutralized by a certain legitimizing reinterpretation as well.

The investigation of the three components in the model by allowing for their interdependences will certainly offer new insights into the complex interplay of psychological processes contributing to sexual harassment. The present research provides first steps in this direction.

1.6   Potential advantages of the three-factor-model explaining sexual harassment

The major potential advantage of the proposed model is that it synthesizes different, previously isolated, theoretical approaches with the aim to explain sexual harassment in one overarching model. By accounting for the interplay of the three proposed factors, it offers a more adequate explanation for this complex phenomenon compared to single-factor theories. Thereby, the proposed model is applicable to a wide range of sexually harassing behavior, for example to forms that fall into the category of gender harassment, as well as forms that fall into the category of unwanted sexual attention (Gelfand et al., 1995), which might be driven by different motivations.

By its three components, the model opens up the view on three different parties, which are usually involved when it comes to sexual harassment: the perpetrator, the target, and society. By looking at *motivational processes*, the perpetrators' internal processes, which possibly lead to sexually harassing behavior, are taken into account. Furthermore, as outlined above, *enabling processes* cover target characteristics as well as certain characteristics of society, which both are potentially able to trigger sexually harassing behavior. And also *legitimizing processes* play a crucial role for all of the three parties: Not only might perpetrators need to rationalize and justify their behavior (Lonsway et al., 2008), but myths about sexual harassment are highly established also in society, in order to justify and maintain its social system (see Brownmiller, 1975). And finally, legitimization might even serve women, that is individuals who are at risk to become targets of sexual harassment, as an anxiety buffer by creating an illusion of invulnerability (see Bohner, 1998; Bohner et al., 2009; Bohner & Lampridis, 1994).

Still, I would like to stress that, although this model proposes to examine certain target characteristics, which may contribute to or facilitate sexual harassment, the whole

responsibility lies on the perpetrators who conduct sexually harassing behavior. Therefore, I would like to stress also that the explicit consideration of perpetrator characteristics (e.g., their individual motivation), which were mainly left unattended by previous research (Pina et al., 2009), is a peculiarity of this model. In particular, the consideration of those individual dispositions, especially in interaction with situational variables, will generate important next steps in sexual harassment research.

Last but not least, the investigation of all three components of the proposed model may offer possibilities for the development of effective intervention programs in the future: The investigation of motivating processes may provide a typology of harassers, which may open up new ways to interventions at the individual level. The investigation of enabling processes may contribute to the development of interventions at the societal level, for instance for actual work policies. Finally, the investigation of legitimizing processes may be a specifically important starting point for interventions, because they seem to play a crucial role at two time points in the whole sequence of a sexual harassment case: First, believing in justifying ideologies directly affects the likelihood of sexually aggressive behavior (Bohner et al., 2010; 2006; Vanselow et al., 2010). Second, it probably affects the perception of sexual harassment cases, the processing of information (Eyssel & Bohner, 2011; Krahé et al., 2007; Süssenbach et al., 2012, 2013), and the discourse about sexual harassment in general by disguising the actual circumstances, by denial, shift of guilt and responsibility, and by downplaying of the actual consequences (Lonsway, et al., 2008). This can lead to secondary victimization of targets (Campbell & Raja, 1999) and contribute to the maintenance of the given societal conditions. Thus, addressing legitimizing processes may be especially effective in the prevention of sexual harassment, and in the reduction of systematic judicial errors in the legal

system (see Lee, Lee, & Lee, 2012; Krahé, Temkin, Bieneck, & Berger, 2008; Temkin & Krahé, 2008).

In my dissertation, I am beginning to explore the utility of the proposed model, and aim to identify some specific variables that facilitate but also inhibit sexual harassment. As the model is etiological, I designed mostly experimental studies, in order to identify causal relationships between the contributing factors and sexually harassing behavior.

2   PRESENT RESEARCH

The research agenda presented in the previous section has been developed in three manuscripts, which test different components of the model. In Manuscript #1, motivating and legitimizing processes of perpetrators were explored. It represents the first attempt to simultaneously test power and sexuality as the prevailing motives underlying actual sexually harassing behavior. Furthermore, the use of legitimizing myths about sexual harassment and its mediating role for the influence of the two motives on sexually harassing behavior were tested.

In Manuscript #2, the interaction of motivational processes and enabling processes was examined. We studied effects of situational cues on the relative impact of power and sexual motives on actual sexually harassing behavior.

Manuscript #3 presents the attempt to counteract legitimizing processes as one starting point for the prevention of sexual harassment. In two studies, we addressed knowledge about the consequences of sexual harassment and empathy with the targets as two main factors reducing the acceptance of myths about sexual harassment and also reducing the likelihood to sexually harass. Figure 2 displays a schematic view of the three-factor model and which parts of it were tested in each manuscript.
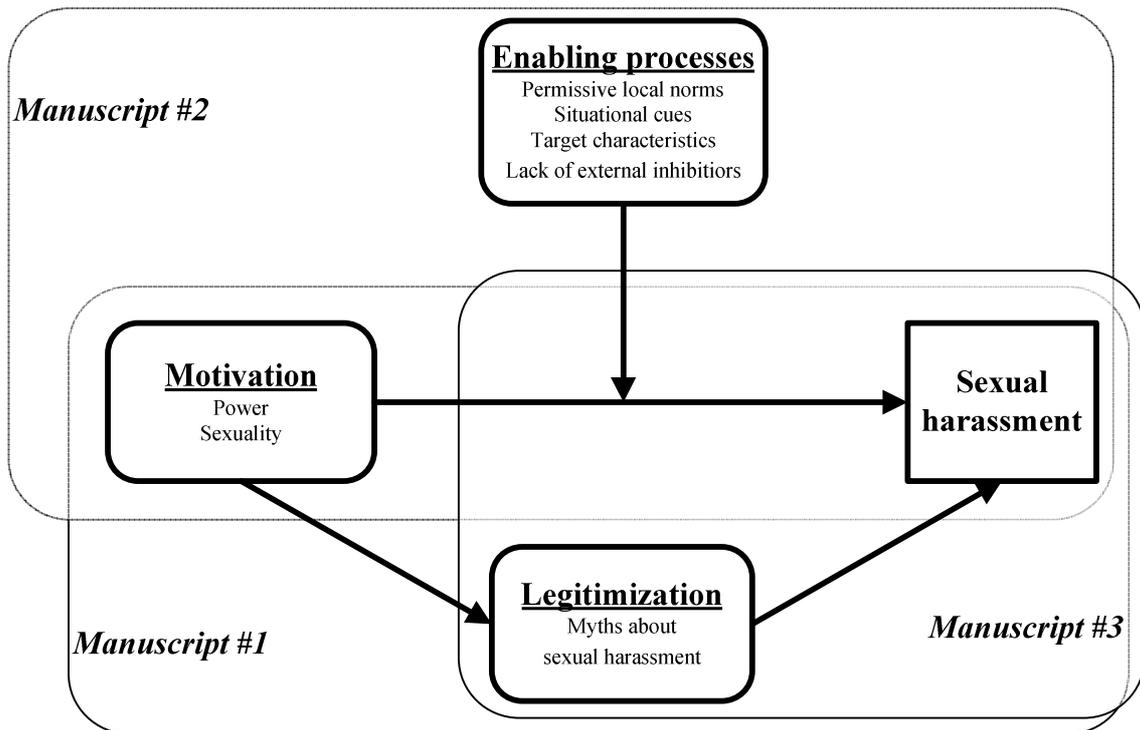
Figure 2. **Schematic view of the three-factor model, as tested in the present research.**

Note: The three frames localize the contribution of each of the three manuscripts to the

examination of the three-factor model.

2.1   Power and sexuality as two different motives underlying sexual harassment

As outlined above, there are two *motivations* underlying sexual harassment, power

and sexuality; however, so far these have been presented as competing hypotheses. In order to

build a comprehensive framework for the explanation of sexual harassment, in Manuscript #1

we tested the two motives together to predict actual, sexually harassing behavior. We

proposed that the two motives, rather than being competing, may complement each other,

each being useful in explaining specific forms of harassing behavior. The two forms of sexual

harassment focused in the manuscript were gender harassment and unwanted sexual attention

(Gelfand et al., 1995).

In Manuscript #1, we subsequently predicted a double dissociation of the two motives, power and sexuality, in the prediction of these two forms of sexual harassment. We argued that power motivated men would particularly show behavior that fall into the category of gender harassment, in order to demonstrate male power toward women. Sexually motivated men, however, would only show harassing behavior that fall into the category of unwanted sexual attention, because this might seem to be functional in order to initiate sexual contact. Slightly asymmetrically to this predicted double dissociation, we added that unwanted sexual attention may be functional not only for a sexual motive, but also for a hostile motive in order to create an embarrassing and humiliating atmosphere (Samuels, 2004; Thomas, 1997). Furthermore, we took **legitimizing processes** (here measured as *sexual harassment myth acceptance*, SHMA) into account: We predicted that SHMA specifically functions as a mediator of the link between power motivation and overtly hostile behavior (i.e., gender harassment), because both, motive and behavior, should elicit a certain need for justification and neutralization. A sexual motive, however, seems to be more socially acceptable, and unwanted sexual attention seems to be ambiguous enough to be re-interpreted as an attempt to flirt (see Cochran, Frazier, & Olson, 1997; Rotundo, Nguyen, & Sackett, 2001).

This study, designed to test these assumptions, shows the advantage of an integrative approach as it is suggested by the proposed model: It allows to simultaneously test predictions of different theories, which might have been competing until now. Beyond that, it even offers the possibility to test predictions that we may only derive from putting together different theories, and that any of these theories considered before.

A notable challenge for the investigation of motivational processes, thus internal processes at the perpetrators' side, is to overcome ethical problems when examining real sexual harassment or transferring it into the laboratory (see Dekker & Barling, 1998; O'Hare

& O'Donohue, 1998). We resolved this problem by using a refined version of the computer harassment paradigm, developed by Dall'Ara and Maass (1999), which allows to experimentally assess in-vivo sexual harassment in a laboratory setting without a physical target being involved (Dall'Ara & Maass, 1999; Maass et al., 2003; Siebler et al., 2008). Within this procedure, male participants interact with an (allegedly real but computer-simulated) female target, and have the repeated opportunity to send her sexually harassing or non-harassing material. In order to measure gender harassment and unwanted sexual attention for the first time simultaneously, we introduced two different types of harassing material, sexist jokes targeting women in general (gender harassment) and sexually offensive personalized remarks (unwanted sexual attention). To assess the two assumed motives in the study, we measured men's short-term mating orientation (STMO; Jackson & Kirkpatrick, 2007), which represents a preference for short sexual relationships without a strong emotional bonding, as an indicator of a sexual motive, and hostile sexism (HS; Glick & Fiske, 1996), which captures negative attitudes toward women and the belief that they should be inferior to men, as an indicator of a power motive, along with a scale assessing SHMA (Lonsway et al., 2008).

The conduction of path analyses revealed the predicted pattern of power and sexual motivation differentially predicting gender harassment and unwanted sexual attention. Both, the two predictors and the two outcome variables were uncorrelated. Whereas STMO was found to predict only sending sexually offensive remarks to the female chat partner, HS predicted both sending sexist jokes and sexually offensive remarks. Furthermore, SHMA fully mediated the link between HS and gender harassment but neither of the links between HS or STMO and unwanted sexual attention.

Thus, Manuscript #1 shows first evidence for two components of the proposed model:

Firstly, the study demonstrates the crucial role of motivational processes in the explanation of sexual harassment. Thereby, both suggested motives, power and sexuality, were shown to be useful predictors of sexually harassing behavior, indeed being independent of each other and accounting for different forms of sexual harassment. Secondly, the study shows that legitimizing processes contribute to the explanation of sexual harassment as well. In our study, participants specifically applied myths about sexual harassment in order to justify and neutralize obviously inappropriate behavior going back to a hostile motive, which evidently aroused a high need for legitimization. This specific mediating role of SHMA that depends on underlying motivation and type of sexual harassment, for one thing, underlines the shrewd and purposeful way in which legitimization is used, considering for instance the very flexible and partially even conflicting argumentation underlying myths about sexual harassment as outlined in Section 1.4 (Lonsway et al., 2008). For another thing, it supports the proposition outlined above, that legitimizing processes should be examined in their interplay with the other two factors in the model.

2.2 Enabling the impact of motivation on sexual harassment

The research presented in Manuscript #2 built upon the first evidence we found for the double dissociation of power- and sexual motives predicting two different types of sexual harassment, as described in Manuscript #1. As this evidence was based on a correlational study, in Manuscript #2 the two motives were experimentally manipulated in order to overcome this shortcoming. Whereas the first manuscript specifically focused on motivational processes and additionally took legitimizing processes as a mediator into account, the second manuscript now addresses the moderating role of *enabling processes* in the prediction of sexually harassing behavior through *motivation*. This seems to be a necessary step, because a given motivation can have very different implications in different contexts, and, beyond the

pure motive force, a suitable opportunity to actually act out a purpose is a necessary

precondition for respective behavior to occur (e.g., Aquino & Bradfield, 2000; Zapf, 1999).

Thus, the aims of Manuscript #2 were to further examine the causal pathways between

the two motives and the respective types of sexual harassment on the one hand, and on the

other hand to shed some light on enabling processes, which might turn certain social

situations into potential opportunities for sexual harassment.

Among the conceivably enabling factors suggested above, we chose to further

investigate *situational cues*, which might specifically make either a power motive or a sexual

motive salient and thereby create distinctive situational contexts and trigger associated

behavior (for a similar approach in the context of intergroup behavior, see Guimond et al.,

2013; Vorauer, Gagnon, & Sasaki, 2009). Although there is some evidence that the presence

of sexually explicit cues can prime sexual harassment (e.g., Yao et al., 2009), there is less

research on priming effects of power-related cues on sexually harassing behavior (for

exceptions see Fiske, 1993*;* Pryor et al., 1993), and no research examining the interplay of

this situational factor with motivational structures. In Manuscript #2, we argued that the

influence of sexual versus power motivation on unwanted sexual attention and gender

harassment, respectively, should be more pronounced if they have been made salient by

certain situational cues (see Bohner et al., 1998, 2005; Schwarz & Strack, 1981). The

possibility that priming with situational cues may lead to an increase of the critical motive or

the critical behavior was kept in sight and additionally tested in Manuscript #2.

In order to show the predicted influence of situational cues on the impact of pre-

existing motivational structures on sexual harassment, we designed an experimental study in

which we primed either power or sexuality in two different conditions. Before entering the

laboratory, the male participants were briefly exposed to a wall poster designed to activate

either one of both concepts. Depending on the experimental condition the poster was entitled "Powerful Men" and showed pictures of high-ranking politicians, or it was entitled "Sexy Women" and showed pictures of women wearing lingerie. By using the established chat paradigm to measure the two behavioral dependent variables, gender harassment and unwanted sexual attention, Manuscript #2 built upon the methodological innovation introduced into the computer harassment paradigm (Dall'Ara & Maass, 1999), and first used in the study described in Manuscript #1. Also power and sexual motives were measured again by assessing participants' STMO and HS (Jackson & Kirkpatrick, 2007; Glick & Fiske, 1996).

To test the theorized role of the context, we conducted two path analyses, for the power context condition and the sexual context condition separately. In line with predictions, Manuscript #2 shows specific effects of priming power versus sexual motivation on the relationships of HS and STMO with the two measured forms of sexually harassing behavior. After activation of a power motive, HS significantly predicted gender harassment, while STMO played a minor role, whereas, after activation of a sexual motive, only STMO significantly predicted unwanted sexual attention, whereas HS played a minor role. By conducting a third path analysis collapsing over the two conditions, we furthermore were able to mostly replicate the pattern of a double dissociation of HS and STMO differentially predicting the two different types of sexual harassment, which we already found in the study described in Manuscript #1. However, we found no significant link between HS and unwanted sexual attention, but each of the two distinct motives being linked with only one type of sexual harassment. This may be due to the specific activation of one of the motives at a time that might lead to a stronger differentiation when merging the two conditions into one overall sample. Interestingly, when testing for mean differences between the two conditions,

power context and sexual context, there were no differences, neither at the motivational level nor at the behavioral level, between participants having seen the poster depicting "Sexy Women" and those having seen the poster depicting "Powerful Men".

Thus, Manuscript #2 successfully contributes to the evaluation of the proposed model for two reasons: First, it provides experimental evidence to further differentiate the motivational structure underlying sexual harassment, and allows for a stronger inference about the causal relationship between the two motives and the respective forms of sexually harassing behavior (Schwarz & Strack, 1981). The results strengthen the assumption that the proposed motives causally lead to sexual harassment and, thereby, replicate the findings presented in Manuscript #1. Second, Manuscript #2 shows that a subtle variation of context variables differentially affects the relative impact of power- and sexual motives on sexually harassing behavior. This underlines the relevance of enabling processes, especially in interaction with motivational processes, for explaining sexual harassment. Furthermore, the results also illustrate the need for interventions. The open display of nude or partially nude photographs of women in a workplace not only may be directly offensive to women and constitute a form of sexual harassment itself (Fitzgerald et al, 1997), but also may enable other, more personal forms of sexual harassment. The same is true for power related cues, which have been too rarely in the focus of attention until now.

2.3   Counteracting legitimizing processes in order to reduce sexual harassment

Whereas the first and second manuscript investigated to what extent, and how exactly the three components of the model, motivation, enabling processes, and legitimization, contribute to the explanation of sexual harassment, the third manuscript presents a possible way to counteract one of these components, in this case legitimizing processes. It thereby provides a first attempt toward the development of interventions against sexual harassment.

Manuscript #3 followed up on one of the results of Manuscript #1, namely that legitimizing processes mediated the link between HS, a factor linked to power motivation, and gender harassment: Hostile-sexist men who sexually harassed a woman in a computer chat apparently used sexual harassment myths to justify their behavior. The endorsement of those myths entails a biased interpretation of sexual harassment, which is characterized by a shift of responsibility toward the female target and by a denial or minimization of the severe consequences that the target may suffer (Lonsway, et al., 2008). As outlined above, also past research on legitimizing processes in the context of sexual aggression, mostly focusing on rape, showed the belief in myths to directly affect actual behavior (Bohner et al., 2010; Gerger et al., 2007), as well as the processing of information (Eyssel & Bohner, 2011; Krahé et al., 2007; Süssenbach et al., 2012, 2013). Taken together, these findings demonstrate the importance to find ways of counteracting legitimization, i.e. reducing SHMA, which might reduce men's likelihood to sexually harass and thereby diminish the risk for women to be harassed, but also achieve an appropriate condemnation and punishment of harassers.

In order to reduce SHMA, the research presented in Manuscript #3 draws on two approaches in the rape and aggression literature: One approach is based on the idea that better knowledge about the consequences of rape for its victims goes along with less rape-supportive attitudes and lower rape proclivity (Hamilton & Yee, 1990). This effect seems to be similar to the one that arises when people know a rape victim in person (Hamilton & Yee, 1990). The other approach is based on the idea that empathy with the victims, especially taking the perspective of the victim, prevents people to commit all sorts of aggressive behavior, including sexual aggression (for related evidence, see Hildebran & Pithers, 1989; O'Donohue, Yeater, & Fanetti, 2003). In two experiments, this research was extended to the domain of sexual harassment. It was hypothesized that learning about the negative

consequences of sexual harassment, and empathy with the target, can both reduce the acceptance of myths about sexual harassment and finally also men's likelihood to sexually harass (LSH).

In Study 1, participants read a newspaper-style text describing sexual harassment, depending on condition, as either a harmless phenomenon (i.e., consequences were downplayed) or a relevant problem in society (i.e., consequences were detailed). Additionally, we tested whether participants' level of empathy influences SHMA. Therefore, we measured empathy as potential moderator and SHMA as dependent variable by means of an attached questionnaire (Leibetseder, Laireiter, Riepler, & Köller; 2001; Lonsway et al., 2007).

Results showed that reporting about sexual harassment as a harmless phenomenon (vs. a relevant problem in society) led to significantly lower SHMA. This effect was moderated by participants' level of empathy. Reading the text that detailed the negative consequences of sexual harassment for its targets led to a reduction in SHMA only for persons low in empathy. Overall, the results supported the above made assumptions and provide first evidence that confronting participants with the actual consequences of sexual harassment leads to decreased legitimization (i.e., SHMA). Furthermore, this attempt to disable legitimizing processes seems to be particularly effective for persons with low levels of empathy, which supports the relevance of the few existing empathy trainings to prevent sexual harassment (e.g., Schewe & O'Donohue, 1993; Leeser & O'Donohue, 1997).

One limitation in the study design of this first study was the absence of a control condition with a neutral baseline of SHMA. Due to this drawback, the observed effect cannot with certainty be referred to our manipulation decreasing SHMA in the actualizing condition, but might possibly trace back to increased SHMA in the downplaying condition. We remedied this weakness in the second study, where we included a baseline control condition.

