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Sexual Harassment: Motivations and Consequences

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INTRODUCTION

Imagine that you have recently met a man, about your age, whom you feel strongly attracted to. He is waiting at the entrance of a restaurant, looking intensely at you while you cross the street. As you come close, he comments on how sexy you look, then puts his arm around your waist while you are entering the restaurant. Now imagine the exact same behaviors (staring at you, commenting on how sexy you look, and touching you) in a different context, performed by your male boss at work. Whereas you are likely to find the former situation extremely pleasant and exciting, you will probably find the latter episode stressful, offensive, and potentially threatening. The key feature that distinguishes harassing from non-harassing conduct is not any specific behavior, but the fact that it is unwelcome, not reciprocated, and considered inappropriate according to shared societal standards. In fact, practically all legal definitions include 'unwantedness' as one of the main criteria for defining sexual harassment.

In this chapter we first present prevalence estimates of sexual harassment, followed by a review of different forms of sexual harassment. We then analyze who is at risk of becoming a victim of harassment and who is likely to become a perpetrator, followed by a discussion of the consequences arising for the victim and for the institution in which the harassment occurs. Subsequently, we focus more in-depth on the harasser and analyze different motivations that may drive harassing behaviors. Finally, we consider situational variables that facilitate or inhibit harassment and discuss intervention strategies aimed at preventing harassment within organizations.

DEFINITION AND PREVALENCE OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Legal definitions vary greatly from country to country, with many countries having no provision at all (see UNIFEM, 2008/2009). In most countries that do have specific legislation,

sexual harassment is treated as a form of gender[1] discrimination, without requiring proof of intentionality of the act. For instance, the European Union (amending Council Directive 76/207/EEC, Article 1.2., 23.9.20022[2], see also Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, 2004) defines sexual harassment *"any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature occurs, with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person, in particular when creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment"*. Likewise, according to the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC, 2012), *'unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when this conduct explicitly or implicitly affects an individual's employment, unreasonably interferes with an individual's work performance, or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.... The harasser's conduct must be unwelcome'*. In the context of educational settings, the US Department of Education (Office of Civil Rights, 2001) defines sexual harassment as *'unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature ... [that] can deny or limit ... the student's ability to participate in or receive benefits, services, or opportunities in the school's program.'* What these definitions have in common is the acknowledgement that the conduct is unwelcome and that it has detrimental effects on the victim (for a comprehensive overview of the legal evolution of sexual harassment in the United States see DeSouza, 2011a).

Sexual harassment is a very common, but generally underestimated, phenomenon. At times, victims do not recognize and label episodes as harassment (especially in countries where awareness of the phenomenon is low, see European Commission, 1998). And even when sexual harassing conduct is identified as such, victims are often reluctant to file complaints or even turn to a confidential counselor or supervisor due to fear of retaliation or lack of trust in the institutions (e.g., European Commission, 1998). For this reason, official sexual harassment complaints provide a poor estimate of actual rates of harassment, which are best assessed through representative surveys. Harassment statistics derived from such surveys vary across professional settings, countries, and research methods, but generally between 40% and 60% of women and about 10% of men report having been harassed at work. Since most surveys define a specific time window (e.g., 'within the last two years'), it is likely that cumulative probabilities across the entire lifespan exceed these estimates. Despite these uncertainties, there is little doubt that sexual harassment constitutes a widespread phenomenon in all Western countries where the phenomenon has been studied most systematically. Educational organizations such as schools and universities are no exception. For instance, it is estimated that about 80% of students in public schools in the United States have experienced some form of sexual harassment (American Association of University Women Educational Foundation, 2001; Eckes, 2006; Mentell, 1993).