In Study 2, we used an alternative way of teaching people the consequences of sexual harassment by harnessing the influence of empathy. This time, we focused on the impact of perspective taking, as one key component of empathy (Decety, 2005; Lamm, Batson, & Decety, 2007), and manipulated participants' perspective taking by presenting them an eyewitness report about a sexual harassment case at the workplace either from a female target's perspective, or from a male perpetrator's perspective. It was hypothesized that taking the target's perspective (but not the harasser's perspective) makes participants simultaneously learn about the serious consequences of harassment, which again reduces SHMA but also male participants' likelihood to sexually harass (LSH). In a third condition participants read a neutral text about interactions at the workplace with no reference to sexual harassment (control condition). Subsequently, all participants answered a questionnaire assessing SHMA and LSH as dependent variables (Lonsway et al., 2007; Vanselow et al., 2010).

As assumed, learning about a sexual harassment case from the target's perspective led to significantly lower SHMA, compared to learning about the same case from the perpetrator's perspective and compared to the control condition. Taking the perpetrator's perspective, in contrast, did not seem to increase SHMA beyond the baseline level of the control condition. Furthermore, for our male subsample, getting to know the case from the target's perspective led not only to lower SHMA but also to lower LSH compared to the control condition.

In conclusion, both studies provide evidence for the two approaches aiming to disable legitimizing processes, such as SHMA: equipping people with knowledge about the negative consequences and instructing them to take the target's perspective. Beyond the effect of both approaches on legitimization (i.e., SHMA), Study 2 also showed a direct effect on anticipated future behavior (i.e., LSH). Thus, the results of Manuscript #3 supports the assumption that

the investigation of legitimizing processes might be a specifically important and promising

starting point for the prevention of sexual harassment.

3 GENERAL DISCUSSION AND OUTLOOK

In the following section, I will discuss the present research in view of the proposed model and scrutinize what the studies can tell us about the three processes and their interplay, and which questions remain open. Thereby, I will take a close look at each of the tested components and each of the links that were taken into account. I will also provide suggestions how future research could examine those links that have not been tested yet (Section 3.1). Then, I will discuss the limitations of the three-factor model and how they can be solved in future studies (Section 3.2). Finally, I will discuss the implications of the model for future prevention and intervention against sexual harassment (Section 3.3).

3.1 Contribution of the three-factor model to the explanation of sexual harassment

What do we know now, in light of the present research, about the proposed three-factor model? First, the present research provides evidence for the relevance of all three proposed components in the model: Manuscripts #1 and #2 show that power and sexuality are highly relevant motives in the context of sexual harassment: First, both motives turned out to be independent from each other, which suggests that they are not only differentiable, but that there exist two types of men, the predominantly power motivated and the predominately sexual motivated men. Second, both motives predict different forms of sexual harassment, which were assessed with an in-vivo measure, the computer chat paradigm. This replicated finding suggests that simultaneously taking socio-cultural and evolutionary theory into account may be the best solution so far, in order to cover different, rather complementing than competing motives for sexual harassment. At the same time, the finding speaks against an automatic link between power and sexuality, as assumed by Pryor and Bargh (Bargh et al., 1995; Pryor & Stoller, 1994), which has important implications: First, it may be helpful to

know for future argumentation that men with a high propensity to sexually harass still are not at the mercy of an automatic mental association between power and sex. Instead, it is known that men take situation-specific factors into account, which are also under investigation in the present research (see Sections 1.3 and 2.2), in order to monitor their behavior (see Siebler et al., 2006, for a similar argumentation). Second, this knowledge seems to be crucial for devising efficient intervention measures against men's proclivity to sexually harass. As will be outlined below, interventions should tackle men who predominately sexually harass on the basis of power motives in a different way, than men who harass mainly due to sexual motives. Manuscript #1 further shows that legitimizing processes contribute to the occurrence of sexual harassment as well. In this case they function as a mediator of the link between motivation and behavior, which is new evidence for an effect of legitimization on in-vivo measured behavior. We further know from Manuscript #3 that targeting legitimizing processes with interventions, aiming at curbing them, additionally serves to reduce men's likelihood to sexually harass. This finding demonstrates a first indication for possible starting points in order to prevent sexual harassment. A direct effect of enabling processes on sexually harassing behavior has not been shown yet. Instead, in Manuscript #2, situational cues turned out to have a moderating function in the prediction of sexual harassment through the two motives, power and sexuality. This latter finding supports the assumption that enabling processes, at least those triggered by situational cues, affect the path between motivation and resulting behavior, and not necessarily the extent of the motivation or of the behavior itself.

What still has to be tested in the proposed model are, on one hand, the effects of further variants of enabling processes, such as processes going on when local norms are permissive or external inhibitors are missing, or processes that are triggered by certain target characteristics. On the other hand, some paths connecting enabling processes with the two

other components in the model remain untested until now: First, the assumed bidirectional connection between enabling processes and motivation was not exhaustively tested in the present research. The fact that power and sexual motives stayed unaffected by situational cues, as described in Manuscript #2, does not necessarily mean that other enabling processes might not have an effect on motivation, and thereby even affect behavior. As argued earlier, target characteristics may trigger specific motives to sexually harass (see Dall'Ara & Mass, 1999; Maass et al., 2003; Siebler et al., 2008). Future studies should systematically manipulate target characteristics that presumably interact with men's motivation to sexually harass. Facing, for instance, a feminist versus a "sexually open" woman may differentially trigger either men's power motivation, because they may perceive the former woman as a threat to their male supremacy, or trigger men's sexual motivation, because they may perceive the latter woman as a potential sex partner. According to the respectively activated motive, men may show sexually harassing behavior that aims to reestablish their power position, or react with forms of sexual harassment that could be part of a flirt. Furthermore, future research should investigate the reversed causal relation, from motivation to enabling processes, which was not tested in the present research. As argued earlier, already existing motivations may influence the perception of certain situational conditions, and may, for example, lead to selective awareness or selective use of information (Johnston, 1996; Lundgren & Prislin, 1998; Pratkanis, 1988).

Second, also the link from enabling factors to legitimization was not tested in the present study. The rationale behind this link is that certain external situations that lack enabling cues may especially necessitate legitimizing processes in order to justify sexual harassment, while external situations that allow for enabling processes should rather supersede the need for additional justification, serving as legitimization on their own. The

study described in Manuscript #1 revealed a similarly differentiated pattern regarding the use of legitimization, as it showed that men specifically applied myths about sexual harassment to justify obviously inappropriate behavior going back to a hostile motive, but did not justify more ambiguous behavior going back to a sexual motive, because there seems to be less need to do so. Still, the interdependence of (a lack) of enabling cues and legitimizing processes would have to be tested by future research.

Overall the present research provides first evidence for the existence of most of the predicted links in the three-factor model and, importantly, it provides evidence for the high relevance of all three components for the explanation of sexually harassing behavior. The proposed model crucially opens up a more global and comprehensive view on sexual harassment and on the main social psychological processes that contribute to its genesis as well as to its maintenance. By considering several previously isolated theories, and by combining these into three main components, and taking its multifaceted interplay into account, it offers a very flexible overarching framework to explain sexual harassment in all its complexity.

3.2   Limitations of the present research and suggestions for future research

Beside the above-mentioned links that still remain to be tested, a shortcoming of the present research is the almost exclusive investigation of verbal sexually harassing behavior. Although the proposed model claims to be applicable to a wide range of sexually harassing behavior, the presented results are based on verbal behavior in the described chat situation (Manuscript #1 and #2), or on scenario-based self-report data (Manuscript #3). Since one important objective of this dissertation was the investigation of actual behavior, this proceeding, including a restriction to verbal forms of sexual harassment, was due to feasibility reasons and the final decision to use the chat paradigm. Nevertheless, the predictive value of

the model would have to be tested with regard to other forms of sexual harassment as well. Otherwise one cannot rule out the possibility that the three components might be less good predictors for other sexual harassment forms.

Another limitation of the methodology used in Manuscript #1 and #2 to measure sexually harassing behavior lies in the restriction of choices in the chat paradigm. With its predominant critical trails (16 out of 20 trials), in which participants can choose between three materials to send to their chat partner, which again consist of mainly harassing options (two out of three options), the chat paradigm could be criticized having a certain stimulative nature that tempts participants to sexually harass. Nevertheless, there is always one non-harassing option that participants can choose. Furthermore, it is important to stress that the chat paradigm is not a diagnostic measure, and accordingly, the resulting sexual harassment scores are not interpretable as absolute indicators of individual participants' harassment proclivity. Instead, the scores are analyzed across participants and in relation to other individual-difference variables, motives for instance. Thus, even if harassing behavior seems to be facilitated, in the two presented studies, indeed, variations in participants' harassing behavior measured by using the chat paradigm reliably reflected variations in their underlying motives. Nevertheless, including more neutral trials and more neutral options within each trial of the chat paradigm could compensate for an overestimation of the prevalence of sexual harassment. Because such alterations would make the paradigm clearly more time-consuming, this would be a question of weighing their benefits against the advantage of parsimony.

A shortcoming that concerns the motivational component in the proposed model is the possibly debatable operationalization of the power motive in Manuscript #1 and #2. One could ask if HS actually represents a power motivation, or rather an attitude that provides the basis for hegemonial power relations. As I argued earlier, HS incorporates negative attitudes

toward women and is part of a misogynist ideology that claims a principle inferiority of women (Glick & Fiske, 1996, 2001). Thus, it has a clearly power-related component, and was further shown to predict tolerance of sexual harassment and sexual harassment proclivity before (Abrams, Viki, Masser, & Bohner, 2003, Study 2; Russell & Trigg, 2004). However, HS as an attitude somewhat lacks the energizing drive that is common to motives (Atkinson, 1975). Despite its predictive value, HS seems to be closely related to power motivation and may contribute to the use of power against women, but might not be completely congruent with a power motive. Better indicators for power motivation could be constructs that reflect the aspiration for power, the striving for satisfying this aspiration, and the enjoyment felt when exerting power over women.

Another limitation of the current research that empirically tested the model is the almost total lack of information about other involved parties that are not perpetrators. Although the model claims to regard also processes that take place at the targets' and the society's side, its theoretical focus certainly lies on the perpetrators. This is definitely intended, because, first, the general responsibility for sexual harassment is seen at the perpetrators' side, and second, perpetrator characteristics too long remained unattended by previous research (Pina et al., 2009), and therefore receive special attention in the model. Still, the model contains theoretical assumptions about targets and society as well, for instance a legitimizing function of myths for society as such, which the current research does not examine at this level. Anyhow, the studies described in Manuscript #3 included male and female participants, and were able to show a reduction of myths for both. Nevertheless, this is not sufficient in order to substantiate certain processes and effects at the societal level. To empirically test the individual as well as the societal level of the model, future research would need to use multilevel approaches, which seems to be a major challenge (see e.g., Pettigrew,

2006). A first step could be made by conducting cross-cultural studies. Analogous to previous research by Sanday for instance, who investigated rape-free versus rape-prone cultures and societies (1981, 1996), an anthropological, cross-cultural study on sexual harassment myths may show how such legitimizing ideologies are embedded in the cultural configuration of societies. Conducting, for instance, several investigations of societies that differ in their level of gender equality and measuring people's reaction to a sexual harassment case as well as their legitimizing tendencies (e.g. by measuring SHMA), would allow to find differences at the societal level and to relate those to differences at the individual level. Only combing individual and societal levels, not merely theoretically but also methodologically, will help to put the social psychological processes that contribute to sexual harassment in their macro-context.

3.3   Practical implications

Despite its shortcomings, however, the proposed three-factor model offers promising implications for the development of prevention and intervention programs in the future. Indeed, the model provides different starting points for the initiation of interventions along its three components. Thereby, the motivational component seems to be especially relevant: What can be derived from the presented results is that possible interventions at the individual level should adapt the underlying motivation of harassers, in order to gain in effectiveness. As one group of harassers seem to be mainly led by self-centered sexual motivations with the aim to get into contact with women, these harassers should be receptive to interventions clarifying that their behavior is not approved by the targets and thereby not functional for their purposes. In this vein, Manuscript #3 presents first attempts to provide knowledge about the negative consequences of sexual harassment for the targets and to persuade people to take the target's perspective, which successfully reduced SHMA and men's LSH. However, this strategy

might not be indicated for the other group of men, who seems to be mainly led by power motivations and hostile intentions toward women. It may, in fact, even encourage and sustain power-motivated sexual harassment by confirming that the goal to offend and harm women is achieved. As the latter case is basically classifiable as a form of intergroup conflict at the societal level, respective interventions seem to be needed. Thus, rather very clear and strictly controlled work policies and prosecution may work out here (see McDonald, 2012; Pina & Gannon, 2012). This second intervention strategy could not only serve to warn potential perpetrators, but is also a possibility to counter permissive local norms, and to react on the widespread tolerance and permissiveness shown by third parties (Herzog, 2007). Accordingly, the second strategy can be assigned to the enabling component in the model. Finally, also legitimizing processes appear to be a specifically important starting point for interventions, because they do not only directly affect the likelihood of sexual harassment to occur, but do also disguise the perception of sexual harassment cases, and thereby influence the discourse about sexual harassment in public. As already mentioned, the present research provides first evidence for a successful intervention aiming at reducing legitimization via equipping people with knowledge about the negative consequences, and inducing empathy with the targets.

This last suggestion to specifically tackle legitimizing tendencies achieves an outstanding relevance also in view of the backlash that arose shortly after the sexism debate. This backlash was widely shaped by argumentations that repeatedly used diverse myths about sexual aggression. Correspondingly, relativization on the one hand, and disavowal on the other hand were the main mechanism that were observable in the reactions to the debate (see Diehl et al., 2014; Pickert, 2013). Many Germans, particularly men, answered with surprise and disbelief that sexism and sexual harassment actually are relevant problems in nowadays German society ("Umfrage: Sexismus auch für Männer ein Problem," 2014). Among others,

the media did its bit, by then, to convey the impression that sexual harassment but especially high-level sexual violence would take place in other countries. Be it the case of Dominique Strauss-Kahn in France, Silvio Berlusconi in Italy, or Vladimir Putin in Russia, or the rape cases without one famous but several perpetrators instead in India, which feels even more far away, they all seem to be extreme and impossible to happen in Germany. Along these lines, the extensive reporting of extreme rape cases serves to establish a common agreement on the damnability of those offenses, but simultaneously, by simple contrasting, serves to demonstrate that the circumstances women live in within our society were relatively comfortable, so that they had no point to complain about banal incidences of sexual harassment or sexism. There exist former critiques of media strategies influencing the mainstream perception of sexual violence, for example by presenting specific cases as individual aberrations, rather than a systematic societal problem, which undermines public awareness (Mahood & Littlewood, 1997; McDonald & Charlesworth, 2013). Because this lack of awareness, be it due to biased media reporting or due to deliberate ignorance, seems to be one crucial problem in the public perception of sexual harassment, I would like to entrust this last mentioned intervention strategy to all sorts of media that report about sexism and sexual harassment. According to the results of this dissertation, adequate reporting and a thorough presentation of the actual negative consequences of sexual harassment have the potential to sharpen public awareness, and would be a first step in the fight of sexist discrimination.

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4   MANUSCRIPT #1: Flirting with disaster: Short-term mating orientation and hostile sexism predict different types of sexual harassment

Authors Contribution Statement

Charlotte Diehl designed the study presented in "Flirting with disaster: Short-term mating orientation and hostile sexism predict different types of sexual harassment" advised by Gerd Bohner,. She conducted the statistical analysis assisted by Jonas Rees. Charlotte Diehl conducted literature searches and provided summaries of previous research studies; she wrote the first draft of the manuscript, and all authors critically revised and approved the final manuscript.

Gerd Bohner and Jonas Rees agree to the submission of the publication as part of this cumulative dissertation "Ways of explaining sexual harassment: Motivating, enabling, and legitimizing processes".

Running Head: MOTIVES OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT

MANUSCRIPT #1

Flirting with Disaster: Short-term Mating Orientation and Hostile Sexism

Predict Different Types of Sexual Harassment

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Abstract

We combine evolutionary and socio-cultural accounts of sexual harassment, proposing that sexuality-related and hostility-related motives lead to different types of harassment. Specifically, men's short-term mating orientation (STMO) was hypothesized to predict only unwanted sexual attention but not gender harassment, whereas men's hostile sexism (HS) was hypothesized to predict both unwanted sexual attention and gender harassment. As part of an alleged computer-chat task, 100 male students could send sexualized personal remarks (representing unwanted sexual attention), sexist jokes (representing gender harassment), or nonharassing material to an attractive female target. Independently, participants' STMO, HS, and sexual harassment myth acceptance (SHMA) were assessed. Correlational and path analyses revealed that STMO specifically predicted unwanted sexual attention, whereas HS predicted both unwanted sexual attention and gender harassment. Furthermore, SHMA fully mediated the effect of HS on gender harassment, but did not mediate effects of STMO or HS on unwanted sexual attention. Results are discussed in relation to motivational explanations for sexual harassment and anti-harassment interventions.

[159 words]

Keywords: sexual harassment, motivation, sexuality, hostility, computer harassment paradigm

Introduction

Sexual harassment is still prevalent in the workplace (e.g., O'Donohue, Downs, & Yeater, 1998; Timmerman & Bajema, 1999) and in other settings (e.g., online harassment, Barak, 2005). Although both genders can be targets as well as perpetrators of sexual harassment (see Fitzgerald, Magley, Drasgow, & Waldo, 1999), the majority of perpetrators is male, and the majority of victims is female (Koss et al., 1994). In the present research, we focus on this common constellation of male perpetrator and female target (see also Berdahl & Moore, 2006; Cortina, Magley, Williams, & Langhout, 2001). The high prevalence of male-on-female sexual harassment necessitates valid explanations of its underlying causes. Only a thorough understanding of the mental processes and motives triggering and sustaining sexually harassing behavior can inform the development of effective prevention programs.

In the following sections we focus on two different forms of sexual harassment and on two competing general approaches aimed at explaining why sexual harassment occurs. We propose that the two approaches may complement each other, each being useful in explaining specific forms of harassing behavior. Then we report an experimental study designed to test this proposition.

Forms of Sexually Harassing Behavior

Workplace sexual harassment may generally be defined as verbal or nonverbal behavior with sexual content that is unwanted and perceived negatively by the target and that leads to interferences with the target's work (see U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 1980). According to this definition, sexual harassment may comprise a variety of specific behaviors. To differentiate between various forms of harassment, a well-known classification model was proposed by Till (1980) and extended by Gelfand, Fitzgerald, and Drasgow (1995). It divides sexually harassing behaviors into three main categories: unwanted

sexual attention, gender harassment, and sexual coercion. In the present study we focus on behaviors falling into the first two categories, unwanted sexual attention and gender harassment, which are usually less severe than sexual coercion, but also more prevalent (Fitzgerald et al., 1999; Richman et al., 1999; Schneider, Swan, & Fitzgerald, 1997). Unwanted sexual attention manifests itself in offensive and unrequited behaviors potentially aiming for sexual cooperation; gender harassment is defined as insulting, hostile and degrading gender-related behavior (Gelfand et al., 1995). Typical examples for unwanted sexual attention are sexualized remarks about the target person's physical appearance; typical examples for gender harassment are sexist jokes degrading women as a group.

For the purpose of explaining the motives underlying sexual harassment, two differences between unwanted sexual attention and gender harassment appear relevant: (1) Unwanted sexual attention usually represents *interpersonal behavior* targeting an individual woman, whereas gender harassment often represents *intergroup behavior* in the sense defined by Tajfel (1978; also see Turner & Reynolds, 2001, pp. 134-136). That is, although gender harassment may also be directed at one particular woman, the insult is nonetheless at the level of her gender group membership, emphasizing her outgroup status from the perpetrator's perspective. (2) Unwanted sexual attention typically has a sexual component, whereas gender harassment does not; instead, only gender harassment typically emphasizes the inferiority of women (as a group) compared to men. Below we will come back to these differences; but first we take a look at two general approaches aimed at explaining sexual harassment.

Two Explanatory Approaches

To explain why many men sexually harass women, two main theoretical accounts have been forwarded. The *evolutionary account* claims that sexual harassment can be understood as an unintended side-effect of men's evolved mating strategies (e.g., Studd &

Gattiker, 1991). According to this account, sexual harassment is motivated by sexuality and does not imply any discriminatory motives on the part of the perpetrator. By contrast, the *socio-cultural account* proposes that sexual harassment serves to maintain men's social and economical dominance by disparaging women and discriminating against them (e.g., Samuels, 2004). Accordingly, sexual harassment is seen as motivated by hostility toward women as a group. We now discuss the two approaches in more detail and consider related empirical evidence.

Evolutionary theorizing. The evolutionary account explains sexually harassing behavior as either adaptation or evolutionary by-product deriving from gender differences in socio-sexual behavior (e.g., Trivers, 1972). Harassment is interpreted as a misunderstanding between the genders (e.g., Studd, 1996; Studd & Gattiker, 1991) originating from a conflict between a short-term mating strategy typically employed by males and a long-term mating strategy typically employed by females (Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Schmitt, 2005). On the motivational side, men's harassing behavior is seen as driven mainly by sexual intentions that derive from a strong short-term mating orientation (STMO), which represents a tendency toward spontaneous and short sexual encounters or short relationships without a strong emotional bonding (Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Simpson & Gangestad, 1991).

We argue that sexually harassing behaviors arising from an instrumental, sexual motive should mainly fall into the category of unwanted sexual attention. They should be relatively ambiguous, as for example personal remarks and sexually explicit compliments, which could be interpreted as part of a flirt. Because the primary intention is to initiate (sexual) contact, these behaviors should typically target individual women. By contrast, neither obviously hostile forms of sexually harassing behavior nor behaviors targeting women as a group can adequately be explained by a sexual motive, because they would not be

effective in establishing intimate contact with a particular woman.

Socio-cultural theorizing. The socio-cultural account, on the other hand, focuses on unambiguously hostile aspects of sexual harassment. It suggests that sexual harassment serves to maintain the patriarchal system by suppressing women on a societal and intergroup level. According to this account, male perpetrators of sexual harassment intend to intimidate women in the workplace, especially those leaving their traditional role and competing with men in male-dominated areas (Samuels, 2004). Thus, from a socio-cultural perspective, sexual harassment is predicted to be motivated by misogynist ideology such as hostile sexism (HS). HS correlates with negative attitudes toward women and stereotypes about women (Glick & Fiske, 1996); it includes the conviction that women are inferior to men but try to oust men from power (Glick & Fiske, 2001). HS has also been shown to predict tolerance of sexual harassment and sexual harassment proclivity (Abrams et al., 2003, Study 2; Russell & Trigg, 2004; Pryor, Giedd, & Williams, 1995).

We argue that sexually harassing behaviors arising from a hostile motive should mainly fall into the category of gender harassment. They should be overtly degrading and discriminatory, targeting women as a group. Importantly, a hostile motive toward women in general could also lead to behavior targeting women on an interpersonal level, for example in the form of individualized, sexually offensive remarks, but the underlying motive would still be group-focused.

Comparing the two approaches. An advantage of the evolutionary account seems to lie in its potential to explain ambiguous forms of sexual harassment (e.g., borderline sexually offensive remarks). If the account is correct in assuming that misguided attempts at initiating sexual contact or flirts can result in unintended harassment, this would have important implications for intervention programs aimed at reducing sexual harassment. Obviously, other

measures would be indicated than in cases of hostile and intended harassment. However, only a hostile motive can explain overtly hostile behaviors (e.g., sexist jokes), which appear clearly dysfunctional as a means of establishing intimate contact with a woman. The two approaches thus may complement each other and may jointly explain a wide range of sexually harassing behaviors. Currently, however, the two approaches are usually presented as competing against each other, each claiming universality (for the evolutionary account, see Kenrick, Trost, & Sheets, 1996; Thornhill & Palmer, 2000; for the socio-cultural account, see Eagly & Wood, 1999).

Empirical Evidence

To date, direct empirical evidence for either the evolutionary or the socio-cultural explanations of sexual harassment is scarce. Indirect evidence apparently in line with the evolutionary approach comes from work on gender differences in the perception of sexual harassment. Women generally perceive a wider range of behaviors as harassing, and judge them to be more serious, than men do (e.g., Blumenthal, 1998; Rotundo, Nguyen, & Sackett, 2001). To explain this result, Rotundo and colleagues suggested that men may be more likely to perceive sexually harassing behavior as a compliment to the woman. Perilloux, Easton and Buss (2012) found a sexual overperception bias in men, that might fit this suggestion. Men seem to misperceive women's sexual interest, especially those who are strongly short-term mating oriented and who interact with a highly attractive women. This finding shows that a strong sexual motive seemingly influences men's perecptions in an interaction with a potential sex partner.

The effect of short-term mating orientation on women's misperception of sexual interest in contrast seems to be less clear: There are studies showing correlations between mating strategy and sexual overperception in women (Kunstman & Maner, 2011; Maner et

al., 2005), but Perilloux et al. found no effect for women. However, it could be shown that women interpret men's behaviors, from mild over moderate verbal harassment through to physical harassment, as less harassing if the perpetrator was very attractive and held a large amount of resources (*vs*. less attractive and held no resources; Littler-Bishop, Seidler-Feller, & Opaluch, 1982). Women's evaluation of potentially harassing behaviors may thus be informed by considerations of the perpetrator's mating value, which would lend support to the evolutionary approach. However, seemingly opposite findings were reported by Bourgeois and Perkins (2003). These researchers asked female students to imagine being the target of unwanted sexual advances by a high versus low status male, and to indicate how upset they would feel in each case. Across three studies, the students reported feeling more upset by harassment from high-status perpetrators, especially when there was a direct power relationship involved. Bourgeois and Perkins interpret this as evidence in favor of a socio-cultural explanation.

The studies discussed so far have relied on imagined scenarios; they also primarily examined perceptions and feelings on the target side. It is thus difficult to draw firm conclusions regarding perpetrators' motives from these studies. There are a few studies, however, that included a behavioral measure of harassment, using a "computer harassment paradigm" where male participants apparently interact online with a female chat partner and get repeated opportunities to send her harassing material, for example in the form of pornographic pictures (Dall'Ara & Maass, 1999; Maass, Cadinu, Guarnieri, & Grasselli, 2003) or sexist jokes (Siebler, Sabelus, & Bohner, 2008). Results of these studies showed that participants harassed the target more when she had expressed egalitarian (*vs*. traditional) gender-role attitudes (Dall'Ara & Maass, 1999; Maass et al., 2003, Expt. 1; Siebler et al., 2008, Study 2), when the situation was perceived as a male-female intergroup (*vs*.

interpersonal) setting (Dall'Ara & Maass, 1999), or when participants' gender identity had been threatened via feedback (Maass et al., 2003, Expt. 2). Furthermore, individual difference variables that strongly predicted the men's harassing behavior were social dominance orientation (Maass et al., 2003, Expt. 1) and HS (Siebler et al., 2008, Study 2). A variation of the target's physical attractiveness, however, did not affect the amount of harassing materials sent to her (Siebler et al., 2008, Study 2). Taken together, these findings appear to support the socio-cultural approach: Men instrumentalize sexual harassment in order to punish role-noncompliant women or to (re-) assert a powerful male identity.

Overall, the available evidence suggests that both the evolutionary and the socio-cultural explanation have their merits. However, many results do not clearly favor one account over the other; for example, women's tendency to judge sexual harassment by perpetrators with many resources more leniently could be explained not only by evolutionary theory (Littler-Bishop et al., 1982), but also by prevalent societal gender inequality pressuring women to accept unpleasant behaviors by high-status men (see Eagly & Wood, 1999). Also, studies to date have not systematically compared different forms of harassment on the criterion side; therefore, divergent findings concerning the underlying motivations might be due to different conceptualizations of harassment. Furthermore, studies examining the constructs gender harassment and unwanted sexual attention have used only self-report measures that were answered by potential targets of those behaviors. Most commonly used was the Sexual Experience Questionaire (SEQ, Fitzgerald et al., 1988; Gelfand et al., 1995), in which certain aspects of sexual harassment or relevant acts are sampled (e.g. Gelfand et al., 1995; Richman et al., 1999; Schneider et al., 1997). The studies using the computer harassment paradigm (Dall'Ara & Maass, 1999; Maass et al., 2003; Siebler et al., 2008), although providing a useful framework for studying objective behavior, have focused only on

gender harassment, operationalized as the sending of pornographic materials and sexist jokes, respectively. Had they used behaviors of the unwanted sexual attention type, results may have been different, as we will demonstrate below.

The Present Research: Two Motives Predicting Two Forms of Sexual Harassment

The main aim of the present study is to differentiate between two distinct motives underlying sexual harassment, a sexual motive and a hostile motive, each of which should be linked with specific forms of sexually harassing behavior. Based on the theorizing and research outlined above, we propose that two motives are of particular importance for understanding sexual harassment: (1) a sexual motive, according to the evolutionary approach, and (2) a hostile motive, according to the socio-cultural approach. The two approaches are both assumed to be valid, but each with respect to different forms of sexual harassment. Accordingly, we hypothesize that a sexual motive will predict harassing behaviors of the unwanted sexual attention type, that is ambiguous behaviors aimed at initiating (sexual) contact and especially targeting individual women. We further hypothesize that a hostile motive will predict harassing behaviors of the gender harassment type, that is more overtly discriminatory behaviors aimed at degrading women as a group.

We also note an asymmetry in the instrumental specificity of unwanted sexual attention and gender harassment. Whereas gender harassment behaviors should serve only a hostile motive but should be dysfunctional as a means of initiating sexual contact, unwanted sexual attention behaviors may be functional not only in the service of a sexual motive, but could also be used in the service of a hostile motive in order to create an embarrassing and disagreeable atmosphere.

The present study will thus be the first to empirically examine simultaneously the two motives assumed to underlie sexual harassment along with two specific forms of sexual

harassment: unwanted sexual attention and gender harassment. To operationalize the two motives, we will assess men's STMO and HS, predicting a link between STMO and unwanted sexual attention, as well as links between HS and both, gender harassment and unwanted sexual attention.

Differential need for justification of unwanted sexual attention and gender harassment: Harassment myths.

We assume that the two forms of sexually harassing behavior differ in their social acceptability and, consequently, the need for perpetrators to justify these behaviors. Especially gender harassment, an overtly hostile and discriminating behavior toward women in general, has become socially inacceptable and partly outlawed. It therefore requires subjective justification, which can be achieved by applying myths that exonerate perpetrators and blame victims. Such justifying myths have been extensively studied in relation to rape and other severe forms of sexual aggression (for a review, see Bohner, Eyssel, Pina, Siebler, & Viki, 2009). For example, rape myth acceptance was shown to affect men's rape proclivity (Bohner, Siebler, & Schmelcher, 2006; Bohner, Pina, Viki, & Siebler, 2010), and for men who had used sexual coercion, rape myths were chronically more accessible (Bohner, Jarvis, Eyssel, & Siebler, 2005). Recently, Lonsway, Cortina, and Magley (2008) applied the concept of justifying myths to sexual harassment, introducing a measure of sexual harassment myth acceptance (SHMA). Lonsway and her colleagues define sexual harassment myths as "attitudes and beliefs that are generally false but are widely and persistently held, and that serve to deny and justify male harassment of women" (p. 600). We assume that men who are high in hostility and thus perpetrate gender harassment will use harassment myths to rationalize and neutralize their behavior. Men who are high in STMO and thus perpetrate unwanted sexual attention, on the other hand, might feel the need to justify their behavior to a

lesser extent, because unwanted sexual attention, by way of its ambiguity, offers more opportunities to re-frame the behavior as part of a flirt.

In the present research, we also assessed SHMA in order to test its assumed mediating function. If we could show that SHMA specifically mediates the link between HS and gender harassment, but does not mediate the link between STMO and unwanted sexual attention (SHMA being unrelated to unwanted sexual attention to begin with), this result pattern would provide further evidence for the separability of the two motives and their specific links to each of the two forms of sexual harassment.

Measuring sexual harassment in the laboratory. To study two separate forms of harassing behavior simultaneously and in vivo, we further extended the computer harassment paradigm (Dall'Ara & Maass, 1999; Maass et al., 2003; Siebler et al., 2008). Specifically we introduced two different types of harassing material, tested in a pilot study, to operationalize unwanted sexual attention and gender harassment, respectively. By this innovation, our study is the first to assess these two constructs simultaneously with a behavioral laboratory paradigm. Within the present procedure, participants interacted with a (computer-simulated) female target and had the repeated opportunity to send her both sexually offensive personalized remarks (unwanted sexual attention) and sexist jokes targeting women in general (gender harassment). Of course they also had the opportunity of sending nonharassing material in each trial.

Hypotheses. We expected a double dissociation of two motives (represented by STMO and HS) in the prediction of two distinct forms of sexually harassing behavior (unwanted sexual attention and gender harassment). Additionally, we expected to find a specific mediational role for SHMA in the prediction of gender harassment from HS. Specifically, the following hypotheses were tested.

H1: STMO is positively related only to the number of offensive personal remarks

sent (unwanted sexual attention), but unrelated to the number of sexist jokes sent

to the female target (gender harassment).

H2: HS is positively related to both the number of sexist jokes sent (gender

harassment) and the number of offensive remarks sent to the female target

(unwanted sexual attention).

H3: The link between HS and the number of sexist jokes sent (gender harassment) is

mediated via SHMA.

Method

Participants and Procedure

One hundred male students (18 to 66 years of age; $M = 25.30$, $SD = 7.28$) volunteered

to participate in a study on "Memory processes in the workplace". Data from seven additional

participants were excluded because they either indicated a homosexual orientation ($n = 2$) or

expressed suspicion concerning the purpose of the experiment ($n = 5$). All participants gave

written informed consent. The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of the German

Association of Psychology (DGPs).

Participants were seated in individual cubicles in front of a networked personal

computer. To increase the credibility of the chat situation, each participant was told that

several people were taking part simultaneously, and diverse features typical for online chats

were included in the program. The experimental session consisted of two parts.

In the first part, participants were ostensibly connected with their chat-partner "Julia"

(a name rated as very attractive; Rudolph, Böhm, & Lummer, 2007), exchanged some

preliminary information with her and saw a picture of Julia, a physically attractive young

woman, on the screen.[1] (In a pilot study with 20 male participants, the picture had received

the highest rating of sexual attractiveness among 10 pictures, $M = 4.78$, $SD = 1.07$, scale from 1 to 7. The woman in the photograph was a White 23 year-old German, in order to match her ethnicity and age with modal values in the participant population.)

Participants learned that they would repeatedly be shown triples of short text messages from which they would have to select one to be sent to Julia, who would later have to recognize the materials in a memory test. Participants were also informed that previous studies had found gender differences in memory performance. These procedures were meant to increase the credibility of the cover story (memory processes), and to activate both a *sexual motive* (by presenting an attractive female chat partner), and a *hostile motive* (by creating a competitive intergroup situation between men and women; see Dall'Ara & Maass, 1999; Maass et al., 2003; Siebler et al., 2008). A matched triple of jokes, remarks, and neutral statements to choose from was shown in each of 20 trials. There were 16 critical trials in which triples consisted of one sexist joke, one sexually offensive personalized remark, and one nonharassing joke or remark (see below for details); there were also 4 filler trials that featured only nonharassing materials. Participants selected one of the stimuli by clicking on a corresponding "Send this one" button. Then, after a variable delay, the next triple was shown. After the last trial, the computer ostensibly disconnected from the chat network.

In the second part of the experimental session, participants completed a questionnaire measuring STMO, HS, and SHMA.[2] Then, participants were thanked, fully debriefed, and received EUR 5 for their participation.

Behavioral Measures of Sexual Harassment

Selection of harassing materials. In a pilot study, 20 male and 20 female participants indicated for each of 60 jokes and 61 remarks how sexually harassing, how unpleasant, and how funny the material would be for a female recipient on a 6-point-scale (1 = *not at all*, to 6

= *very much*). Based on these pilot ratings, 16 critical triples, each containing one sexist joke, one personalized remark, and one neutral item, were formed such that (a) a sexist joke was matched with an equally harassing and unpleasant personalized remark, and (b) both were matched with a neutral joke or remark that was equally funny but clearly nonharassing and not unpleasant. For the selected materials, funniness ratings did not differ between harassing ($M = 2.15$, $SD = .82$) and nonharassing items ($M = 2.00$, $SD = .42$), $t(39) = 1.10$, $p = .28$. By contrast, as intended, the harassing materials were rated as clearly more harassing ($M = 4.37$, $SD = .84$) and unpleasant ($M = 4.25$, $SD = .87$) than the nonharassing materials ($M = 1.31$, $SD = .48$ and $M = 1.40$, $SD = .53$, respectively), $t(39) = 21.57$, $p < .001$ and $t(39) = 18.31$, $p < .001$, respectively. Finally, also as intended, within the harassing materials the jokes were rated as equally harassing ($M = 4.51$, $SD = 1.32$) and unpleasant ($M = 4.24$, $SD = 1.42$) as the personalized remarks ($M = 4.24$, $SD = .98$; and $M = 4.26$, $SD = 1.02$, respectively), $t(39) = .85$, $p = .40$ and $t(39) = .05$, $p = .96$, respectively. For example, one critical triple read: "What is the difference between a woman having her period and a terrorist? – With a terrorist one can negotiate" (sexist joke), "You are the sweetest chocolate of the world and I've got the filling for you" (offensive personalized remark), "You seem to be a cheerful person" (nonharassing remark).[3]

Behavioral measures of unwanted sexual attention and gender harassment. For each participant, the number of sexist jokes sent was defined as his gender harassment score, and the number of offensive remarks sent was defined as his unwanted sexual attention score. The possible range for each of these variables was 0 to 16. (As critical jokes and remarks appeared in the same triples, it should be noted the sum of the two behaviors was also constrained to be between 0 and 16.) Our measures of gender harassment and unwanted sexual attention reached internal consistencies of $\alpha = .56$ and $\alpha = .68$, respectively; these

coefficients are acceptable given the items' dichotomous coding (0 = not selected, 1 = selected).

Individual-difference Variables

Short-term mating orientation. To assess STMO, we used our own German translation of the 15-item STMO subscale of the Sociosexuality Scale by Jackson and Kirkpatrick (2007), which measures a disposition for spontaneous sexual encounters without commitment, one-night stands, or short-term relationships without strong emotional bonding. In developing the measure, Jackson and Kirkpatrick have found the STMO subscale to be highly reliable in a large student sample ($N = 328$; $\alpha = .95$) and established its validity, e.g. by demonstrating positive correlations of STMO with males' preference for attractiveness in a potential mate ($r = .24$, $p < .01$) and with self-perceived mate value ($r = .27$, $p < .01$). Item examples are "Sex without love is OK," "I would consider having sex with a stranger if I could be assured that it was safe and he/she was attractive to me" (response scale from 1, *do not agree at all*, to 7, *agree completely*). For each participant, item scores were averaged to form an index of STMO. In the present sample, the STMO scale was highly reliable ($\alpha = .88$).

Hostile sexism. HS was measured using the German version (Eckes & Six-Materna, 1999) of the 11-item HS subscale of the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (Glick & Fiske, 1996). The underlying construct reflects sexist antipathy and negative attitudes toward women (Glick & Fiske, 1996) including dominative paternalism, derogatory beliefs, and heterosexual hostility (Glick & Fiske, 1997). Eckes and Six-Materna report good reliability for the German version (Cronbach's α in 5 samples between .78 and .87); other studies attest the validity of the scale by showing that HS predicts sexist behavioral tendencies, such as a preference for sexist humor (rs between .34 and .54, all $p < .01$; Eyssel & Bohner, 2007), as well as actual behavior in the form of sending sexist jokes in a computer chat (partial $r = .46$, $p < .001$;

Siebler et al., 2008). Item examples are "Women are too easily offended," "Most women fail to appreciate fully all that men do for them" (response scale from 1, *do not agree at all*, to 7, *agree completely*). For each participant, item scores were averaged to form an index of HS. In the present study, the HS scale's internal consistency was good ($\alpha = .82$).

Sexual harassment myth acceptance. Our own German translation of the 20-item Illinois Sexual Harassment Myth Acceptance Scale (Lonsway et al., 2008) was used to measure SHMA. The underlying construct captures attitudes and beliefs that serve to excuse sexually harassing behaviors of male perpetrators and ascribe contributory guilt to the targets. The resulting shift of responsibility away from the perpetrator and onto the victim aims at justifying perpetrators' actions. Lonsway and colleagues report high reliability for three student samples consisting of N = 303 in total ($\alpha = .91$) and demonstrate the SHMA scale's validity by examing its relationship with sexism ($r = .49$, $p < .01$), hostility toward women ($r = .59$, $p < .01$), traditional attitudes toward women ($r = .43$, $p < .01$), rape myth acceptance ($r = .64$, $p < .01$), and feminism ($r = -.22$, $p < .05$). Item examples are "Women who claim that they have been sexually harassed are usually exaggerating," "Sometimes women make up allegations of sexual harassment to extort money from their employer" (response scale from 1, *do not agree at all*, to 7, *agree completely*). For each participant, item scores were averaged to form an index of SHMA. In the present study, the SHMA scale's internal consistency was good ($\alpha = .83$).[4]

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Behavioral measures of sexual harassment. Descriptive statistics and zero-order correlations of all principal measures are displayed in Table 1. Eighty-nine per cent of participants sent at least one sexist joke (observed range of gender harassment from 0 to 11),

and 67 % sent at least one sexually offensive remark (observed range of unwanted sexual attention from 0 to 8). Overall, participants sent more sexist jokes ($M = 2.72$; $SD = 2.11$) than sexually offensive remarks ($M = 1.79$; $SD = 2.02$), $t(99) = 3.30$, $p < .01$, thus showing higher levels of gender harassment than unwanted sexual attention.[5]

Correlation of Motivation Measures and Harassing Behaviors

Correlation analyses (see Table 1) showed that, in line with H1, STMO was positively correlated with unwanted sexual attention scores, $r(98) = .32$, $p < .01$, but not with gender harassment scores, $r(98) = -.05$, $p = .64$. Furthermore, in line with H2, HS was positively correlated with both unwanted sexual attention scores, $r(98) = .23$, $p < .05$, and gender harassment scores, $r(98) = .18$, $p = .07$. Finally, the two predictors HS and STMO were independent of each other, $r(98) = .15$, $p = .14$, and the same was true for the two behavioral measures of gender harassment and unwanted sexual attention, $r(98) = .07$, $p = .49$.

A Path Model Testing All Hypotheses Simultaneously

To get a clearer picture of the hypothesized differential links between sexual and hostile motives on the one hand, and different forms of harassing behavior on the other, as well as the hypothesized specific mediational role of SHMA, we computed a path model (see Figure 1). Path analyses were conducted using AMOS 19.0 for Windows.