Forms of Harassment

The term 'sexual harassment' encompasses a variety of behaviors that can vary considerably in severity. In psychological research, sexual harassment is typically divided according to one of two broad classification systems. The first distinguishes *quid-pro-quo* from *hostile environment* harassment. *Quid-pro-quo* harassment refers to situations in which an individual who holds power provides advantages (e.g., hiring), or withholds disadvantages (e.g., firing) in exchange for sexual favors. This kind of harassment requires a status hierarchy and is typically exerted by higher-status males who have institutional power over lower-status females (or, to a lesser degree, men). *Hostile environment* harassment includes behaviors such as telling sexual jokes, making sexual gestures or unprofessional sexist remarks, uninvited touching, displaying sexual materials and the

like, all of which can create an intimidating, offensive, or hostile work environment. The latter form of harassment does not require a power differential and indeed is often displayed by coworkers of approximately equal status. Interestingly, *hostile environment* harassment has even been observed in inverse power relations, such as when individuals in a subordinate position (e.g., students) harass those in a superior position (e.g., professors, see DeSouza, 2011b). For this non-prototypical form of harassment, DeSouza coined the term *contrapower harassment*. Within *hostile environment* harassment, a subtle form of sexual harassment is objectifying gaze (which may be defined as scrutinizing another person's body parts), a form of harassment that is frequently experienced by women (Kozee, Tylka, Augustus-Horvath, & Denchik, 2007; Swim, Hyers, Cohen, & Ferguson, 2001). As we will see later, it is a form of harassment that can have remarkable effects on the victim, possibly because of its ambiguous nature.

The other frequently used classification of sexual harassment was originally proposed by Fitzgerald and collaborators (see Fitzgerald & Hesson-McInnis, 1989; Fitzgerald, Gelfand, & Drasgow, 1995), and distinguishes between *sexual coercion*, *unwanted sexual attention*, and *gender harassment*. In this classification, *sexual coercion* represents the most severe form of harassment and includes behaviors such as sexual blackmail, threats aimed at receiving sexual cooperation, or physical attacks. This form of harassment is most likely to occur at critical career stages such as hiring and promotion. *Unwanted sexual attention*, such as touching or making explicit sexual remarks, represents the intermediate level, whereas *gender harassment* (including misogyny and sexual orientation harassment) refers to relatively benign, but particularly frequent, forms of sexual harassment, such as telling sexist jokes or exposing pornographic materials at work. Although *quid-pro-quo* or sexual coercion, unwanted sexual attention, hostile environment or gender harassment are distinct forms of harassment, they tend to co-occur. For instance, work settings in which unwanted sexual attention is more prevalent also tend to have higher rates of gender harassment, suggesting a generalized problematic situation in the organization (we return to this issue when we consider the important role that the normative context can play in encouraging and discouraging harassment).

As the above examples of harassing conduct illustrate, harassers can employ different channels of communication, including verbal (e.g., sexual jokes, verbal sexual advances), nonverbal (e.g., staring, whistling, exposing pornographic materials), and physical forms of expression (e.g., unsolicited physical contact; see European Commission, 1998). Harassing language practices are particularly common in reference to gays, the second largest group of victims of harassment. Homophobic epithets aimed at denigrating homosexuals (such as 'fag' and 'faggot') are frequently used among primary school (Plummer, 2001) and college students alike (Burn, 2000), and 99% of gay and lesbian college students recount having heard homophobic remarks on campus (D'Augelli, 1992).

A similar pattern of sexual harassment can also be found in cyberspace, but with two important differences: physical contact is by definition impossible and sexual coercion attempts are relatively rare (see Barak, 2005, for an overview). In contrast, gender harassment is very common in chat rooms, forums, e-mail exchanges, and even in regular use of search engines, and it includes both offensive sexual messages and unwanted exposure to pornographic materials. For instance, users may incidentally run into pornographic or offensive materials when searching the Internet, or when unsolicited pop-ups are encountered. Online gender harassment can occur in a variety of different forms, such as when Internet users engage in hostile and insulting interactions, commonly known as 'flaming'. Similar to real world harassment, online harassment

tends to create a hostile virtual environment for women, who often feel obliged to leave online communities for this reason (see Barak, 2005; Scott, Semmens, & Willoughby, 2001). In addition, Internet users may be exposed to unwanted sexual attention and, in some cases, sexual coercion (including cyber-stalking and bribes; see Barak, 2005, for an overview). Although victims cannot be exposed to physical force, they can be threatened or blackmailed to engage in sexual cooperation, as most clearly evidenced by the behavior of adult Internet users recruiting child victims through online interactions.