Double dissociation of two motives predicting two forms of sexual harassment. As can be seen in Figure 1, the correlational pattern reported above did not change substantially when the covariations among motivational predictors and behavioral dependent variables were taken into account. In support of H1 and H2, the paths reaching significance were those between STMO and the unwanted sexual attention score, between HS and the gender harassment score, as well as between HS and the unwanted sexual attention score. The remaining paths among these four variables, also in line with hypotheses, were far from

significant ($ps \geq .15$).

Mediational role of sexual harassment myth acceptance. We then tested the theorized role of SHMA (H3) by adding SHMA as a mediator for the path from HS to the gender harassment score to the path model. The full model, displayed in Figure 1, fitted the data well, χ^2 ($N = 100$; df = 2) = 0.48, $p = .79$, CFI = 1, RMSEA < .01, SRMR = .016. Bootstrapping analyses, using 5,000 bootstrap re-samples and bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals (CIs), showed that the indirect effect from HS through SHMA on the gender harassment score was significant at the $\alpha = .05$ level (standardized indirect effect = .34; 95% CI = [.16, .56]; see Preacher, Rucker, & Hayes, 2007). To test for full mediation, an additional model without the path from HS to the gender harassment score was also tested. This nested model explained the data equally well as the full model, $\Delta\chi^2$ (1) = 1.45, $p > .20$. These analyses therefore show that the effect of HS on gender harassment was fully mediated by SHMA, indicating support for H3.

Additional analyses testing for the specifity of the mediator showed that all other indirect effects through SHMA were nonsignificant. More specifically, when all indirect effects were tested simultaneously, for the indirect effects of HS on unwanted sexual attention as well as of STMO on gender harassment and unwanted sexual attention, all three CIs included zero and the two-tailed significance levels based on bootstrapping procedures were $\geq$ .39. The same pattern emerged when the indirect effects were tested individually.

Discussion

Two Motives Underlying Sexual Harassment

In the present study we could show, for the first time, a double dissociation of two different motives, sexuality and hostility, as predictors of two different forms of sexual harassment, using a refined version of the computer harassment paradigm (Dall'Ara & Maass,

1999; Siebler et al., 2008). The two forms of harassment were unwanted sexual attention and gender harassment (Gelfand et al., 1995). Crucially, whereas sexuality was found to predict only unwanted sexual attention, hostility predicted *both* gender harassment and unwanted sexual attention. This suggests that sexualized personal remarks should not be interpreted exclusively as misled attempts at initiating sexual contact (cf. Studd & Gattiker, 1991), but may also serve a harasser's intent to humiliate the target (Brownmiller, 1975; Samuels, 2004).

Furthermore, the endorsement of myths about sexual harassment fully explained the link of generalized hostility with gender harassment, but not with unwanted sexual attention. This is in line with our argument that male participants may be well aware of the fact that gender harassment is socially inacceptable, and may thus need justification for such behavior (i.e., sexual harassment myths; see Lonsway et al., 2008). The greater ambiguity of unwanted sexual attention, on the other hand (in spite of it being recognized as harassment; Cochran, Frazier, & Olson, 1997; Fitzgerald, Gelfand, & Drasgow, 1995), appears to supersede the need for additional justification, serving as justification on its own (Rotundo et al., 2001; Studd & Gattiker, 1991).

Answering to evolutionary psychologists who postulate male deficits in the perception of sexual harassment (e.g., Blumenthal, 1998; Rotundo et al., 2001), we stress that in our study both types of harassing material, the sexualized remarks representing unwanted sexual attention as well as the sexist jokes representing gender harassment, had been rated in a pretest as equally insulting by both women and men. We can thus assume that our male participants were able to recognize unwanted sexual attention as harassment even though they were still willing to use such behaviors in interaction with a female target. In our view, it is not so much the recognizability, but rather the greater justifiability of unwanted sexual attention that facilitates its use by men high in STMO. As argued above, gender harassment,

on the other hand, is in further need of justification.

Our data thus support the hypothesis that two distinct motives may underlie sexual harassment: hostility (a generalized hostile sexist attitude toward women) and sexuality (a preference for short-term mating strategies). To measure these motives we assessed men's HS and STMO, two constructs that proved to be independent of each other in the current sample. In a similar vein, Hall and Canterberry (2011, Study 2) found evidence for both STMO and HS as predictors of assertive courtship strategies (such as the use of teasing, competition with other men, and isolation of the female target). These findings, taken together, lend support to both the evolutionary psychological account and the socio-cultural account. We argue that these approaches are both valid, have the potential to complement one another, and need to be taken into account jointly for a complete explanation of sexual harassment.

Further Refinement of the Computer Harassment Paradigm

Corresponding to the two underlying motives, we measured two different forms of sexually harassing behavior simultaneously in one experimental task, by creating a modified and extended version of the computer harassment paradigm that features both sexist jokes and sexually offensive personalized remarks as harassing materials. The present study thus further corroborates the usefulness of the computer harassment paradigm as a reliable, subtle, and ethically acceptable method for measuring sexual harassment in the laboratory (see Dall'Ara & Maass, 1999; Maass et al., 2003; Siebler et al., 2008). Moreover, our extended version of the computer harassment paradigm allows for the simultaneous, reliable assessment of different forms of sexually harassing behavior in one study. It thereby permits conclusions about both potential conceptual overlap and specificity of the behaviors studied.

It is also noteworthy that, by using our extended version of the computer harassment paradigm, we were able to demonstrate, for the first time, the predictive power of SHMA for

actual harrassing behavior. These results both corroborate the validity of the Illinois SHMA

scale and go beyond previous research that has relied on correlational indicators of construct

validity (such as rape myth acceptance, hostility, or traditional attitudes toward women;

Lonsway et al., 2008). The finding that endorsement of sexual harassment myths is linked

with behavioral as well as attitudinal outcomes, and serves as a specific mediator between

hostile sexism and GH underscores the usefulness of research on myths about sexual

aggression (see Bohner et al., 2009; Gerger, Kley, Bohner, & Siebler, 2007; Lonsway et al.,

2008; Süssenbach & Bohner, 2011).

Some Limitations of the Current Research

A limitation of our extended computer harassment paradigm may lie in the restriction

of choices in the chat situation. We cannot rule out the possibility that participants might send

fewer harassing remarks or jokes if they had a larger range of choices, including more

nonharassing options. Two out of three options in each of the critical trials were harassing

options, so one could argue that sexually harassing behavior may have been facilitated by the

paradigm used. Nonetheless, participants always had one nonharassing option that they could

select. More importantly, even if harassing behavior was somewhat facilitated in the current

paradigm, variations in participants' harassing behavior still reliably reflected variations in their

underlying motives. Thus, the computer harassment paradigm's sensitivity and validity does not

appear to be impaired compared to its previous version (Siebler et al., 2008).

Another potential shortcoming of the present study is its correlational design. A more

stringent test of the causal assumptions underlying the suggested model would require

manipulating the two motives independently and testing for differential effects of these

manipulations on the two forms of harassing behavior. Experiments in which sexual and

hostile motives are separately primed are currently conducted in our lab. If it turns out that

activation of a sexual motive in males leads to an increase in unwanted sexual attention behavior, whereas activation of a hostile motive leads to an increase in gender harassment or in both forms of harassment, this would provide important information for possible interventions against sexual harassment. Accordingly, a first step in combating sexual harassment in the workplace could be a ban of cues that might stimulate either a sexual motive (e.g., provocative posters) or a hostile motive (e.g., any cue highlighting competition between the sexes).

Practical Implications

Our results show an asymmetry between the motives for sexual harassment in terms of their breadth. Whereas STMO specifically predicted unwanted sexual attention (i.e., the number of sexually offensive remarks sent to a female target), HS predicted both unwanted sexual attention and gender harassment (i.e., the number of sexually offensive remarks as well as sexist jokes sent). Unwanted sexual attention thus deserves closer attention because, from the perspective of a potential perpetrator, it may have both a sexual and a hostile component. This finding is in line with socio-cultural theory (e.g., Samuels, 2004), which claims that forms of harassment that reduce women to their sexuality or to a sex object can equally serve to enforce male dominance and thereby be conducive to a hostile motive. Thus, whether unwanted sexual attention behaviors are intended to initiate sexual contact, as might be the case for sexually motivated perpetrators, or intended to oppress women, as might be the case for hostility-motivated men, perpetrators always accept negative consequences for the women they target.

In this light, it becomes obvious that interventions to reduce unwanted sexual attention are indispensable, but may gain in effectiveness by targeting the specific motive that underlies a given harassing behavior. Those harassers for whom harassment may be a by-product of

self-centered sexually motivated advances should be receptive to interventions clarifying that

their behavior is not functional for their purposes (see Siebler et al., 2008). Furthermore,

interventions highlighting the negative consequences of sexual harassment for the victims

may be more effective in combating sexually motivated harassment but less effective, or even

counterproductive, in the case of hostility-motivated harassment. Such interventions might

encourage and sustain hostility-motivated sexual harassment by confirming that the harasser's

principal aim can be achieved. It is crucial, therefore, in decoding and tackling sexual

harassment, to understand not only its diverse forms but also its underlying motives.

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Footnotes

[1] Before guiding the participants to their assigned cubicles, in each case the experimenter asked for the participant's consent to take a picture of him for entering it in the allegedly installed computer chat network. This procedure was designed to increase the credibility of the chat situation as well as the plausibility of the (female) chat partner's picture that was presented in the experiment. Nevertheless, to give participants the feeling of sufficient anonymity, when starting the program, each participant received an error message claiming that his picture could not be entered in the computer chat, so that the participant's picture never appeared but the female chat partner's did.

[2] The questionnaire also contained additional items that will not be discussed here.

[3] A full list of triples used in the study may be obtained from the first author on request.

[4] Since there were no validated German versions available, the STMO and SHMA scale were translated into German by a bilingual person and back-translated into English by a second bilingual person. This method allowed us to evaluate the translation quality by comparing the original English version with the back-translated English version (see Sinaiko & Brisilin, 1973). The two versions matched very well, so no further alterations were deemed necessary. German translations of the STMO and SHMA scales may be obtained from the first author on request.

[5] To minimize influences of skewness of the behavioral measures, we also performed all analyses using logarithmically transformed data and bootstrapping procedures. These analyses yielded the same pattern of results. Skewness and kurtosis for all measures are reported in Table 1.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics and Zero-order Correlations of Principal Measures

	M (*SD*)	Skewness[a]	Kurtosis[a]	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
(1) STMO	3.88 (1.51)	.18	-.23				
(2) HS	3.78 (1.10)	-.07	-.49	.15			
(3) SHMA	3.17 (0.79)	.65	.05	.06	.68**		
(4) Gender harassment Score (Jokes)	2.72 (2.11)	1.04	1.45	-.05	.18 [†]	.40**	
(5) Unwanted sexual attention Score (Remarks)	1.79 (2.02)	1.34	1.31	.32**	.23*	.13	.07

Note. STMO = short-term mating orientation; HS = hostile sexism; SHMA = sexual

harassment myth acceptance.

The theoretical range of STMO, HS and SHMA was 1 to 7; the theoretical range of gender

harassment and unwanted sexual attention was 0 to 16 (with the constraint that the sum of

gender harassment and unwanted sexual attention could not exceed 16).

[a]The standard errors for skewness and kurtosis were .24 and .48, respectively.

**$p < .01$; *$p < .05$; [†]$p = .07$

Figure Caption

Figure 1. Double dissociation of two motives predicting two forms of sexually harassing

behaviors, and mediation through sexual harassment myth acceptance. Un-mediated effect in

parentheses. Dotted paths and correlations are nonsignificant in the full (mediated) model.

STMO = Short-term mating orientation; HS = hostile sexism; SHMA = sexual harassment

myth acceptance.

The variables e1, e2, and e3 represent error terms.

** $p < .01$ * $p < .05$

Figure 1
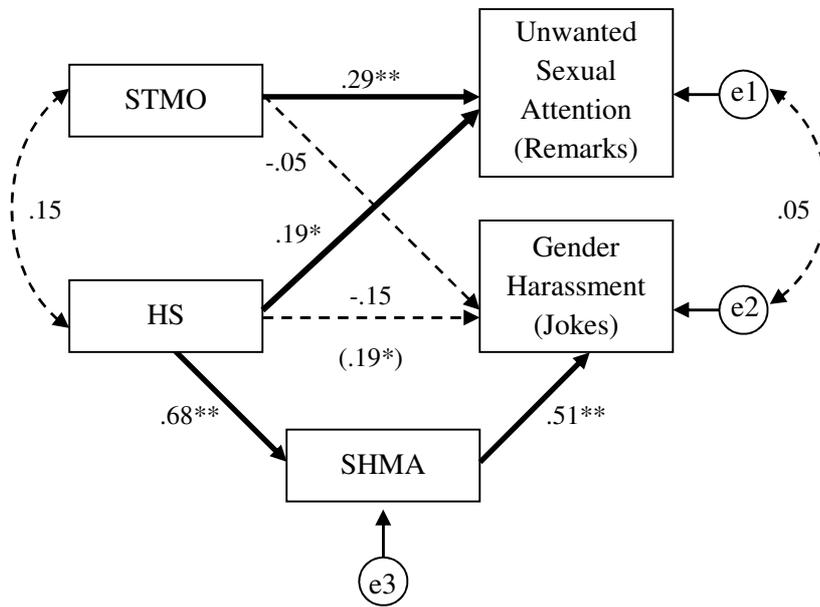
5 MANUSCRIPT #2: Predicting sexual harassment from hostile sexism and short-term mating orientation: Relative strength of predictors depends on situational priming of power versus sex

Author Contribution Statement

Charlotte Diehl designed the study presented in "Predicting sexual harassment from hostile sexism and short-term mating orientation: Relative strength of predictors depends on situational priming of power versus sex" advised by Gerd Bohner. She conducted the statistical analysis assisted by Jonas Rees. Charlotte Diehl conducted literature searches and provided summaries of previous research studies; she wrote the first draft of the manuscript, and all authors critically revised and approved the final manuscript.

Jonas Rees and Gerd Bohner agree to the submission of the manuscript as part of this cumulative dissertation "Ways of explaining sexual harassment: Motivating, enabling, and legitimizing processes".

Running Head: PRIMING SEXUAL HARASSMENT

MANUSCRIPT #2

Predicting sexual harassment from hostile sexism and short-term mating orientation:

Relative strength of predictors depends on situational priming of power versus sex

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Abstract

Integrating socio-cultural and evolutionary approaches, previous research (Diehl, Rees, & Bohner, 2012, *Aggressive Behavior*) has shown that short-term mating orientation (STMO) and hostile sexism (HS), representing sexuality- and power-related motives, respectively, selectively predict different types of sexual harassment. We studied the situational malleability of those motive-behavior links in a priming experiment. Male participants could repeatedly send sexist jokes (representing gender harassment) or harassing personal remarks (representing unwanted sexual attention harassment) or non-harassing messages to a (computer-simulated) female target. Before entering the laboratory, participants were briefly exposed to a wall poster designed to activate the concepts of either power or sexuality. Partly replicating and extending previous research, we found that STMO specifically predicted unwanted sexual attention harassment, whereas HS specifically predicted gender harassment. Importantly, unobtrusive priming of sexuality (power) selectively strengthened the link between STMO and unwanted sexual attention harassment (between HS and gender harassment). Implications for anti-harassment interventions are discussed.

[150 words]

Keywords: sexual harassment, priming, motivation, computer harassment paradigm

Predicting sexual harassment from hostile sexism and short-term mating orientation: Relative

strength of predictors depends on situational priming of power versus sex

Certain visual cues are associated with particular modes of behavior: A business

computer, piles of documents, and a person wearing a grey suit would possibly be associated

with working at the office; a hydraulic ramp, piles of tires, and a person wearing a blue

overall would possibly be associated with physical labor at a garage. But how would a woman

wearing lingerie fit within these contexts? In this article we present experimental evidence

consistent with the idea that visual cues, such as a wall calendar depicting scarcely clad

women, may increase observers' psychological accessibility of sexual motives, which might

lead men to commit a certain type of sexual harassment. On the other hand, we will show that

a visual demonstration of male dominance, for instance via an ancestors' gallery depicting

former male proprietors, directors, and managers, which is not uncommon to adorn company

halls and board rooms, might be just as harmful as it may increase the accessibility of power

motives, which might lead men to commit sexual harassment of a different form.

In recent years, sexual harassment has received increasing attention in both North

America and Europe. National and international surveys show that sexual harassment is still a

prevalent problem affecting particularly, but not exclusively, employed women (European

Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2014; Ilies, Hauserman, Schwochau, & Stibal, 2003).

As research has shown that male sexual harassment of women is the most commonly

observed gender constellation (Berdahl & Moore, 2006; Koss et al., 1994), we focus on male

perpetrators and female targets in our research.[1] Surveys also revealed that women are

frequently targeted by sexual harassment in settings other than the work place as well, such as

in public spaces and in virtual environments (e.g., Barak, 2005; Chawki & el Shazly, 2013).

Definitions of sexual harassment usually cover unwanted, sexually connoted behavior that

aim at or lead to reducing a target person to his or her gender, as well as behavior involving gender-based devaluation and violation of a target person's dignity (see, e.g., Fitzgerald, Swan, & Magley, 1997). Extensive research about the outcomes of sexual harassment has documented various negative consequences on targets' mental and physical health (Nielsen & Einarsen, 2012; Rospenda, Richman, & Shannon, 2009) as well as on their job performance, job satisfaction, and career opportunities (Chan, Chun, Chow, & Cheung, 2008).

It is thus important to examine the personal factors underlying men's motivation to sexually harass women, as well as the context factors that facilitate such motivations to be translated into action. The latter is the particular objective of this article. We build upon previous research (Diehl et al., 2012) that identified two distinct motives for sexual harassment: generalized hostility toward women, as reflected in hostile sexist attitudes, and sexuality, as reflected in short-term mating orientation (STMO). In the current study, we experimentally tested the influence that certain contextual cues may have on the likelihood that each of these two motives guide men's behavior.

Two motives underlying two different forms of sexual harassment

Two broad fields of research address the instrumental function of sexual harassment: According to the socio-cultural approach, sexual harassment serves to maintain political and economical male dominance by suppressing women on an interpersonal and on a societal level (see, e.g., Samuels, 2004), whereas the evolutionary approach conceives of sexual harassment as a kind of misunderstanding between women and men that arises from gender-differences in specific forms of socio-sexual behavior (see, e.g., Studd, 1996). Thus, in terms of underlying motivations on the perpetrator-side, socio-cultural theory suggests a power motivation, based on misogynist ideology such as hostile sexism (HS). Evolutionary theory,

on the other hand, suggests an allegedly "natural" sexual motivation, which derives from a strong STMO, to underlie sexually harassing behavior.

In their study, Diehl et al. (2012) found support for both the socio-cultural and the evolutionary account. They demonstrated that the two proposed motives were independent of each other, thus differentiable in the prediction of sexual harassment, and that each motive showed a specific pattern in predicting different forms of sexual harassment. Diehl et al. used a refined version of the computer harassment paradigm originally developed by Dall'Ara and Maas (1999; see also Maas, Cadinu, Guarnieri, & Grasselli, 2003; Siebler, Sabelus, & Bohner, 2008, for previous applications), and introduced two different types of harassing material, to operationalize unwanted sexual attention and gender harassment, respectively. In the course of the study, male participants interacted with a computer-simulated (but allegedly real) female chat partner and could repeatedly choose to send sexist jokes (representing gender harassment), harassing personal remarks (representing unwanted sexual attention) or non-harassing messages to the target. To operationalize the two motives, men's STMO and HS were assessed using a questionnaire. Participants' STMO predicted only unwanted sexual attention in the form of sending personal remarks and sexually explicit compliments to the female chat partner, which falls into the category of offensive and unrequited behavior potentially aiming at the initiation of sexual contact (Gelfand, Fitzgerald, & Drasgow, 1995). This sexual motive, however, did not predict gender harassment in the form of sending sexist jokes, which falls into the category of insulting, hostile, and degrading gender-related behavior targeting women as a group (Gelfand, et al., 1995), as this behavior would not be effective in establishing intimate contact with a particular woman. Participants' HS, on the other hand, predicted both gender harassment and unwanted sexual attention, suggesting that a hostile motivation might not only lead to discriminatory behavior to intimidate women, but

also to individualized sexually offensive remarks. The pattern of results suggested that both

motivational structures are valid predictors of sexual harassment, and that socio-cultural and

evolutionary accounts may complement each other rather than forming competing

explanations.

Implicit contextual activation of power and sexual motives

The main aim of the present study was to further investigate situational cues that might

increase the relative impact of power- and sexual motives on sexually harassing behavior. We

chose an experimental approach, which is an important next step for several reasons: First, an

experimental study may provide further evidence for the differentiability of the two suggested

motives underlying sexual harassment. Second, it allows for stronger inferences about the

causal role of the two motives. Third, it may shed light on contextual features that render

these motives accessible so they become the major factors guiding behavior. An experimental

approach may thus also offer important insights for practical interventions.