It is currently difficult to judge whether – given similar conditions – sexual harassment is facilitated in Internet as compared to offline interactions. On the one hand, the greater anonymity of the Internet may make harassment easier, whereas on the other hand the victim is generally better protected as she can leave the situation and interrupt the interaction with greater ease on the Internet than in most real-life situations. Another important question is whether Internet harassment is perceived differently than face-to-face harassment. Berkley and Kaplan (2009) have shown that – given identical content – jurors tend to judge email harassment as harsher than verbal harassment, suggesting that, at least in the eyes of the observer, written harassment has greater weight and is evaluated more severely, possibly because it leaves tangible evidence. Sexual harassment includes a wide range of phenomena that vary from very severe to relatively mild, but interactions in virtual environments largely reproduce the harassment patterns found in the real world.

Victim and Perpetrator Characteristics: Who Is at Risk?

Across different geographical areas, women constitute the primary target of sexual harassment both in terms of incidence and legal charges. For instance, a recent analysis by the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (2012) revealed that only 16% of all sexual harassment charges in the United States were filed by men. The same report also found that sexual harassment charges by male victims have increased steadily over time (from 12% in 1997 to 16% in 2011). A similar pattern emerges from a national telephone survey conducted by the Australian Human Rights Commission in 2008 in which 22% of women, but only 5% of men reported to have personally experienced sexual harassment. Thus, as these studies exemplify, women are the large majority of victims. Importantly, the few studies investigating same-gender versus cross-gender harassment also show that a relevant portion of the male victims involve gay men harassed by heterosexual men, which makes men the most common target of same-gender harassment.

But what is the profile of the typical victim of harassment? Some studies have investigated the characteristics of prototypical female victims. As far as occupational settings are concerned, the European Commission (1998) concluded that 'women who are between 30 and 40 years of age, single or divorced, with a lower level of education are more likely to experience sexual harassment'. Moreover, women in temporary jobs or in a minority status within male-dominated organizations are most likely the targets of sexual harassment. Also, dual minority status, such as being a black woman (Berdahl & Moore, 2006) or a female student belonging to a national minority group (DeSouza, 2010), seems to constitute a particularly strong risk. Similarly, multi-racial individuals tend to report higher rates of harassment (Buchanan et al., 2009). Finally, there is evidence that women who have already been victims of prior interpersonal violence (such as child or partner abuse) are particularly likely to be targets of sexual harassment (for a recent overview, see Stockdale & Nadler, 2012). Indeed, Stockdale and Nadler claim that sexual harassment often represents a form of 'revictimization'.[3] Together, the picture

of the prototypical victim emerging from these studies is that of a particularly vulnerable woman, although the source of this vulnerability may be quite varied (e.g., race, young age, low education, critical career stage, solo status, or prior victimization).

There is also another, and quite different, victim profile emerging from research. For instance, in an analysis of different organizations, Berdahl (2007a, 2007b) found that women who do not conform to gender stereotypes and who violate gender-role expectations are particularly likely to be harassed. For instance, assertive, or independent women experience more harassment than those with more feminine personalities. Convergent evidence comes from experimental studies showing that women are harassed more frequently when they express feminist views (see Maass & Cadinu, 2006, for an overview).

These lines of research suggest that there are two distinct types of women who 'attract' the harassing conduct of males, namely weak and vulnerable women on one side and strong and independent women on the other. Given these distinct profiles, it seems likely that different types of harassers are driven by different motivations, given that the former group of women is easily dominated whereas the latter probably poses a threat to male dominance. We will address this issue in depth when we discuss research concerning the motivations driving harassment.

Turning to male victims, although men are overall much less likely to become victims of sexual harassment, they are the most common target of same-gender harassment (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2008). This group of victims includes both gay men (the second largest target group after women) and heterosexual men who do not comply with stereotypical gender norms. Thus, for both groups (male and female victims) gender-role incongruence, along with low status or power, seem to be key risk factors for becoming victims of sexual harassment.