Potential causal variables at the level of mental representations, such as the two

motives under investigation, can exert an effect on behavior only to the extent that they are

cognitively accessible. We therefore predicted that the influence of sexual versus power

motivation on unwanted sexual attention and gender harassment, respectively, should be more

pronounced if the causal motives are made salient before assessing participants' sexually

harassing behavior (see Bohner, Jarvis, Eyssel, & Siebler, 2005, Study 1; Bohner et al.,

1998a; Schwarz & Strack, 1981). As the temporarily salient motives are considered to be the

prevailing determinants of individuals' actions, such differential strength of motivation-

behavior links as a function of motivation salience would be strong evidence for a causal

effect of each of the two motives under investigation on different forms of sexual harassment

(see Schwarz & Strack, 1981). This approach to substantiate causality has been successfully

applied before, e.g. to test the impact of ideologies on majority- and minority-group members'

behavior during an intergroup interaction (Vorauer, Gagnon, & Sasaki, 2009), or, closer to the

current work, to assess the causal influence of rape myth acceptance on men's rape proclivity

(Bohner et al., 1998a, 2005). In their studies, Bohner and colleagues manipulated the relative

cognitive accessibility of participants' rape myth acceptance by merely varying the order in

which they assessed rape myth acceptance and rape proclivity. When reporting on rape

proclivity, their own rape-related attitudes were temporarily more accessible for those

participants who had completed the rape myth acceptance scale before, compared to those

who completed this scale afterwards. As a result, the correlation between rape myth

acceptance and rape proclivity was significantly higher when the former had been assessed

before, demonstrating a causal effect of rape myth acceptance on rape proclivity, rather than

vice versa (Bohner et al., 1998a, 2005, Study 1).

Social cognition research conclusively shows that priming with subtle, even

subliminal, environmental stimuli can activate and increase the cognitive accessibility of

certain concepts (for a review see Higgins, 1996), and thereby influence social perceptions

and behavior (Bargh, Chen, & Burrows, 1996; Higgins, Rholes, & Jones, 1977). In particular,

semantic primes and images have been shown to affect perceptions of others (e.g., Higgins,

1996), construals of normative demands of social situations (e.g., Kay & Ross, 2003),

interpersonal processes (Fitzsimmons & Bargh, 2003), and also motivated behavior (Bargh,

Gollwitzer, Lee-Chai, Barndollar, & Trötschel, 2001). Priming research in the field of gender

inequality or gender violence has mostly focused on the identification of environmental cues

that activate gender stereotypes in social perception and behavior (Banaji & Hardin, 1996;

Deaux, 1995), e.g. gender-stereotypical ideas and images in television (Lazier-Smith, 1989),

music clips (Johnson, Jackson, & Gatto, 1995; Sprankle, End, & Bretz, 2012), or video games

(Yao, Mahood, & Linz, 2010). Rudman and Borgida (1995), for example, found that males primed with television commercials portraying women as sex objects displayed stereotyped information acquisition and engaged in sexualized behavior during a staged interview of a female confederate; they paid more attention to the confederate's appearance, asked more sexist questions, and gazed more at her body (see also McKenzie-Mohr & Zanna, 1990). Yet, nothing is known to date about priming effects on existing motivational structures underlying sexual harassment and their impact on corresponding behavior. Research on the social effects of power has shown that persons who have power pay little attention to the actions of their subordinates and are more likely to stereotype (e.g., Fiske, 1993) and to sexually harass (Chamberlain, Crowley, Tope, & Hodson, 2008).

On this theoretical and empirical basis, and as a further step toward disentangling the potential of power and sex in explaining sexual harassment, we now examine the consequences of a specific activation of both motives with regard to sexually harassing behavior. As motive activation arouses and directs behavior to achieve certain motivational goals, we argue that the activation of a power motive versus a sexual motive plays a crucial role in explaining why certain motivational dispositions are ultimately translated into actual sexually harassing behavior. In order to examine the causal pathways between sexual motivation and unwanted sexual attention as well as power motivation and both types of harassment, we use an approach similar to those by Schwarz and Strack (1981) and Bohner and colleagues (1998a, 2005). Applying their reasoning, we aim to establish causality by testing if making one of the two motives temporarily salient differentially strengthens the respective motivation-behavior link. Although there is some evidence that the presence of sexually explicit and also power-related cues can lead to sexual harassment, neither the interplay of those situational cues with related personal dispositions, nor the causal role of the

latter has been examined to date.

To address these open issues in the present study, we manipulated the relative accessibility of the two motives by priming male participants, in two different experimental conditions, with either a poster depicting "sexy women", in order to activate participants' sexual motivation, or a poster depicting "powerful men", in order to activate participants' power motivation (for a similar method, see Bohner & Wänke, 2004). To study different forms of harassing behavior as dependent variables, we used the established computer chat paradigm (Diehl et al., 2012), and to operationalize the two motives, we assessed men's STMO and HS, as did Diehl and colleagues (2012). By subtly varying situational cues as key variables, we aimed to influence the extent to which pre-existing, motivational dispositions predict different forms of sexually harassing behavior. As priming with certain situational cues may additionally lead to an increase of the critical attitude or the critical behavior, we also tested for such main effects of the priming, although they were not part of our hypotheses (cf. Bohner et al., 1998a, 2005).

Moreover, we note that motives are usually defined as individual dispositions, which are stable over time and relatively independent of situational influences (Atkinson, 1964; Heckhausen, 1989). This can be confirmed at least for STMO, which was demonstrated to be relatively stable for periods of up to one year (Penke & Asendorpf, 2008; Simpson & Gangestad, 1991). There are also fairly stable gender effects in sociosexuality across nations and cultures (Schmitt, 2003, 2005) and even evidence that sociosexuality is substantially heritable (Bailey, Kirk, Zhun, Dunne, & Martin, 2000), which might also serve as indication for its stability. Accordingly, we expected the priming in our study to lead to higher correlations between each motive and its corresponding behavior, rather than to mean differences by priming condition.

Hypotheses

We expected to replicate the double dissociation of two motives, power and sex, in the prediction of two different forms of sexual harassment, gender harassment and unwanted sexual attention, found by Diehl and colleagues (2012):

H1: STMO predicts the number of offensive personal remarks (unwanted sexual attention), but not the number of sexist jokes (gender harassment) sent to the female target.

H2: HS predicts both the number of sexist jokes (gender harassment) and the number of offensive personal remarks (unwanted sexual attention) sent to the female target.

More importantly, we further hypothesized that different situational cues would selectively strengthen the paths between the underyling motives and the respective form of sexual harassment:

H3: A context that subtly primes a sexual motive leads to an even stronger effect of STMO on the number of offensive personal remarks, but not on the number of sexist jokes sent to the female target .

H4: A context that subtly primes a power motive leads to an even stronger effect of HS on both the number of sexist jokes and the number of offensive personal remarks sent to the female target.

METHOD

Participants

Eighty-five heterosexual male students (18-46 years of age; $M = 24.66$, $SD = 4.66$) from different subject areas were recruited in the main university hall and volunteered to participate in a computer chat study that allegedly tested "memory processes in interactions at the workplace". Data from seven additional participants were excluded because they either indicated a homosexual orientation ($n = 4$) or expressed suspicion concerning the cover story

used in the experiment ($n = 3$).

Design and Procedure

Before participants were seated in separate laboratory cubicles, they followed the experimenter along a hallway where, depending on experimental condition, one of two posters was displayed on the wall. One poster was entitled "Powerful Men" and showed pictures such as high-rank politicians, the other was entitled "Sexy Women" and showed pictures of women wearing lingerie. The two posters were swapped in random intervals so that participants were randomly assigned to the power priming condition ($n = 41$) or the sex priming condition ($n = 44$).

Still in the hallway and with the participant's permission, the experimenter took his photograph to be uploaded into the computer network, in order to increase the credibility of the following chat procedure. When taking the photo, all participants were positioned in such a way that they had to look in the direction of the poster to ensure that they would notice it. Later, participants were informed that due to a hardware error their picture could not be uploaded, so that the participant's picture never appeared in the chat; this was done in order to give participants the feeling of sufficient anonymity.

The study consisted of two separate parts. The first part comprised the computer chat paradigm. To increase the credibility of the chat situation, participants were led to believe that multiple participants were taking part in the experiment simultaneously, and from multiple simulated chat partners the computer ostensibly chose "Julia" (a name that is rated as very attractive; Rudolph, Böhm, & Lummer, 2007) to connect with. Participants saw a picture of her, an attractive, White German in her mid-twenties, on the screen. They were then informed about their task to select and send, in each of several trials, one out of three short messages to their chat-partner. Each participant was informed that both he and his chat partner would later

be asked to recognize the materials in a memory test, and that previous studies had found gender differences in memory performance. This information was provided in order to increase the credibility of the cover story (memory processes) and to set the stage for both a sexual motive (by presenting an attractive female chat partner) and a hostile motive (by creating a competitive intergroup situation between men and women; see Dall'Ara & Maas, 1999; Maas et al., 2003; Siebler et al. , 2008). In 20 trials, participants were then asked to select material from 20 matched triples of jokes and remarks. There were 16 critical triples consisting of one critical (sexist) joke and one critical (sexually harassing) personalized remark as well as one neutral joke or remark, and four completely neutral filler trials. The participants could select one of the stimuli by clicking on the corresponding "Send this one" button. After a variable delay, the next triple was shown. After the last trial, the computer ostensibly disconnected from the chat network, and in the second part of the study, participants completed a questionnaire measuring their HS and STMO.[2] After completing both parts of the study, participants replied to a manipulation check, were thanked, fully debriefed, and received EUR 4 for their participation. Procedures were approved by the Ethics Committee of the German Association of Psychology (DGPs).

Materials and Measures

Priming by wall posters. To ensure that the priming would be subtle and unobtrusive, we designed two posters in the style of scientific conference posters to be displayed in the hallway of the laboratory, as is customary to do with former conference posters displayed in many corridors all over the university. The posters were printed in portrait A0 format and in color. All text was written in German, and complemented by figures displaying the ostensible results of scientific studies.

In order to activate a power motive, one of the posters was entitled "Powerful Men"

and reported a fabricated study about the representation of men in the media and in movie films. Approximately one third of the poster was covered by several pictures depicting Daniel Craig in the role of James Bond, and national as well as international politicians (e.g., German federal minister Thomas de Maizière, and U.S. president Barack Obama), portrayed torso or whole-body, and alone, by two, or in a group. All of them wore suits, and no other power- or aggression-related items were shown.

In order to activate a sexual motive, the other poster was entitled "Sexy Women" and reported a fabricated study about the influence of female models on consumer behavior. Again, approximately one third of the poster was covered by several pictures depicting female models in advertisements for lingerie, as well as for alcoholic beverages (e.g., by lingerie labels such as Calvin Klein and Triumph, and by the German brewery Bitburger). All women wore lingerie or bikinis and were portrayed whole-body with focus on their body; one of the pictures even showed neither head nor legs.

In an awareness check immediately after the experiment, participants were asked if they remembered the topic of the poster at the wall. Using a funnel sequence of questions, we started by asking if anything had attracted participants' attention before starting the experiment, then if there was anything on the walls that they may have noticed, and finally if they could remember what was displayed on the poster and the title of the poster.

Selection and scoring of harassing materials. We used the same material as in Diehl et al. (2012), which had been pilot-tested with $N = 40$ (20 male, 20 female) participants. They matched 16 triples containing one critical joke, one critical remark, and one neutral item such that in each triple (a) a sexist joke was always matched with an equally harassing and unpleasant personalized remark and (b) the neutral item was either a non-harassing joke matched in funniness with the harassing joke, or a non-harassing remark. For example, one

critical triple read: "Women are like ties: You choose them under insufficient lighting and then you have them around your neck." (sexist joke), "I read in the newspaper that kissing makes happy. May I make you happy?" (harassing personal remark), "Two tomatoes are crossing the road. A car runs over one of them. The other turns around and shouts: 'Come on, Ketchup!'" (non-sexist joke).

From the 16 critical trials, we derived two separate harassment measures. The total number of sexist jokes sent was used as a behavioral measure of gender harassment (Cronbach's α = .77), and the total number of offensive remarks sent was used as a behavioral measure of unwanted sexual attention (α = .73).

Individual-difference variables. *STMO* was measured using a German translation of the 15-item STMO subscale of the Sociosexual Orientation Inventory (Jackson and Kirkpatrick, 2007), which measures attitudes in favor of casual sex and the desire for short-term sexual relationships (item example: "I can imagine myself enjoying a brief sexual encounter with someone I find very attractive"; response scale from 1, *do not agree at all*, to 7, *agree completely*). Item scores were averaged for each participant to form an index of STMO. In the present study, the STMO scale was highly reliable (α = .86).

Hostile sexism was measured using 5 items from the HS subscale of the German version (Eckes & Six-Materna, 1999) of the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (Glick & Fiske, 1996). The underlying construct reflects overtly negative evaluations and stereotypes about women (Glick & Fiske, 1996), dominative paternalism, competitive gender differentiation, and heterosexual hostility (Glick & Fiske, 1997). An item example is "Women seek to gain power by getting control over men." (response scale from 1, *do not agree at all*, to 7, *agree completely*). Item scores were averaged for each participant to form an index of HS. In the present study, the HS scale was satisfactorily reliable (α = .69).

RESULTS

Behavioral measures

Eighty percent of the participants sent at least one sexist joke to their female chat partner (potential range from 0 to 16, observed range from 0 to 12), and 71% of the participants sent at least one sexually offensive personalized remark (potential range from 0 to 16, observed range from 0 to 12). Overall, participants sent more sexist jokes ($M = 2.85$, $SD = 2.78$) than sexually offensive remarks ($M = 1.99$, $SD = 2.21$), $t(84) = 2.29$, $p = .03$, thus showing a higher level of gender harassment than unwanted sexual attention.

Correlation analyses showed that, in line with our first hypothesis, STMO and HS were differentially correlated with the two behavioral measures of gender harassment and unwanted sexual attention, respectively. STMO was significantly positively correlated with unwanted sexual attention scores, $r(84) = .35$, $p = .001$, but less with gender harassment scores, $r(84) = .21$, $p = .05$. And inversely to STMO, HS was positively correlated with gender harassment scores, $r(84) = .27$, $p = .01$, but not with unwanted sexual attention scores, $r(84) = .18$, $p = .11$. Finally, the two predictors STMO and HS were independent of each other, $r(84) = .16$, $p = .14$, and the same was true for the two behavioral measures of gender harassment and unwanted sexual attention, $r(84) = .05$, $p = .65$. Descriptive statistics and zero-order correlations of all principal measures are displayed in Table 1.

Double dissociation of two motives predicting two forms of sexual harassment

To simultaneously test the differential links between the two predictors STMO and HS on the one hand, and the two dependent variables number of offensive personal remarks sent and number of sexist jokes sent on the other hand, path analyses were conducted using AMOS 19.0 for Windows. In the model, displayed in Figure 1, the only two paths reaching significance were those between STMO and number of offensive personal remarks sent and

between HS and number of sexist jokes sent, respectively. All other paths, including the

correlations amongst both predictors and both dependent measures, were far from significant

(ps $\geq$ .15). These analyses are thus fully in line with H1, showing a specific effect of STMO

on unwanted sexual attention, and partly in line with H2, showing a specific effect of HS on

gender harassment but not on unwanted sexual attention. The two predictors STMO and HS

were independent of each other, and the same was true for the two behavioral measures of

unwanted sexual attention and gender harassment, thus reflecting the theorized double

dissociation.

Priming effects on the relative strength of motive-behavior links

The awareness check revealed that 34 participants correctly remembered the title of

the poster they had seen, 17 participants remembered having seen a poster, but were not able

to recall the topic or title, and 18 participants did not remember having seen a poster at all.

Sixteen participants did not answer the awareness check. Awareness (coded 0 = remembered

nothing, 1 = remembered poster, but no detail, and 2 = remembered poster and title; treating

data of participants who did not answer as missing values) was independent of the Priming

condition, $t(67) = 1.25$, $p = .21$, $M_{power} = 1.40$, $SD_{power} = 0.87$; $M_{sex} = 1.14$, $SD_{sex} = 0.82$.

Because remembering versus not remembering the posters did not have any further influence

on either motivation or behavior, *both* ps $\geq$ .21, we report all following analyses on the basis

of the whole sample.

First we analyzed potential mean differences between the two priming conditions. At

the motivational level, there were no mean differences between participants having seen the

poster depicting "sexy women" and participants having seen the poster depicting "powerful

men", either in STMO, $t(83) = 1.00$, $p = .32$, or in HS, $t(83) = 1.74$, $p = .09$.[3] At the

behavioral level also, there were no mean differences between conditions, either for the

number of sexist jokes sent, $t(83) = .92$, $p = .36$, or for the number of offensive remarks sent, $t(83) = .44$, $p = .66$.

Second, we tested for homogeneity of variances in the two Priming conditions using Levene's test (Levene, 1960). Both for the predictors, STMO and HS, and for the dependent variables, number of sexist jokes sent and number of offensive remarks sent, variances were equal in the two priming conditions, Fs$(1,83) \leq 1.73$, ps $\geq .19$.

We then tested the theorized role of the priming by conducting two more path analyses, for the sex priming condition and the power condition separately (see Figures 2 and 3). In the model testing the sex condition, displayed in Figure 2, the only path reaching significance was the one between STMO and number of offensive personal remarks sent. All other paths, including the correlations amongst both predictors and both dependent variables, were not significant (ps $\geq .18$). This is in line with our H3, in which we predicted priming of sex to specifically strengthen the link between STMO and unwanted sexual attention harassment. In the same condition, the link between HS and gender harassment was substantially weaker and nonsignificant. In the model testing the power condition, displayed in Figure 3, conversely, the only path reaching significance was the one between HS and number of sexist jokes sent. All other paths were not significant, ps $\geq .18$. This generally supports our H4, in which we predicted priming of power to strengthen the effect of HS on both forms of sexually harassing behavior, although only the specific link between HS and gender harassment reached significance. The expected link between HS and unwanted sexual attention was descriptively stronger than in the sex condition, but still not significant. In the same condition, the link between STMO and unwanted sexual attention was substantially weaker and nonsignificant. These analyses therefore show, in line with H3 and H4, a specific effect of activating a sexual motivation on the relationship of STMO and unwanted sexual

attention and a specific effect of activating a power motivation on the relationship of HS and

gender harassment.

DISCUSSION

The current study shows that a subtle contextual variation may influence the

implications of pre-existing motives for actual sexually harassing behaviors. We replicated

the double dissociation of two different motives, power (generalized hostility towards

women) and sex (a preference for short-term mating strategies), as predictors of two different

forms of sexual harassment, gender harassment and unwanted sexual attention (Diehl et al.,

2012). Crucially, however, our study provides first evidence for a causal relationship between

these two motives and different forms of sexually harassing behavior.

As reported by Diehl and colleagues (2012), STMO specifically predicted the number

of sexually offensive remarks sent to a female target in a computer chat paradigm, and HS

predicted the number of sexist jokes sent. However, somewhat diverging from previous

results, we found no significant link between HS and unwanted sexual attention. The current

data instead show an even clearer pattern of the predicted double dissociation, with two

distinct motives being linked with only one type of sexual harassment, respectively. This may

be due to the fact that the overall model in the present study was based on a sample composed

of two conditions in which we subtly activated either one of the individual motivations.

According to this logic, the specific activation of one of the motives at a time might lead to a

stronger differentiation in the overall model. Importantly, the current study provides further

support for our hypothesis that two distinct motives underlie sexual harassment and that these

motives are indeed differentially linked to two forms of sexually harassing behavior: As

socio-cultural theory suggests (e.g. Samuels, 2004), a power motive predominantly leads to

gender harassment, whereas a sexual motive predominantly leads to unwanted sexual

attention, lending support to an evolutionary account (e.g. Studd, 1996).

Sexual harassment in context

The current study shows that, apart from individual motivations, context features matter in predicting sexual harassment. Differentially activating the two motives for sexually harassing behavior did not lead to higher motivation to sexually harass *per se*, but to a more specific pattern of how motivations and harassing behaviors were linked: After activating a sexual motive, only STMO significantly predicted unwanted sexual attention, while the role of HS became negligible. On the contrary, after activating a power motive, HS significantly predicted gender harassment, while STMO was no longer a relevant predictor in the model. Thus, each of the two main paths (from STMO to unwanted sexual attention and from HS to gender harassment) was stronger after the activation of the respective motive. With these data, the current study provides first evidence that both motives can be triggered by situational cues and thereby strengthened in their impact on sexually harassing behavior. These findings might not only confirm the predicted causal relationship between the two motives and sexual harassment (see Schwarz & Strack, 1981), but also offer important implications for work policies. In fact, Fitzgerald and colleagues' influential model of sexual harassment in organizations acknowledges the prominent role of context as a facilitating factor for sexually harassing behaviors (Fitzgerald, Drasgow, Hulin, Gelfand, & Magley, 1997). The importance of organizational climate is emphasized by many researches in the field (for an overview see Pina & Gannon, 2012; McDonald, 2012) and was also supported by a more recent meta-analysis in which it emerged as the strongest predictor of sexual harassment (Willness, Steel, & Lee, 2007). However, it was also noted that all of the 41 studies included in the meta-analysis had operationalized organizational climate "as an individual perception rather than objective characteristics of organizations or work groups" (Willness et al., 2007, p. 144). The

current study is thus an important step forward in investigating the *objective* context's

influence on actual sexual harassment.