Concerning the profile of the typical perpetrator, the vast majority of harassers are men, although cases of female harassers have been reported and their number seems to be rising as women gain greater power in organizations. Harassers typically are superiors or colleagues, and very rarely subordinates, although cases of *contrapower* harassment have been reported in the literature (see DeSouza, 2011b). Whereas it is difficult to define a precise psychological profile of the typical perpetrator, it is relatively easy to identify individuals with a high harassment proclivity. In this respect, Pryor, Giedd, and Williams (1995) have proposed a Person X Situation model, predicting that only a small proportion of men will harass and they will do so only in settings that permit such behaviors. Men's proclivity to harass is generally assessed through the Likelihood of Sexual Harassment Scale (LSH, Pryor, 1987; see Bartling & Eisenman, 1993, for a similar scale applicable to men and women), consisting of a series of hypothetical scenarios, in which the protagonist may or may not sexually exploit a female subordinate. The LSH scale allows for reliable identification of those men who are at high risk of becoming quid-pro-quo harassers, but LSH is also predictive of other forms of sexual harassment (e.g., Maass, Cadinu, Guarnieri, & Grasselli, 2003; Rudman & Borgida, 1995; Siebler, Sabelus, & Bohner, 2008).

What kinds of men show a high sexual harassment proclivity? Research investigating the psychological characteristics of high LSH men has identified a series of trait correlates of LSH, including high levels of hostile sexism, rape myth acceptance, authoritarianism, endorsement of traditional gender roles and masculine ideology, and low levels of agreeableness, openness to experience, and empathy (see O'Leary-Kelly, Bowes-Sperry, Arens Bates, & Lean, 2009; Pina, Gannon, & Saunders, 2009 for reviews).

Another individual-difference variable that predicts sexual harassment is Social Dominance Orientation (SDO), which is the preference for hierarchical group relations. Maass et al.

(2003) found that men with a high SDO were more likely than low-SDO men to actually harass a woman by sending pornographic material to her by e-mail and reporting an intention to harass as measured by the LSH scale. Importantly, high-SDO men not only harassed, on average, more than their low-SDO peers, but they also harassed a feminist interaction partner more than a traditional woman, presumably because feminist women challenge the status advantage of males.

Consequences of and Reactions to Harassment

There is no doubt that sexual harassment can have severe consequences for the victim and, in the case of work-related harassment, for the organization as well. Various meta-analyses (Cantisano, Dominguez, & Depolo, 2008; Lapierre, Spector, & Leck, 2005; Willness, Steel, & Lee, 2007) have consistently documented these negative outcomes. More specifically, sexual harassment can have negative effects on both physical and mental health of the victim. As far as physical health is concerned, typical effects involve stress-related psychosomatic symptoms such as headache, nausea, shortness of breath, fatigue, gastro-intestinal problems, sleeplessness, loss of appetite, and weight-loss. Sexual harassment-related mental health problems include depression, anxiety, anger and irritability, uncontrolled crying, and burnout-related symptoms such as emotional exhaustion. In addition, victims often show symptoms indicative of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), suggesting that at least some forms of sexual harassment should be considered serious trauma (see Avina & O'Donohue, 2002). Considering the broader and less specific consequences of sexual harassment, research has generally documented a reduction in psychological well-being, life satisfaction, and self-esteem, which, although less dramatic, may be detectable even after considerable time has passed.

In employment contexts, sexual harassment effects have been directly linked to performance decrements, increased absentee rates, job withdrawal, reduced job satisfaction, and a decline in organizational commitment (e.g., Schneider, Swan, & Fitzgerald, 1997; Fitzgerald, Drasgow, Hulin, Gelfand, & Magley, 1997). These observable performance effects generally drive the motivation of management to implement prevention strategies, such as normative interventions or diversity management programs. Performance declines have also been studied experimentally, showing that women perform much worse, especially on stereotypically masculine tasks (such as mathematics), when they are sexually harassed. For instance, Gervais, Vescio, and Allen (2011) observed that exposure to objectifying gaze interfered with performance at mathematics for women, but not for men. In a similar vein, Gay and Castano (2010) found a performance deficit on cognitive tasks when women were objectified, a decline that the authors attributed to increased cognitive load. However, the exact processes underlying such harassment-induced performance decrements need to be examined in greater depth, potentially from both objectification (see Bosson, Vandello, & Caswell, Chapter 8 this volume) and stereotype threat (see Betz, Ramsey, & Sekaquaptewa, Chapter 26 this volume) perspectives.

At the same time, even comparably 'mild' forms of harassment, such as exposure to sexually explicit materials, may have important social consequences. Hundhammer and Mussweiler (2012) have argued that exposure to sexual primes will lead to highly gendered self-perceptions and behaviors. In support of this idea, participants who were either super- or subliminally exposed to sex primes (either in verbal or pictorial form) described themselves in a more gender stereotypical way and also behaved in line with traditional gender roles, with women becoming more submissive and males more assertive and dominant. These findings suggest that sexually explicit materials displayed at the workplace or on websites may contribute in a subtle way to the maintenance of traditional gender roles.

Importantly, the severity of the consequences of experiencing sexual harassment varies greatly across settings and across victims, suggesting that organizational factors (such as organizational climate and social support) and personal factors can jointly contribute to the emergence of harassment-related outcomes. In addition, responses to sexual harassment vary greatly across targets. Some victims confront the harasser directly, other victims are unable to take action, either directly (confronting the harasser) or indirectly (turning to supervisors, confidential counselors, coworkers, or seeking legal advice outside of the organization) because they fear retaliation or expect a lack of support.

In addition, some victims are disturbed more by sexual harassment than others and research has shown that such differential appraisals play an important moderating role in the experience of sexual harassment. For instance, victims who are bothered by the harassment episode also tend to experience greater health problems (de Haas, Timmerman, & Hoeing, 2009; Langhout et al., 2005). This moderating role of appraisal on health appears to be more pronounced in cross-race sexual harassment (Woods, Buchanan, & Settles, 2009). Indeed, cross-racial sexual harassment is perceived as more offensive and frightening, which results in more serious post-traumatic stress reactions.

Another important variable moderating the effects of sexual harassment on physical and mental health is the presence or absence of work-related social support (e.g., feeling valued at work and being able to count on one's colleagues; de Haas et al., 2009). Overall, a meta-analysis conducted by Cantisano, Dominguez, and Depolo (2008) suggests that the detrimental effects of sexual harassment vary greatly as a function of the degree of social support available to the victim. While the effects of sexual harassment can be severe and long-lasting, these effects are not automatic; rather, they depend on a number of moderating variables, including the victim's appraisal of the incident(s) and the level of social support available (see also Matheson & Foster, Chapter 20 this volume).

Motivations Driving Harassment

One of the most interesting and challenging questions is why perpetrators engage in harassment. Given that sexual harassment is counternormative, and sometimes illegal, why would people (typically men) still engage in harassing behaviors? What is their motivation and what do they gain from it? There are at least three motivations, namely sex, power, and gender identity protection, which have been hypothesized to drive harassing behaviors. First, and most obviously, men (and in a few cases women) may harass because they search for sexual arousal and/or sexual satisfaction. Second, sexual harassment may be driven by a need for power over women (or the victim group more generally). Third, sexual harassment (both of women and, atypically, men) may constitute a means of bolstering one's gender identity as male or to defend it when that identity is perceived as threatened. Below we examine each of these three motivations.

The first motivation underlying sexual harassment – to obtain *sexual favors* – is pretty straightforward. For example, in the case of sexual blackmail, sexual satisfaction or sexual arousal would appear to be by definition the goal of sexual harassment. More specifically, sexual blackmail can be defined as a threat for which sex is the potential price to be paid by the victim. However, sex is an unlikely explanation for other forms of harassment such as hostile-environment or gender harassment. Also, if the desire for sex was the primary motivation, harassers should essentially search for victims who are very feminine considering that most heterosexual men consider stereotypically feminine women sexually attractive; yet, many studies have shown that victims often have rather masculine, gender-role incongruent characteristics (Berdahl, 2007a, 2007b). This suggests that only a portion of harassing behaviors can be accounted for by the desire for sex and that other motivations must come into play.

The second motivation that has been proposed to drive sexual harassment is the *need for power* over the victim. This motivation is based on the connection between power and sex, which is especially entrenched in societies in which strong power inequalities define the relations between men and women. For instance, when organizing his questionable social events, Italy's former prime minister Silvio Berlusconi sometimes invited, along with young and attractive women, powerful men from the TV and film industries because 'these are men who can offer jobs to whomever they want … thus, the young women have the impression they will find themselves in front of men who can decide their destiny' (intercepted phone call, 23 September 2007, cited in *La Stampa*, 17 September 2011). The common connection between power and sex is in line with the idea that, in some men, the concepts of sex and power are closely and *automatically* linked (Bargh, Raymond, Pryor, & Strack, 1995). Using a subliminal priming paradigm, these investigators demonstrated that male participants who were high in LSH were also faster to respond to a series of target words related to sex, which had been primed by words related to power. Moreover, their responses were also faster to power words, which had been primed by sex words. Because facilitation occurred regardless of the direction of the prime-target combination, these results suggest that, in absence of conscious awareness, power and sex are interconnected in the mind of those high in proclivity to sexually harass.