Interestingly, we found no differences between participants who were aware of the

priming and those who were not. Independently of awareness of the posters, priming affected

the interplay of motives and behavior for all of our participants. Although some research on

person perception suggests that the strength of priming effects may depend on whether

primed individuals are consciously aware of the priming episode (Higgins et al., 1977; Strack,

Schwarz, Bless, Kübler, & Wänke, 1993), there is also research on motivational constructs

showing that, for instance after priming goals, conciously and nonconciously activated goals

produced comparable effects on participants' responses (Chartrand & Bargh, 2002). With

regard to possible areas of application for the current research, it might be instructive to know

that situational cues affect behavior independent of persons' awareness of those situational

features. This means that even subtle contextual features may impact on behavior and

therefore must be considered, for instance in order to arrange workplaces and work

equipments free of sexism and sexual harassment.

Methodological improvements on previous work

From a methodological point of view, the current study further substantiates the

computer chat paradigm as a reliable, subtle, and ethically viable way of measuring sexual

harassment in the laboratory (see also Dall'Ara & Maas, 1999; Diehl et al., 2012; Maas et al.,

2003, Siebler et al., 2008). The extended version of the paradigm, proposed and tested by

Diehl and colleagues (2012), offers a useful approach to measure different forms of critical

behavior simultaneously, and thereby permits conclusions about connections or differences

between these forms of behavior. Unfortunately, however, the study by Diehl et al. (2012)

was limited by its correlational nature, allowing only for very tentative causal conclusions.

The current study is a significant improvement on this previous work in testing the causal

assumptions underlying the suggested double dissociation of two motives (sex and power) as

predictors of two forms of sexual harassment (unwanted sexual attention and gender

harassment) in a more stringent way. Experimentally manipulating the two motives led to

differential effects on the two types of harassing behavior after activation of either sex- or

power-motives in two different conditions. By combining the extended version of the

computer chat paradigm with an experimental manipulation, we hope to encourage

investigation of a variety of other research questions that can be flexibly tested in the field of

sexual harassment. The current methodology also offers an approximation to experimentally

capture a form of online harassment, which becomes more and more prevalent and

problematic in modern societies (Barak, 2005; Chawki, & el Shazly, 2013).

A further refinement of the computer chat paradigm that would be interesting for

future studies could be the implementation of a reaction time measure as an additional

dependent variable. If men who are high in STMO would also be <u>faster</u> in sending sexually

offensive remarks, and men who are high in HS would also be faster in sending sexist jokes,

this would provide further support for the specificity of the two links between motives and

forms of behavior (for a study combining type of response and response time, see Bohner et

al., 1998b).

Limitations of the current study

One important limitation of the computer harassment paradigm used in this study is

the restriction of choices in the chat situation (see also Diehl et al., 2012). We cannot rule out

with absolute certainty that participants send less harassing remarks or jokes if they have a

larger range of choices also including more non-harassing options. Statistically, two out of

three options in each of the critical trials were harassing options, so one could argue that

sexually harassing behavior is facilitated. It is important to stress, however, that participants always had one non-harassing option to pick.

Practical implications

The results of the current study might offer some promising avenues for intervention programs against sexual harassment, and for work policies aimed at preventing sexual harassment (for one of few programs designed to prevent sexual harassment at the workplace see e.g., Bell, Quick, & Cycyota, 2002). Our results show that the activation of a sex-motive increases the likelihood of sexually motivated men to actually sexually harass women through unwanted sexual attention, whereas the activation of a power-motive can lead to an increased likelihood of hostile motivated men to engage in gender harassment. Converging with previous research and theorizing (Diehl et al., 2012; Samuels, 2004; Studd, 1996), this implies that sexual harassment, including harassment at the workplace, could be tackled from at least two angles: (a) by addressing the root, i.e. personality variables motivating sexual harassment on the perpetrator side (e.g., by inducing empathy, Diehl, Glaser, & Bohner, 2014), or (b) by addressing the facilitating factors, i.e. the context in which sexual harassment occurs. Obviously, while a combination of both approaches would probably be most effective, there might be situations in which one of the two would be more feasible. Whereas the idea of interventions aimed at individual difference variables (e.g., rape myth acceptance, Flores & Hartlaub, 1998) is not new, a rather straightforward intervention of the latter type would be a ban of provocative posters (stimulating a sex-motive) or a less power-focused work environment for the whole company. While the effects of presenting women in sexualized or objectified ways (such as in wall calendars depicting scarcely clad women) on the activation of gender stereotypic perceptions and also on sexually aggressive behavior have frequently been shown by previous research (e.g., McKenzie-Mohr & Zanna, 1990; Rudman & Borgida,

1995), the impact of power-related cues on male sexually harassing behaviors has not been in the focus of attention until now. Such developments, while certainly a step in the right direction, may obscure our view on lingering issues surrounding sexual harassment and sexism in our societies more generally. In the context of television commercials, for example, some studies have found a significant change in the depiction of women but not men (Allan & Coltrane, 1996). According to the current work, however, displaying men as particularly powerful may be equally detrimental as displaying women as sex objects.

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Footnotes

[1] Of course we do not rule out that women can also engage in or that men can also be targets of sexual harassment (see Berdahl, Magley, & Waldo, 1996).

[2] The questionnaire also contained additional items that will not be discussed here.

[3] If anything the trend for HS was in an unexpected direction, with participants showing higher HS after sex priming ($M = 3.83$, $SD = 1.14$) than after power priming ($M = 3.36$, $SD = 1.35$).

Table 1. *Descriptive Statistics and Zero-order Correlations of Principal Measures over all*

Conditions and separated by Condition (Priming of Sex vs. Power)

Over all Conditions	*M* (*SD*)	(1)	(2)	(3)
(1) STMO	3.71 (1.38)			
(2) HS	3.60 (1.26)	.16		
(3) Unwanted sexual attention Score (Remarks)	1.99 (2.21)	.35**	.18	
(4) Gender harassment Score (Jokes)	2.85 (2.78)	.21[†]	.27*	.05
Priming of Sex	*M* (*SD*)	(1)	(2)	(3)
(1) STMO	3.86 (1.53)			
(2) HS	3.83 (1.14)	.10		
(3) Unwanted sexual attention Score (Remarks)	2.09 (1.97)	.48**	.07	
(4) Gender harassment Score (Jokes)	3.11 (3.11)	.21	.17	.04
Priming of Power	*M* (*SD*)	(1)	(2)	(3)
(1) STMO	3.56 (1.20)			
(2) HS	3.36 (1.35)	.20		
(3) Unwanted sexual attention Score (Remarks)	1.88 (2.45)	.23	.24	
(4) Gender harassment Score (Jokes)	2.56 (2.38)	.18	.36*	.06

Note. STMO = short-term mating orientation; HS = hostile sexism.

The theoretical range of STMO and HS was 1 to 7; the theoretical range of gender harassment

and unwanted sexual attention was 0 to 16 (with the constraint that the sum of gender

harassment and unwanted sexual attention could not exceed 16).
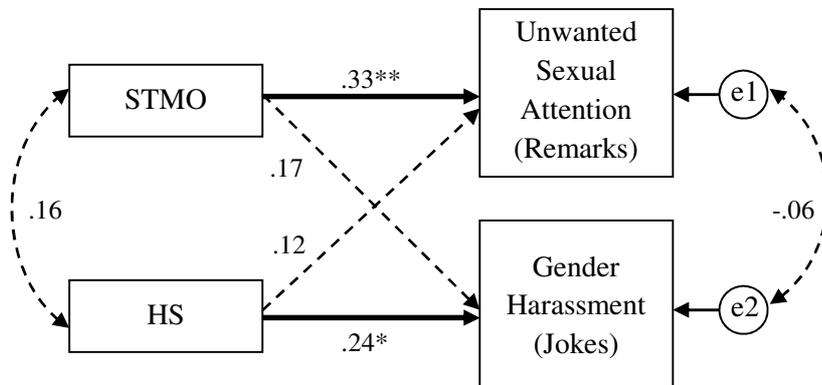
**p < .01; *p < .05; [†]p = .07

Figure 1. *Double dissociation of two motives predicting two forms of sexually harassing behavior.*

Note. Dotted paths and correlations are not significant. STMO = short term mating orientation, HS = hostile sexism. The variables e1 and e2 represent error terms.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

Figure 2. *Double dissociation of two motives predicting two forms of sexually harassing*

*behavior **after activating a sexual motive***.

Note. Dotted paths and correlations are not significant. STMO = short term mating

orientation, HS = hostile sexism. The variables e1 and e2 represent error terms.

*** *p* < .001.

Figure 3. *Double dissociation of two motives predicting two forms of sexually harassing*

*behavior **after activating a power motive**.*

Note. Dotted paths and correlations are not significant. STMO = short term mating

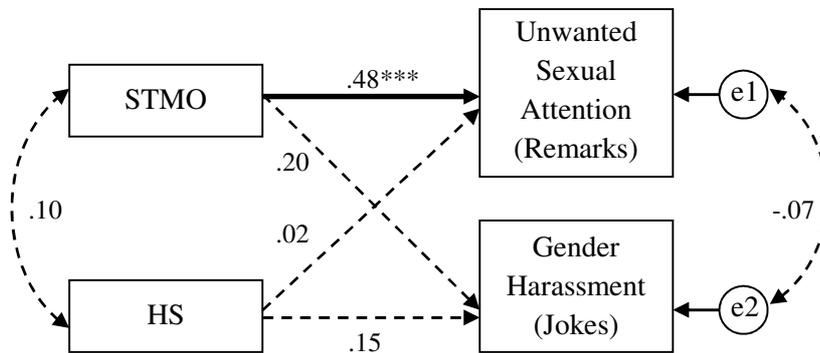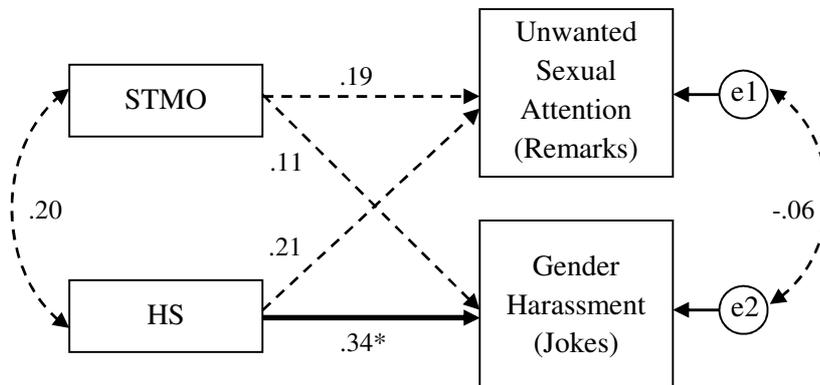orientation, HS = hostile sexism. The variables e1 and e2 represent error terms.

* *p* < .05.

6   MANUSCRIPT #3: Face the consequences: Learning about victim's suffering reduces sexual harassment myth acceptance and men's likelihood to sexually harass

Author Contribution Statement

Charlotte Diehl and Tina Glaser designed the studies presented in "Face the consequences: Learning about victims' suffering reduces sexual harassment myth acceptance and men's likelihood to sexually harass" according to a research question developed by Charlotte Diehl. Thereby, Tina Glaser primarily handled Study 1, and Charlotte Diehl primarily handled Study 2. Charlotte Diehl conducted the statistical analysis assisted by Tina Glaser. Gerd Bohner contributed to the interpretation of the data. Charlotte Diehl conducted literature searches and provided summaries of previous research studies; she wrote the first draft of the manuscript, and all authors critically revised and approved the final manuscript.

Tina Glaser and Gerd Bohner agree to the submission of the publication as part of this cumulative dissertation "Ways of explaining sexual harassment: Motivating, enabling, and legitimizing processes".

MANUSCRIPT #3

Face the consequences: Learning about victim's suffering reduces sexual harassment myth acceptance and men's likelihood to sexually harass

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Abstract

Prior research has shown that (1) better knowledge about the consequences of rape goes along with less rape-supportive attitudes and lower rape proclivity, and (2) empathy with the victims correlates negatively with sexual aggression. In two experiments, the authors combined these approaches in order to reduce sexual harassment myth acceptance (SHMA) and the likelihood to sexually harass (LSH). In Study 1, 101 male and female university students read a report describing sexual harassment as either serious or harmless, and completed scales assessing dispositional empathy and SHMA. Results showed that higher empathy was associated with lower SHMA; furthermore, learning about the seriousness (vs. harmlessness) of sexual harassment led to lower SHMA, particularly in participants low in empathy. Gender differences in SHMA were fully explained by gender differences in empathy. In Study 2, perspective taking, a crucial aspect of empathy, was manipulated. 119 male and female participants read either a neutral text or a description of a sexual harassment case, which was written either from the female target's or from the male perpetrator's perspective; then they completed scales measuring SHMA and (only male participants) LSH. The target's perspective led to lower SHMA and to lower LSH than did the neutral text, whereas no such effect was found for the perpetrator's perspective. Implications for intervention programs are discussed.

[215 words]

Keywords: sexual harassment, sexual harassment myth acceptance, sexual harassment proclivity, empathy, perspective taking

Face the consequences: Learning about victim's suffering reduces sexual harassment myth

acceptance and men's likelihood to sexually harass

Sexual harassment is still a serious and prevalent problem in the workplace (e.g.,

Aquino & Thau, 2009; European Commission, 1998; Ilies, Hauserman, Schwochau, & Stibal,

2003; Strub & Schär Moser, 2008) and in other settings (e.g., online harassment: Barak,

2005). Definitions of sexual harassment vary in their focus and breadth; in this article we use

a broad definition that includes unwanted, sexually connoted behavior that aims at or leads to

reducing a target person to her or his gender, as well as behavior involving gender-based

devaluation and violation of a target person's dignity (cf. Fitzgerald, Swan, & Magley, 1997;

McDonald, 2012). In principle, both women and men may be victims as well as perpetrators

of sexual harassment, but empirical reviews show that the most common constellation is that

of male perpetrator and female target (see also Berdahl & Moore, 2006; Cortina, Magley,

Williams, & Langhout, 2001). In the present research, we focus on this common constellation

but we will come back to its potential implications for other gender constellations in the

General Discussion.

Sexual harassent has many negative consequences for the targets in various respects.

Previous research has detected negative effects on targets' physical, psychological, and

emotional well-being (Fitzgerald, Drasgow, Hulin, Gelfand, & Magley, 1997; Rospenda,

Richman, & Shannon, 2009) as well as on their job performance, job satisfaction, and career

opportunities (Lapierre, Spector, & Leck, 2005; Shannon, Rospenda, & Richman, 2007).

Furthermore, this relationship between exposure to sexual harassment and impaired mental

and physical health was confirmed by some longitudinal and cross-sectional studies, which

also ruled out dispositional influences and response biases (Glomb, Munson, Hulin, Bergman,

& Drasgow, 1999; Munson, Hulin, & Drasgow, 2000; Nielsen & Einarsen, 2012). Several

meta-analyses in the field showed these severe and damaging outcomes of sexual harassment

in the workplace very impressively (Bowling & Beehr, 2006; Chan, Chun, Chow, & Cheung,

2008; Willness, Steel, & Lee, 2007).

However, despite these clear-cut findings, when people hear about sexual harassment

they tend to misperceive these consequences or to rate them as not serious or severe. Instead,

public perceptions are often lenient and tolerant toward harassers (Herzog, 2007), which may

lead to secondary victimization of targets who bring sexual harassment to light and may

prevent perpetrators from being condemned (for research about secondary victimization of

rape victims, see Campbell & Raja, 1999).

Sexual Harassment Myth Acceptance

One factor that plays a crucial role in the perception and evaluation of sexual

harassment cases is sexual harassment mythology. Building on research on rape myths (e.g.,

Burt, 1980), Lonsway, Cortina, and Magley (2008) defined myths about sexual harassment as

"attitudes and beliefs that are generally false but are widely and persistently held, and that

serve to deny and justify male harassment of women" (p. 600). The underlying construct, as

measured by Lonsway and colleagues' Illinois Sexual Harassment Myth Acceptance Scale

(ISHMA), captures attitudes and beliefs pertaining to three aspects: denial of the incident,

shift of guilt and responsibility, and downplaying of consequences. Myths of the first type

convey the impression that harassment situations are a matter of rarely occurring and distinct

misunderstandings. Consequently, the occurrence of sexual harassment as a societal problem

is denied and the pertinence of single cases is understated. Myths of the second type serve to

excuse sexually harassing behavior of male perpetrators and ascribe contributory guilt to the

targets. This shift of responsibility away from the perpetrator and onto the victim serves to

justify perpetrators' actions. Finally, myths pertaining to the third aspect either dispute or

downplay negative consequences of the harassing behavior for the targets. All three aspects go hand in hand with a strongly biased perception of sexual harassment cases: Besides biased estimations of responsibility and guilt, people high in SHMA underestimate the adverse consequences that harassing behavior can have for its targets (Lonsway et al., 2008).

Furthermore, all three aspects indicate that the belief in myths about sexual harassment fulfills specific functions: Analogous to rape myth acceptance (RMA) SHMA serves to rationalize and justify males' sexually aggressive behavior and rescues perpetrators from negative consequences (Lonsway et al., 2008). Previous research showed, for instance, that SHMA mediated the link between hostile sexism and gender harassment: Hostile-sexist men who sexually harassed a woman in a computer chat apparently used harassment myths to justify their behavior (Diehl et al., 2012). Because these legitimizing functions fit and defend males' interests, it is not surprising that on average men endorse myths to a greater extent than women do. Comparable to findings about RMA (Bohner, 1998; Payne, Lonsway, & Fitzgerald, 1999), there also is empirical evidence showing that men typically are more accepting of sexual harassment myths than women are (Lonsway et al., 2007). But why do women endorse sexual harassment myths at all? In the context of rape myths, Bohner and his colleagues have proposed that RMA might serve an anxiety-buffering function for women. Thus, some women use myths to construe a stereotypical, negatively evaluated subcategory of women who are prone to become rape victims because of their presumed behavior or character (Bohner, 1998; Bohner, Eyssel, Pina, Siebler, & Viki, 2009; Bohner & Lampridis, 1994). This categorization allows those women to distance themselves from the group of potential victims, creating an illusion of invulnerability. In a similar way, endorsing myths about sexual harassment may allow women to distance themselves from harassment victims, whom they may thus characterize as exaggerating or fabricating allegations of harassment, as

pursuing ulterior motives, as being actually flattered by the perpetrator's attention, and as responsible for resolving a situation in which they are harassed (Lonsway et al., 2008). Although the functions of SHMA might be gender-specific, serving men primarily as a rationalization and justification of their own tendencies toward harassing behavior (Diehl et al., 2012) and serving women primarily as an anxiety buffer, the endorsement of SHMA entails a biased interpretation of sexual harassment for both men and women. This biased interpretation is characterized by a shift of responsibility toward the female target and by a denial or minimization of the severe consequences that the target may suffer.

While justifying myths have been studied extensively in relation to rape and other severe forms of sexual aggression (for a review, see Bohner et al., 2009), there is less research about sexual harassment myths. However, SHMA is typically highly correlated with RMA, and its pattern of relationship to other negative attitudes toward women is similar to that found in the rape literature (e.g., Dekker & Barling, 1996; Lonsway et al., 2008; Süssenbach & Bohner, 2011). A particularly relevant finding is that RMA affects men's rape proclivity (Bohner et al., 1998; Bohner, Siebler, & Schmelcher, 2006; Bohner, Pina, Viki, & Siebler, 2010; Gerger, Kley, Siebler, & Bohner, 2007). Furthermore, for men who had used sexual coercion in the past, rape myths were chronically more accessible (Bohner, Jarvis, Eyssel, & Siebler, 2005). Recent studies showed that RMA also affects the processing of rape-related information, which results in lower ratings of defendant guilt (Eyssel & Bohner, 2011; Krahé, Temkin, & Bieneck, 2007; Krahé, Temkin, Bieneck, & Berger, 2008; Süssenbach, Bohner, & Eyssel, 2012; Süssenbach, Eyssel, & Bohner, 2013). Research on sexual harassment myths provides evidence that the general mechanisms are the same: Vanselow, Bohner, Becher, and Siebler (2010), for example, showed that SHMA significantly correlates with men's likelihood to sexually harass (LSH). Beyond that, there is evidence that

SHMA plays an important role in predicting and, more specifically, justifying actually committed sexual harassment (Diehl et al., 2012). These significant links between harassment myths and actual behavior show that it is important to find ways of reducing SHMA, which might save targets not only from primary victimization by reducing men's likelihood to sexually harass but also from secondary victimization by changing observers' perceptions of harassment incidents.

Reducing Sexual Harassment Myth Acceptance

The rape literature provides numerous reports of interventions aimed at reducing RMA (e.g., Flores & Hartlaub, 1998; O'Donohue, Yeater, & Fanetti, 2003). One approach is based on the idea that the more knowledge people have about rape and its consequences, the less they will agree with rape-supportive attitudes and (for male participants) the lower will be their rape proclivity. This idea was supported in a correlational study by Hamilton and Yee (1990), which also revealed a myth-reducing effect when someone knows a rape victim in person.