The idea that harassment is driven by power rather than sexual desire is in line with studies showing that harassers often prefer particularly vulnerable victims, including women who have limited resources to react, have multiple minority memberships, or have already been victims of interpersonal violence in the past. Also in line with this interpretation are studies showing greater harassment rates among men who are high in social dominance orientation (Maass et al., 2003).

The third motivation driving sexual harassment is what we have called *gender identity protection* (Maass & Cadinu, 2006). In our research (Dell'Ara & Maass, 2000; Maass et al., 2003), we have focused primarily on the least severe, but also most common form of sexual harassment: gender harassment or misogyny. This kind of sexual harassment poses a puzzle to researchers because it is not aimed at gaining sexual satisfaction. Whereas other forms of sexual harassment may be related in part to the perpetrator's goal of gaining sexual satisfaction, this is not the case for gender harassment. For example, exposing pornographic material, using sexual epithets, or telling jokes, gags, and double meanings that support offensive and degrading depictions of women are behaviors that are not aimed at obtaining sexual favors, but rather are aimed at offending women.[4] Maass and Cadinu (2006) point out that what motivation leads to gender harassment and what kind of satisfaction the perpetrator might derive from this form of harassment can best be addressed from a social identity perspective.

Consistent with social identity theory (SIT; Tajfel & Turner, 1986), Branscombe, Ellemers, Spears, and Doosje (1999) showed that ingroup favoritism and outgroup discrimination can increase as a function of threat to the ingroup's identity. Because harassing conduct can be conceived as a form of outgroup derogation, we reasoned that sexual harassment could also derive from the desire to enhance or protect (a) the status of one's own gender group especially when the status of the ingroup has been threatened (e.g., via legitimacy threat), or (b) the status of the self within the ingroup has been threatened (e.g., via prototypicality threat). Legitimacy threat was investigated in one of our studies in which participants interacted via computer with a supposed feminist versus a traditional woman (Maass et al., 2003, Experiment 1), and masculinity (or prototypicality) threat was investigated in a second study in which a male participant was told (after taking a fictitious test) that he was a rather atypical male (Maass

et al., 2003, Experiment 2). In line with a gender identity interpretation of sexual harassment, under both types of threat, the level of sexual harassment, operationalized as the number of pornographic pictures sent to the female interaction partner, strongly increased as compared to the no-threat condition. Recently, Hunt and Gonsalkorale (2011), using the same computer harassment paradigm, have provided evidence that such harassment under gender identity threat may serve ingroup-bonding purposes, particularly among males who conform to masculinity norms. In order to distinguish dominance from ingroup-bonding motivation, the authors created a situation in which the two motivations may enter in conflict. The gender identity of male participants was first threatened (or not threatened) and then they were provided with an opportunity to harass a woman in the presence of a peer who either encouraged or discouraged such harassment. If dominance over women was the main motivation, threatened males should harass regardless of the peer's behavior. However, if ingroup bonding was the motivating force, then threatened male participants should align their behaviors with that of their ingroup peer. Results supported the latter explanation: men with a high need to conform to masculinity norms (e.g., to be in control, to have power over women) harassed more, but they did so only under specific conditions, namely when their gender identity was threatened and when a male peer encouraged the harassing conduct. Together, these findings suggest that, for these men, harassment serves to re-establish a positive gender identity by aligning their identity with other ingroup members.

A motivational interpretation is not new to the literature on sexual harassment. For example, regarding same-gender sexual harassment, research has shown that men are much more likely to be bothered, distressed, and humiliated by it than by different-gender sexual harassment (Stockdale, Visio, & Batra, 1999). These authors concluded that men are strongly harmed by same-gender sexual harassment because these experiences pose a threat to their masculinity. In addition, same-gender sexual harassment might be used as a weapon against those men who violate the stereotypical gender norms on how men should behave.