Another prominent approach is focused on enhancing empathy with the victims, for instance by including an instruction to take the victim's perspective. Empathy and perspective taking play a significant role in several theories of aggression (Miller & Eisenberg, 1988) and theories of prejudice, such as in contact theory, where empathy is one of the most-studied mediators for prejudice reduction (e.g., Batson, Early, & Salvarani, 1997; Batson, Lishner, Cook, & Sawyer, 2005; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008). Apart from contact theory, there is an abundance of research showing that empathy is negatively correlated with prejudiced attitudes (Bäckström & Björklund, 2007; Dovidio et al., 2004; McFarland, 2010), and with discriminatory behavior (Stephan & Finley, 1999), such as bullying (Caravita, Di Blasio, & Salmivalli, 2009; Gini, Albiero, Benelli, & Altoe, 2007; Jolliffe, & Farrington, 2011) and

sexual aggression (Hildebran & Pithers, 1989; Lee, 1987; O'Donohue et al., 2003). Because

perspective taking involves imagining being in another person's situation or focusing on the

feelings of another, it is particularly suited to arouse feelings of empathic concern and thereby

to promote improved intergroup attitudes (Batson, Polycarpou et al., 1997; Batson, Chang,

Orr, & Rowland, 2002; Finlay & Stephan, 2000; Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000; Vescio,

Sechrist, & Paolucci, 2003).

Building on this research, we predicted that (1) learning about the negative

consequences of sexual harassment and (2) perspective taking with the target can both be

successfully used to reduce the acceptance of myths about sexual harassment. Although

knowledge about the consequences of sexual aggression has been shown to reduce RMA, no

experimental study has been conducted yet that tested whether SHMA can also be reduced by

learning about the consequences of sexual harassment. Sexual harassment myths in general

function as a system-justifying ideology, thus helping to maintain male power over women

but people do not necessarily apply this function consciously. In many cases, high SHMA

might be traced back to a lack of knowledge regarding the circumstances and consequences of

sexual harassment. Considering the strong misperception of sexual harassment cases and the

typical tendency to downplay the negative consequences for the targets that go along with

SHMA, we propose that learning about the severe consequences of sexual harassment for the

victims may be an important aspect of prevention. In the present studies, we experimentally

tested whether the positive effect of learning about consequences also holds for SHMA,

which reflects attitudes supportive of sexual harassment, and for LSH, which represents

behavioral intentions. Furthermore, although it has been shown that empathy is negatively

correlated with sexual aggression (Hildebran & Pithers, 1989; Lee, 1987; O'Donohue et al.,

2003), there is no study that investigated the role of empathy and perspective taking for the

reduction of SHMA. We therefore measured empathy in Study 1 and directly manipulated

perspective taking as one crucial aspect of empathy in Study 2.

Overview of Studies

In the present research, we aim to reduce SHMA by providing people with the

information that sexual harassment is highly aversive for the targets, thereby focusing on the

targets' experience and feelings as well as on the actual consequences of sexual harassment.

In two experiments, we made these consequences salient by employing different experimental

interventions. In Study 1, we tested whether SHMA can be reduced by providing information

about the consequences of sexual harassment via a newspaper-style text. Additionally, we

examined the role of empathy in this process. In Study 2, we focused on the impact of

perspective taking, as one key component of empathy, and investigated whether reading a

report about a sexual harassment case from the target's perspective (compared to the

harasser's perspective) reduces SHMA and LSH. Both forms of intervention should decrease

perceptions biased in favor of the perpetrators and instead facilitate unprejudiced perceptions

of sexual harassment cases. We predicted that, caused by a modified awareness of the

negative consequences, men's and women's SHMA would significantly decrease and men's

LSH would decrease as well.

Study 1

In this study, we examined the influence of differential reporting about sexual

harassment, as either a harmless phenomenon or a relevant problem in society, on SHMA.

Because victim empathy is seen as one of the focal therapeutic tasks in treatment programs

for sexual harassment (Leeser & O'Donohue, 1997; O'Donohue et al., 2003; Schewe &

O'Donohue, 1993) and might be of specific relevance in the context of learning about harmful

experiences of other persons, we also tested whether participants' level of empathy influences SHMA. We formulated three hypotheses.

(1) Replicating the robust gender effect found in previous literature about SHMA and RMA (Bohner, 1998; Lonsway et al., 2007), men are in general more accepting of sexual harassment myths than are women.

(2) Empathy and SHMA are negatively correlated, such that people who are low (vs. high) in empathy endorse myths about sexual harassment more strongly. This hypothesis is based on the notion that the endorsement of SHMA entails a biased interpretation of sexual harassment in a victim-harming (i.e., prejudiced) way. As empathy is negatively correlated with prejudiced attitudes, we also expect such a negative correlation of empathy and SHMA.

One important aspect of SHMA is the underestimation of adverse consequences that harassing behavior can have. We thus predicted that

(3) reading a text about sexual harassment as a severe problem that has many negative consequences for the target counteracts the underestimation of consequences and thereby leads to lower SHMA than reading a text in which the consequences of sexual harassment are downplayed.

Participants and Design

A total of 101 students from different subject areas at the University of Bielefeld, Germany (51 men and 50 women; 18-33 years of age; $M = 22.14$, $SD = 2.99$) were recruited in the main university hall. Participants volunteered to follow the experimenter to a separate laboratory room in order to take part in a study that allegedly tested different study materials. Participants were randomly assigned to the conditions of a one-factorial two-level (report: *downplaying* vs. *actualizing*) between-subjects design.

Procedure

The study was approved by the local ethics committee. After giving written informed consent, participants first were instructed to read carefully one of two texts that were written to resemble actual news reports about sexual harassment. Depending on condition, participants read either that sexual harassment is a severe problem in society, or that is not a problem at all. They were then asked to outline the essence of the text and to complete two more questionnaires that were allegedly unrelated and contained (a) an empathy scale and (b) an SHMA scale. Then participants were thanked, were fully debriefed[1], and received a chocolate bar for their participation.

Materials and Measures

Reports. Half of the participants read a newspaper-style text presenting sexual harassment as a severe and frequent problem in society (*actualizing report*); the other half read a text in which sexual harassment was described as harmless and overestimated as a societal problem (*downplaying report*). Both texts resembled actual news reports, opened with a general introduction into the topic, and ended with a summary conclusion. In the middle of the texts, the same two cases of sexual harassment—each exerted by a man against a woman—were described. One of the cases featured a situation at the workplace, where a woman was verbally harassed by a male colleague who repeatedly made sexist comments in a meeting. The other case took place in a club, where a woman was physically harassed by another guest trying to dance with her and touching her buttocks and her breasts. The texts differed in the interpretation of the man's behavior: The actualizing report detailed the negative consequences for the two targets of sexual harassment and their thoughts and feelings. The downplaying report portrayed the incidents as attempts to flirt or misunderstandings, underlined women's toughness, their capability to bear such situations,

and their (co-) responsibility for the man's behavior. Excerpts of the original texts used in the study can be found in Table 1, full translations can be obtained from the first author.

Empathy. To assess empathy, we used a German empathy scale by Leibetseder, Laireiter, Riepler, and Köller (2001) that consists of 22 items. Exampless are "I can easily empathize with fictional characters in a novel" and "I often feel compassion and empathy for people who are less lucky than me" (response scale from 1= *do not agree at all*, to 7 = *agree completely*). We formed an overall index of empathy by averaging all item scores for each participant (Cronbach's α = .84; M = 4.50, SD = 0.74).

Sexual harassment myth acceptance (SHMA). To measure SHMA, we used our own German translation of the 20-item Illinois SHMA Scale (Lonsway et al., 2008). This scale contains subtle and non-obvious misconceptions about sexual harassment; it measures attitudes and beliefs that serve to excuse sexually harassing behavior of male perpetrators and ascribe contributory guilt to the targets. Item examples are "As long as a woman doesn't lose her job, her claim of sexual harassment shouldn't be taken too seriously" and "Sometimes women make up allegations of sexual harassment to extort money from their employer" (response scale from 1= *do not agree at all*, to 7 = *agree completely*). For each participant, item scores were averaged to form an index of SHMA (Cronbach's α = .89; M = 2.83, SD = 0.80).

Results

To determine the statistical power of our analyses, we used G*Power (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007). Given our sample size of N = 101 participants and an alpha level of .05, the statistical power to detect a large (medium-sized) effect according to Cohen (1988) was determined to be greater than .98 (.70) for all analyses that follow.

Gender effect. As predicted in Hypothesis 1, men were more accepting of sexual harassment myths ($M = 3.01$, $SD = 0.90$) than were women ($M = 2.65$, $SD = 0.64$), $t(99) = 2.31$, $p = .02$, $d = 0.46$. Additionally, we found a large gender difference in empathy: Men were significantly less empathic ($M = 4.08$, $SD = 0.68$) than were women ($M = 4.92$, $SD = 0.54$), $t(99) = -6.98$, $p < .001$, $d = -1.38$.

Correlation of empathy and sexual harassment myth acceptance. A correlation analysis showed that, in line with Hypothesis 2, SHMA was negatively correlated with empathy, $r(99) = -.43$, $p < .001$. The correlation did not differ between men and women or between experimental conditions. Further analyses showed that empathy was not affected by report condition, $F < 1$.

Influence of differential reporting about sexual harassment on SHMA. A 2 x 2 ANOVA with report (downplaying vs. actualizing) and gender (male vs. female) as between-subjects factors resulted in two main effects. Apart from the main effect of gender (see above for means), $F(1, 97) = 5.65$, $p = .02$, $\eta^2 = .06$, a main effect of report emerged, $F(1, 97) = 5.63$, $p = .02$, $\eta^2 = .06$. As predicted in Hypothesis 3, participants' SHMA scores were significantly lower after reading the actualizing report ($M = 2.65$; $SD = 0.66$) than after reading the downplaying report ($M = 3.01$; $SD = 0.89$). There was no report x gender interaction effect, $F < 1$.

Because SHMA was strongly correlated with empathy, we conducted a hierarchical multiple regression analysis in which report (coded 1 = downplaying report, and 2 = actualizing report), gender (coded 1 = male, and 2 = female), and the interaction of these two variables were used as predictors of SHMA in Step 1, and the empathy score and its interaction with type of report, as well as its interaction with gender, were additionally entered in Step 2. Before creating the interaction terms, all variables were centered (see Cohen,

Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003, pp. 261-266). Results are displayed in Table 2. In Step 1, the

regression confirmed the two main effects of gender, $B = -0.23$, $SE = 0.12$, $p = .05$, and report,

$B = -0.34$, $SE = 0.15$, $p = .02$, found in the ANOVA. The interaction of gender and report was

not significant, $B = 0.02$, $SE = 0.15$, $p = .89$. In Step 2, results showed an additional effect of

empathy, $B = -0.70$, $SE = 0.16$, $p < .001$, indicating that the lower the participants' empathy

score, the higher was their SHMA score. Most importantly, however, the effect of type of

report remained significant, $B = -0.32$, $SE = 0.13$, $p = .02$, whereas the effect of gender did

not, $B = 0.12$, $SE = 0.13$, $p = .35$. Additionally, the interaction of report and empathy was

significant, $B = 0.41$, $SE = 0.18$, $p = .02$, while the interaction of gender and empathy was not,

$B = -0.003$, $SE = 0.12$, $p = .98$, indicating a moderating effect of empathy but not of gender.

The observed interaction effect was further inspected with simple-slopes analyses by

estimating the conditional effects of the report condition at low (1 SD below the mean) and

high (1 SD above the mean) levels of empathy. The simple-slopes analysis revealed an effect

of report on SHMA only when participants scored low on empathy ($B = -0.67$, $SE = 0.23$, $p = $

.004) but not when they showed high levels of empathy ($B = -0.09$, $SE = 0.16$, $p = .57$; see

Figure 1 for the results of the simple slopes analysis). Thus, participants' level of empathy

moderated the effect of report on SHMA, such that the manipulation was especially effective

for persons low in empathy. Results also revealed that gender differences in SHMA may be

explained by differences in empathy.

Discussion

In the present study, we showed that reporting about sexual harassment as either a

harmless phenomenon or a relevant problem in society has a significant influence on SHMA.

First of all, we replicated the robust finding in SHMA research that men are more accepting

of sexual harassment myths than women (see Lonsway et al., 2008). We also found that men

are less empathic than women. Furthermore, there was a negative correlation between empathy and SHMA. This finding is in line both with previous research on prejudice showing that empathy is negatively correlated with generalized prejudice (Bäckström & Björklund, 2007) and discriminatory behavior (Stephan & Finley, 1999) and with research on sexual aggression showing that perspective-taking is negatively correlated with sexual harassment proclivity (Pryor, 1987). Moreover, our results are also in line with findings that empathy training increases high-risk men's internal inhibitions against sexually harassing (Eisenberger, Schaller, Miller, & Fultz, 1988; Leeser & O'Donohue, 1997).

The data indicate that differences in SHMA between men and women might actually reflect gender differences in empathy. The effect of gender disappeared once empathy was included as a predictor in the analysis, suggesting that empathy might be the explanatory variable underlying the gender effect. This assumption is supported by previous research on prejudice, which has revealed that the effect of gender on generalized prejudice, with men scoring higher than women on prejudice scales, is mediated by empathy (Bäckström & Björklund, 2007).

Most importantly, our data also support our Hypothesis 3: Reading an actualizing report, in which sexual harassment was described as a severe problem, led to low SHMA, whereas reading a downplaying report, in which the consequences of sexual harassment were minimized, led to high SHMA. This effect is moderated by participants' level of empathy. Reading the actualizing report about sexual harassment led to a reduction in SHMA only for persons low in empathy. However, because we did not have a control condition with a neutral baseline of SHMA, we cannot say for certain whether the effect of our manipulation decreases SHMA in the actualizing condition or increases SHMA in the downplaying condition. This

shortcoming will therefore be addressed in the second study, where we included a baseline control condition.

Taken together, our results provide the first evidence that confronting participants with an actualizing report about sexual harassment leads to decreased SHMA. Our data are compatible with the interpretation that empathy may reduce SHMA, supporting the relevance of the few existing attempts to prevent sexual harassment trough empathy trainings, for instance the prevention programs by Schewe and O'Donohue (1993) or Leeser and O'Donohue (1997). Furthermore, the confrontation with severe consequences of sexual harassment seems to be particularly effective for persons with low levels of empathy. This leads to the conclusion that learning about the consequences of harassment and empathy each contributed to decreasing SHMA. Therefore, in Study 2, we used an experimental intervention that varied participants' opportunity to learn about the consequences of harassment along with manipulating their level of empathy.

Study 2

As the ability to adopt the perspective of another person is one key aspect of empathy (Davis, 1983; Decety, 2005; Lamm, Batson, & Decety, 2007) and has frequently been shown to reduce stereotyping and to improve feelings, attitudes, and behavior toward outgroups (Batson, Polycarpou et al., 1997; Batson et al., 2002; Finlay & Stephan, 2000; Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000; Vescio et al., 2003), we chose to focus on this aspect in Study 2. We replaced the correlational approach to empathy with an experimental manipulation of perspective taking. Following this, the aim of Study 2 was to conceptually replicate the SHMA-reducing effect of informing people about the negative consequences of sexual harassment by using an experimental manipulation that provides participants with information but *also* increases their perspective taking. We implemented information by means of

personalized reports of either a female target of workplace sexual harassment or of the alleged male perpetrator. Thus, participants read about a case of sexual harassment that was written either from the target's or the perpetrator's perspective. As imagining being in another person's situation or focusing on the feelings of another arouses feelings of empathic concern (Batson, Polycarpou et al., 1997; Batson et al., 2002; Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000), this manipulation should encourage participants' perspective-taking and should therefore have a stronger effect than information provided by a third party.

Additionally, we implemented a control condition in order to assess a baseline for comparisons with the experimental conditions. In the control condition, participants read a text resembling a news report about typical interactions and issues occurring at the workplace, but without any reference to sexual harassment.

As previous correlational research in relation to rape showed that more knowledge about rape and its consequences for the victims is related not only to less rape-supportive attitudes but also to less self-reported rape proclivity (Hamilton & Yee, 1990), the third aim of the study was to go one step further and to assess the impact of the report's perspective not only on an attitudinal level (i.e., by assessing effects on SHMA) but also on anticipated future behavior. We therefore asked all male participants to additionally complete a scale measuring their LSH, which we used as a second dependent variable.

We had three hypotheses:

(1) The gender effect found in Study 1 and previous research about SHMA and RMA is replicated, with men being more accepting of sexual harassment myths than women.

(2) Getting to know a case of sexual harassment from the target's perspective leads to lower SHMA than does reading a neutral report (control condition) because people will take the target's perspective *and* thereby simultaneously learn about the serious consequences of

harassment. Getting to know the same case from the perpetrator's perspective leads to higher SHMA than does reading a neutral report (control condition) because people will take the perpetrator's perspective, thereby strengthening their tendencies to downplay the consequences.

(3) An analogous effect of perspective taking is expected on men's LSH. For male participants, getting to know a case of sexual harassment from the target's perspective leads to lower LSH, whereas getting to know the same case from the perpetrator's perspective leads to higher LSH than does reading a neutral report (control condition).

Participants and Design

A total of 119 students from different subject areas at the University of Bielefeld, Germany (59 men and 60 women; 19-32 years of age; $M = 23.54$, $SD = 3.20$) were recruited in the main university hall. Participants volunteered to follow the experimenter to a separate laboratory room in order to participate in a study on "interactions at the workplace". Data from five additional participants were excluded because four of them expressed suspicion concerning the purpose of the study and one had an outlier LSH score more than 3 standard deviations different from the overall mean. Participants were randomly assigned to the conditions of a one-factorial three-level (perspective of report: target's perspective vs. perpetrator's perspective vs. control) between-subjects design.

Procedure

The study was approved by the local ethics committee. After giving written informed consent, participants first read either one of two personalized reports about a sexual harassment case at the workplace, from either the target's or the perpetrator's perspective, or a neutral text about interactions at the workplace (control condition). They were then asked to fill out a questionnaire. Intermixed with the 20 items of the SHMA scale, the questionnaire

also contained 11 filler items in order to cover the aim of the study. Questionnaires for male

participants additionally contained the LSH scale. At the end, participants were thanked, fully

debriefed, and received a chocolate bar for their participation.

Materials and Measures

Personalized reports and neutral report. One third of the participants read an

eyewitness report about a sexual harassment case from a female target's perspective. Another

third read an eyewitness report about a sexual harassment case from a male perpetrator's

perspective. The last third read a neutral report about typical interactions and issues at the

workplace that contained no reference to sexual harassment. In both eyewitness reports, the

same case of sexual harassment at the workplace was described, exerted by a male colleague

against a woman who just started in the new job. The description included recurrent sexually

harassing behavior, such as repeatedly making sexist or suggestive comments, sending

inappropriate messages, and embracing the woman against her will. Importantly, the reports

differed in perspective: The target's report especially detailed her feelings and thoughts and

described the serious consequences for the target, like reduced well-being, and problems

regarding her health and her job. In the perpetrator's report, the same incidents were

described, but from his point of view. The report detailed his thoughts and insinuated his

intentions, which still left the reader some space for interpretation. Accordingly, some of his

behavior could be interpreted as just clumsy or unintended and could thereby be excused. In

the same way, it became clear from his report that, although he had perceived a few hints

indicating that the target disapproved of his behavior, he just did not care to stop. In the

neutral report, different forms of interactions and issues coming up at the workplace were

described. Excerpts of the original texts used in the study can be found in Table 1, full

translations can be obtained from the first author.

Sexual harassment myth acceptance (SHMA). SHMA was measured as in Study 1 with the German translation of the 20-item Illinois SHMA scale (Lonsway et al., 2008), which was highly reliable (Cronbach's $\alpha = .83$; $M = 2.86$, $SD = 0.65$). In addition, 11 self-created filler items were intermixed with the SHMA items to cover the purpose of the SHMA scale. These questions asked for different job-related attitudes (e.g., "I have a very exact idea of what job I would like to do in the future"; response scales from 1= *do not agree at all*, to 7= *agree completely*). The filler items were not analyzed.

Likelihood to sexually harass (LSH). A German adaptation of Pryor's (1987) LSH scale (Vanselow et al., 2010) was used to measure male participants' sexual harassment proclivity. The scale contained four critical scenarios in which a man has the opportunity to sexually harass a female subordinate. For each scenario, three behavioral alternatives represented severe and moderate forms of sexual harassment as well as a neutral behavior alternative, respectively, and the participant indicated his likelihood of engaging in each behavior on a response scale from 1 = *completely unlikely*, to 7 = *very likely*. Five filler scenarios served to obscure the scale's purpose. We formed an overall index of LSH by averaging all item scores asking for severe and moderate forms of sexual harassment for each male participant (Cronbach's $\alpha = .79$; $M = 2.37$, $SD = 0.97$).

Results

To determine the statistical power of our analyses, we again used G*Power (Faul et al., 2007). Given our sample size of N = 119 participants and an alpha level of .05, the statistical power to detect a large (medium-sized) effect according to Cohen (1988) was determined to be greater than .98 (.67) for the following analyses. Given the sample size of N = 59 male participants for the analyses regarding LSH, the power to detect a large (medium-sized) effect according to Cohen (1988) was greater than .68 (.33).

Gender effect. Contrary to Hypothesis 1, there were no differences between men and women regarding their SHMA (M_{men} = 2.87, SD = 0.67; M_{women} = 2.85, SD = 0.63), $t(117)$ = .18, p = .86, d = 0.03.

Influence of report's perspective on SHMA. A one-way ANOVA with perspective of the report as the between-subjects factor and SHMA as the dependent variable resulted in a marginally significant overall effect of perspective, $F(2, 116)$ = 3.06, p = .05, η^2 = .05. Pairwise comparisons between the report conditions showed that participants' SHMA scores were significantly lower after getting to know the case from the target's perspective (M = 2.65, SD = 0.60) than after having read the neutral newspaper article (M = 2.95, SD = 0.67; $t(77)$ = -2.07, p = .04, d = -0.48) or after getting to know the case from the perpetrator's perspective (M = 2.97, SD = 0.63; $t(77)$ = -2.27, p = .03, d = -0.53). The score in the perpetrator's perspective condition did not differ from that in the control condition, $t(78)$ = 0.13, p = .90, d = 0.03 (see also Table 3 for condition means). This pattern supports the first part of Hypothesis 2: Getting to know a case of sexual harassment from the target's perspective led to lower SHMA than in a control condition. However, in contrast to the second part of Hypothesis 2, getting to know the same case from the perpetrator's perspective did not lead to higher SHMA.

Influence of report's perspective on LSH. To examine the effect of the different perspectives on behavioral intentions, we conducted further analyses with the data of male participants. First of all, LSH and SHMA were positively correlated, $r(58)$ = .48, p < .001. As predicted, a one-way ANOVA yielded a significant effect of perspective on LSH, $F(2, 56)$ = 4.14, p = .02, η^2 = .13. Pairwise comparisons between the report conditions showed that participants' LSH scores were significantly lower after getting to know the case from the target's perspective (M = 1.97, SD = 0.52) than in the control condition (M = 2.81, SD = 1.13;

$t(37) = -2.97$, $p = .005$, $d = -0.96$), whereas there was no significant difference between the

perpetrator's perspective condition ($M = 2.32$, $SD = 0.99$) and the control condition, $t(38)$

$= -1.47$, $p = .15$, $d = -0.47$ (see also Table 2 for condition means). Thus, the data pattern for

LSH is similar to the SHMA results: In comparison to the control condition, getting to know a

case of sexual harassment from the target's perspective led to lower LSH in men. However,

getting to know the same case from the perpetrator's perspective did not lead to higher LSH.

Discussion

In the second study, we demonstrated that reading about a case of sexual harassment

from either the target's or the perpetrator's perspective has a significant influence on SHMA.

Learning about a sexual harassment case from the target's perspective led to significantly

lower SHMA than did learning about the same case from the perpetrator's perspective or

reading a neutral text (control condition), whereas the latter two conditions were not

significantly different from each other. This result is first evidence for the positive effect of

(target's) perspective taking on the reduction of SHMA. This is in line with previous research

showing that perspective taking arouses feelings of empathic concern and improves

intergroup attitudes (Batson, Polycarpou et al., 1997; Batson et al., 2002; Finlay, & Stephan,

2000; Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000; Vescio, Sechrist, & Paolucci, 2003). Taking the

perpetrator's perspective, in contrast, does not seem to increase SHMA beyond the baseline

level of the control condition, which could be an indication that this perspective reflects more

or less the default mode of thinking about sexual harassment cases.

Furthermore, we could show for the male part of the sample that perspective taking

affects not only attitudes but also the level of anticipated future behavior. Getting to know the

case from the target's perspective led not only to lower SHMA but also to lower LSH

compared to the control condition. This result is in line with previous research on rape

showing that more knowledge about rape and its consequences for the victims is related not only to less rape-supportive attitudes but also to less self-reported rape proclivity (Hamilton & Yee, 1990). Again, there was no increasing effect of taking the perpetrator's perspective on LSH beyond the baseline level. SHMA and LSH were significantly correlated, which supports the validity of both constructs and replicates previous research (Vanselow et al., 2010).

Although Study 2 comprised important improvements compared to Study 1, such as the inclusion of a control condition, there are some potential limitations that need to be addressed. A potential confound is that the two reports in the experimental conditions were written in the first person in order to stimulate participants' perspective taking, whereas the text in the control condition was written in the third person. However, the obtained differences between the two experimental conditions cannot be explained by different writing perspectives (i.e., both written in the first person). Furthermore, instead of using an empathy scale and examining its correlational relationship with SHMA and LSH, we directly manipulated participants' perspective taking as one of the key aspects of empathy. However, we did not additionally measure the level of empathy (as we did in Study 1). For future studies, it could be fruitful to implement a control condition that uses also a personalized report of some sort and to additionally measure empathy.

Taken together, Study 2 showed that providing participants with information about the negative consequences of sexual harassment while at the same time inducing them to take the victim's perspective leads to decreased SHMA and LSH. Thus, addressing attitudes and beliefs about sexual harassment is crucial when aiming to change sexually aggressive behavior.

General Discussion

Results of two experiments revealed that learning about the serious consequences that sexual harassment can have for the victims reduces both the endorsement of sexual harassment myths and men's proclivity to sexually harass. In Study 1, participants were exposed to varied reports about sexual harassment as either harmless or a relevant problem in society. In Study 2, participants' perspective taking in a specific case of sexual harassment was varied. Both ways of providing information were effective in reducing SHMA for male and female participants. Furthermore, taking the target's perspective also decreased male participants' self-reported likelihood to sexually harass. The results of the present research provide further evidence that rape myths and sexual harassment myths are indeed closely related. Research on RMA has already demonstrated that knowledge about rape and its consequences for the victims may be related to reduced endorsement of myths (Hamilton & Yee, 1990). Our current research provides initial evidence that presenting information on consequences also reduces the acceptance of sexual harassment myths. Furthermore, whereas Hamilton and Yee provided only correlational evidence for the link between knowledge and the reduction of myths, our findings substantially extend previous research by experimentally demonstrating that learning about consequences plays a causal role in the reduction of myths about sexual aggression.

Gender Differences

Although the literature reveals a robust gender difference in SHMA, with men being more accepting of sexual harassment myths than women (Lonsway et al., 2008), our results only partially replicated this finding. Contrary to our expectations, we did not find gender differences regarding SHMA in Study 2. Furthermore, the results of Study 1 indicated that differences in SHMA between men and women could be explained by gender differences in empathy. Thus, gender differences in SHMA may not be as stable as previous research

suggests. Instead, differences in empathy might be able to explain these gender differences. However, this assumption remains tentative. Future studies should take a closer look at the influence of gender and empathy on SHMA, and could thereby build on research in the context of prejudice that has emphasized the benefit of including empathy in models explaining prejudice (Bäckström & Björklund, 2007).

Considering our findings regarding SHMA and gender, it might be important to stress again that there are reasons also for women to endorse sexual harassment myths. SHMA might serve an anxiety-buffering function for women. Previous research on RMA provides evidence that women use rape myths to distinguish themselves from the group of potential victims, creating an illusion of invulnerability (Bohner, 1998; Bohner & Lampridis, 1994; Bohner et al., 2009). Supporting this notion of an anxiety-buffering function, research has shown that women who agree with rape myths respond with less negative feelings and higher self-esteem when reading or hearing about a rape case compared to women who reject rape myths (Bohner & Lampridis, 2004; Bohner, Weisbrod, Raymond, Barzvi, & Schwarz, 1993; Bohner, Siebler, & Raaijmakers, 1999). Although the functions of SHMA may partly be gender-specific, both men and women do endorse sexual harassment myths to some extent. Therefore, we wish to stress that not only men but also women could benefit from an intervention aimed at reducing SHMA. Our results support this assumption by providing evidence that learning about the consequences of harassment reduces the acceptance of myths in both men and women.

Considerations Regarding the Target's Gender

Although the present research focused on male sexual harassment of women, it may also have implications for other perpetrator-target constellations. The literature addressing issues of target gender has mainly examined the prevalence of male victims as compared to

the prevalence of female victims of sexual harassment, the victims' feelings of threat, as well

as the victims' own perceptions and appraisal of different forms of sexual harassment, which

appear to differ depending on gender (Berdahl, Magley, & Waldo, 1996; Einarsen, & Raknes,

1997; Stockdale, Visio, & Batra, 1999). To date, however, little is known about how

observers' perceptions of sexual harassment incidents differ depending on whether the victim

is female or male. Related research on bullying suggests that people are less likely to

acknowledge the negative effects of bullying, for instance on victims' health, when the victim

is male rather than female (Salin, 2011). By contrast, studies focusing on the victims'

experience have shown— for both bullying and sexual harassment—that experiencing such

negative behavior has similarly negative effects for female and male targets (Magley, Waldo,

Drasgow, & Fitzgerald, 1999; Vartia, 2001). The reported public misperception of the actual

consequences of bullying for male targets might similarly apply to cases of sexual harassment

of male victims. Furthermore, Salin (2011) suggests that this gender-differentiating public

view on bullying victims might result in less assistance and support given to male targets.

In light of the presented findings, it might be fruitful to take a closer look at how

people's myths would change when being exposed to a harassment case with a male victim.

However, our assumption is that myths about sexual harassment of male victims might differ

in content from myths regarding female victims. For instance, as with myths about the rape of

male victims, where the belief that "it can't happen" appears to be emphasized (Struckman-

Johnson & Struckman-Johnson, 1992) and to be endorsed more than with respect to female

victims (Hope, 2000), the main public response to the sexual harassment of men may not be

justification but rather denial (for related evidence from qualitative interviews, see D. Lee,

2000). These reflections suggest that victim's gender may matter not only for the way third

parties perceive particular sexual harassment cases but also for the very content of sexual

harassment myths that may guide those perceptions. Thus, future research should differentiate and measure the specific types of sexual harassment myths that observers would apply when dealing with male versus female targets. Such research might help to tailor interventions in order to reduce sexually aggressive behavior toward both women and men, and to alleviate negative attitudes toward female and male victims.

Underlying Processes

Although our results showed that presenting accurate information about the consequences of sexual harassment to participants decreased their SHMA (and men's LSH), our studies leave the question of the underlying process unanswered. Considering the gender-specific functions of myths about sexual harassment, it seems plausible to assume that the mechanism underlying the reported effects also differs for male vs. female participants. Research has shown that men often do not recognize how aversive sexual harassment may be to women (Kunstman & Maner, 2011; Maner et al., 2005; McCabe & Hardman, 2005; Moor, 2010; Nelson, Halpert, & Cellar, 2007; Perilloux, Easton, & Buss, 2012; Rotundo, Nguyen, & Sackett, 2001). Thus, learning about aversive consequences may be a necessary first step in order to raise awareness of the problem, which should subsequently reduce the acceptance of myths that blame women and deny the seriousness of harassment. Women, however, who probably endorse myths because they serve as an anxiety buffer, also seem to profit from receiving information about the actual consequences of harassment. On the one hand, being confronted with the serious implications of sexual harassment might facilitate women's perspective-taking and their identification with other women. On the other hand, it also illustrates women's personal vulnerability in terms of belonging to the main target group. Although this could potentially increase female perceivers' anxiety, the salient new information presents a sharp contrast to the content of sexual harassment myths that should be

difficult to ignore or deny. Consequently, explicitly informing or reminding women about the severe consequences of harassment might create a barrier for women to accept harassment myths. These considerations will need to be more directly tested in future research.

Consideration of the Cultural Context

It would further be useful to replicate our studies in other cultures. Considering the potential influence of culture on our results, we tentatively conclude that Germany is quite similar to other European Countries as well as to the USA in terms of gender-related attitudes and societal development. Based on relevant national indicators and previous research, one should not expect large cultural differences among Germany and the USA. On the global gender gap index, which measures inequality in achievements between women and men in four dimensions (economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment), Germany's most recent score is .7583 (rank 15 of 136 nations surveyed); the United States' score, for comparison, is .7392 (rank 23) (World Economic Forum, 2013).

Also, research based on Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory (1980, 2001), which takes anthropological and psychological aspects into account, strengthens our assumption that the results of our two studies would not look very different in a study conducted in another European country or in the USA. According to Hofstede (2001), Germany has a relatively low score of 35 on power distance (rank 42 of 58 nations surveyed), which measures society's level of inequality, and a relatively high score of 66 on masculinity (rank 9), which captures the proportion of male values (assertiveness and competitiveness) in relation to female values (caring) within a society. These scores are not considerably different from the USA's scores of 40 (rank 38) for power distance, and 62 (rank 15) for masculinity (Hofstede, 2001).

Yet, neither Germany nor the USA are representative for the whole world. It would be interesting to see how learning about the severe consequences of sexual harassment would affect others' acceptance of sexual harassment myths in non-Western cultural contexts.

Practical Implications

Considering that the endorsement of attitudes supportive of sexual harassment can predict sexually harassing behavior and that information about sexual harassment and its consequences reduces these myths, it seems crucial to target these attitudes in intervention programs. Although there are a few programs designed to prevent sexual harassment at the workplace (e.g., Bell, Quick, & Cycyota, 2002) and in other settings (e.g., prevention programs at schools: Shoop & Edwards, 1994), there is—to the best of our knowledge—no program that includes SHMA as a relevant component. Thus, we think that its potential role in sexual harassment prevention is largely underestimated. Learning about sexual harassment and its consequences, and thereby reducing SHMA, seems to be a feasible and promising possibility for intervention programs targeted at the reduction of sexually harassing behavior.

Furthermore, we were able to show that particularly persons low in empathy respond very well to this approach. Thus, learning about the consequences of sexual harassment could work as a viable complement to the few prevention programs that aim at increasing empathy with the victims (e.g., O'Donohue et al., 2003). Furthermore, as most people will probably not get the chance to participate in such an intervention program, our results offer implications that can be used in a much broader context. In the current studies, information was presented to participants either as a newspaper-style text or as an eyewitness report. Reading such a text or report proved to be successful in reducing SHMA. Thus, our result could also provide interesting recommendations for optimal media coverage of cases of sexual harassment. Media do and should report about cases of sexual harassment, but they

should report about such cases in a certain way. Specifically, the consequences of sexual

harassment should not be downplayed or denied. Realistically reporting the negative impact

of sexual harassment for the victims in different media outlets could be one important

component in trying to reduce SHMA and sexually harassing behavior. Furthermore, reducing

the myths should not only decrease sexual harassment per se but should also reduce secondary

victimization. If that is the case, victims of sexual harassment will be taken more seriously

and perpetrators will more likely be held accountable. Future research needs to investigate the

specific steps that need to be taken in order to reach this goal. We are optimistic that the

results of our research provide valuable and feasible suggestions regarding first steps in this

important endeavor.

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Footnotes

[1] In the written debriefing, all participants were told that the texts they had read were created for the purpose of this study, and that in one of them the actual consequences of sexual harassment were downplayed, while in the other one the consequences were adequately described. Additionally, we gave information about actual prevalence rates and a list of actual negative outcomes for targets of sexual harassment.

Table 1

Excerpts of the original texts used in Study 1 and Study 2 (English translation)

Study 1	
actualizing report	"Sexual harassment became an important issue in our society. […] The psychological consequences are severe and affect usually the victim's whole life, family and friends."
	"It is important that people learn about the severe consequences victims of sexual harassment have to cope with. It is not a trivial offense but a serious invasion of a human's privacy."
downplaying report	"Sexual harassment became a big issue in our society. People are only too ready to emphasize and exorbitantly exaggerate the consequences."
	"These and other examples show that suggestive remarks and slight touches could also be interpreted as compliments and recognition. The same is true for jokes about women, such as blonde jokes. […] Something so commonplace can hardly be called sexual harassment."
Study 2	
target's report	"Before I had a chance to react in any way, he got behind me and firmly pressed me between him and the photocopier, and he put his arms around me, allegedly to operate the touch screen of the photocopier. I was able to feel his breath and noticed that he sniffed at me. 'You have to do it this way, sweetie.' I'll always remember these words. I find him so disgusting. I was completely confused at

that time, and didn't know how to behave. I was thunderstruck, but I somehow got over the day. Arriving at home, I started crying. I actually intended to complain about him to the management, but what would have happened if they didn't believe me? I was in the probation period after all."

perpetrator's report	"One day, she was standing at the photocopier and pretended having problems with it. It was the first time we got really near to each other. I got behind her and put my arms around her – as if it was an accidental embracement – and showed her how to operate the touch screen of the photocopier. At that opportunity, I was able not only to feel how good she feels to the touch but also to smell how incredibly good she smells. She didn't say a word and left speechless but I'm sure that she got the signal I sent her. […] I don't take it as a setback; on the contrary: It intensifies my hunting instinct. I'll make more compliments to her."

Note. The original language was German.

Table 2

Hierarchical multiple Regression Analyses Predicting SHMA from Report and Gender (Step 1,) and Report, Gender, and Empathy (Step 2) (Study 1)

	B	SE	β	p
Step 1				
Constant	0.16	.12		$p = .18$
Report	-0.34	0.15	-.23	$p = .02$
Gender	-0.23	0.12	-.24	$p = .05$
Report x Gender	0.02	0.15	.02	$p = .89$
Step 2				
Constant	0.11	.11		$p = .32$
Report	-0.32	0.13	-.21	$p = .02$
Gender	0.12	0.13	.12	$p = .35$
Report x Gender	-0.17	0.16	-.14	$p = .29$
Empathy	-0.70	0.15	-.67	$p = .00$
Empathy x Report	0.41	0.18	.33	$p = .02$

Note. Report coded 1 = downplaying report, and 2 = actualizing report, Gender coded 1 = male, and 2 = female; $R^2 = .10$, $p = .01$ for Step 1; $\Delta R^2 = .28$, $p < .001$ for Step 2.

Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations of SHMA and LSH (Study 2)

	Target's perspective		Control		Perpetrator's perspective		
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*N*
SHMA	2.65	0.60	2.95	0.67	2.97	0.62	119
LSH	1.97	0.52	2.81	1.13	2.32	0.99	59

Note. SHMA = sexual harassment myth acceptance; LSH = likelihood to sexually harass.
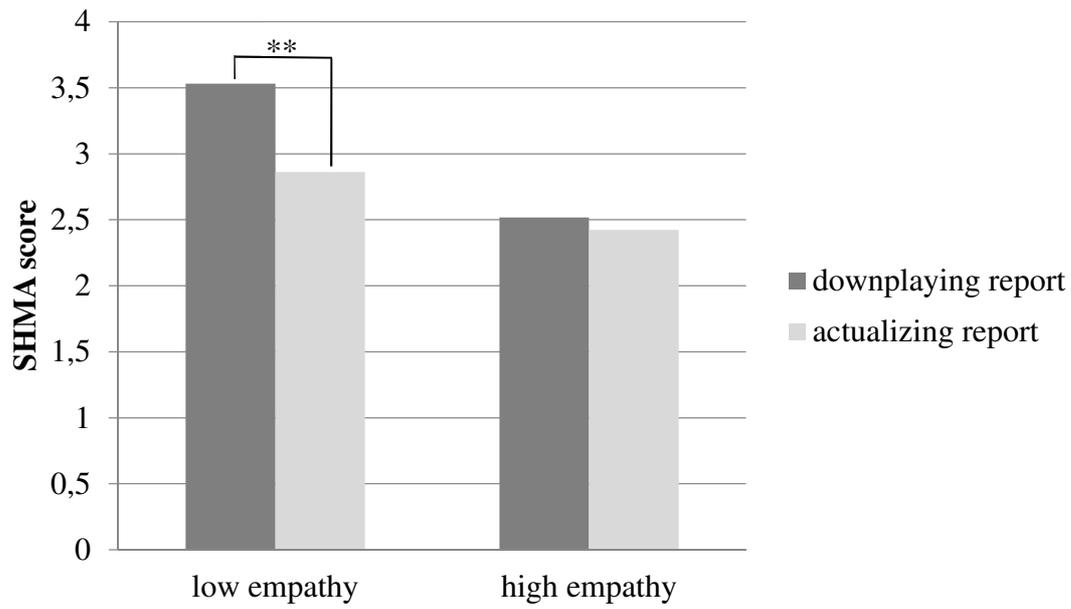
Figure 1. Simple slopes effects of the regression of SHMA on report estimated at 1 SD above and 1 SD below the mean empathy score of participants (Study 1).

** $p < .01$

Eigenständigkeitserklärung

Ich versichere, dass ich meine Dissertation "Ways of explaining sexual harassment:

Motivating, enabling, and legitimizing processes" selbstständig und ohne unerlaubte Hilfe

angefertigt habe, und mich dabei keiner anderen als der von mir ausdrücklich bezeichneten

Quellen und Hilfen bedient habe.

Die Dissertation wurde in der jetzigen oder einer ähnlichen Form noch bei keiner anderen

Hochschule eingereicht, und hat noch keinen Prüfungszwecken gedient.

_____   _____

(Ort / Datum)   Charlotte Diehl

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Diehl, C., Glaser, T., Bohner, G. (2014). Face the consequences: Learning about victim's suffering reduces sexual harassment myth acceptance and men's likelihood to sexually harass. *Aggressive Behavior*. doi:10.1002/ab.21553

Diehl, C., Rees, J., & Bohner, G. (2012). Flirting with disaster: Short-term mating orientation and hostile sexism predict different types of sexual harassment. *Aggressive Behavior*, *38*, 521-531. doi:10.1002/ab.21444