Also consistent with a gender identity interpretation are results from a study by Siebler et al. (2008), who gave male participants an opportunity to send sexist jokes to a computer-simulated female chat partner. As in Maass et al. (2003), feminists were harassed more than traditional women because by definition they challenge male privilege in society and thus may pose a threat to men with a traditionally masculine gender identity. Overall, the explanation of sexual harassment as gender identity protection has received considerable support, and it has been able to account for the findings that sexual harassment (a) often occurs in situations in which the perpetrator feels under gender identity threat, and (b) is often directed toward strong (e.g., feminists) versus weak (e.g., traditional) women.

Although each of these three motivations may become the main driving force in specific situations and may be directed at specific types of victims, they are not mutually exclusive. For instance, sex and power motivation may co-occur, especially in those males in whom the two concepts are semantically linked. Similarly, exerting power over women may become a strong motivation for those males who are exposed to an identity threat, as in the case of high SDO males, who are particularly likely to harass when their masculine identity is threatened (Maass et al., 2003).

PREVENTING HARASSMENT THROUGH NORMS, REGULATIONS, AND DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT

Sexual harassment is not confined to any specific context; it can potentially occur anywhere. However, its prevalence varies greatly as a function of the general culture of a country

and of the specific climate within an organization. For instance, the *sociocultural model* (Gruber & Bjorn, 1982; Rospenda, 2002) identifies socially legitimized power and status differences across gender as causes of sexual harassment in patriarchal society. This model suggests that normative and legal regulations are top priorities in countering sexual harassment. Legislation indeed plays an important social role in communicating what is acceptable and what is not, thus defining the values and morals of a given society. In most Western countries, legislation has erected strict boundaries for interpersonal behavior and the law sanctions sexually harassing conduct. Unfortunately, however, legal regulations are not sufficient means of controlling sexual harassment unless they are accompanied by changes in social norms and in the culture in which sexual harassment takes place.

In this section, we first explore how sexual harassment is influenced by the normative context both in the society at large and within specific organizations. We report evidence from both national surveys and experimental studies showing that the prevalence of harassment varies greatly as a function of normative and legal regulations and of organizational climate. We then examine how harassment can be prevented and addressed in organizations, and discuss the characteristics that harassment policies ought to have in order to be effective.

At the societal level, sexual harassment is influenced by social norms, but the dissemination of such norms depends to a large degree on broadly available channels of communication. As a case in point, restrictive versus permissive norms regarding sexual harassment may be communicated through the media, as recently shown by Galdi, Maass, and Cadinu (2013). In Italy, the overwhelming diffusion of television programs characterized by the presence of women as sexual objects (scantily clad, dressed in a sexually explicit manner, presented in sexually exploitative ways and posing in submissive postures, see Zanardo, Malfi Chindemi, and Cantu's documentary film *Women's Bodies* (2009) as an example) led us to test the hypothesis that exposure to objectifying TV in which women are depicted as sexual objects increases the likelihood of sexual harassment. As predicted, male participants were more likely to send sexist jokes supporting offensive and degrading depictions of women[5] to a female chat-line partner and reported a higher intention to harass (assessed via LSH) after viewing an objectifying TV clip compared to a non-objectifying control clip. Interestingly, men also viewed the female chat partner as less competent after watching the objectifying TV clip despite the fact that there was no logical link between the women shown in the TV program and the specific female chat partner. In a second experiment, using the same procedure, participants also showed an increase in adherence to traditional masculinity norms right after watching objectifying TV clip, which led to an increase in the number of sexist jokes sent to the female partner. Overall, this study revealed that exposure to objectifying TV programs encourages men's harassing responses, most likely because it induces a shift in the norms that govern harassing (vs respectful) behaviors. As a case in point, empirical evidence suggests a relation between adherence to masculine norms and sexual aggression (Pleck, Sonnenstein, & Ku, 1994). Applying these findings to the present issue, exposure to objectifying TV programs may contribute to the emergence of harassment in two ways: by creating harassing role models that adhere to traditional masculine norms such as the pursuit of status and of power over women, and by condoning harassing conduct.

Turning to the organizational level, several studies have shown that sexual harassment is widespread both in educational and in work settings (Petrocelli & Repa, 1998; Richman et al., 1999), but that the incidence rates vary greatly as a function of occupational and organizational characteristics. In particular, temporary workers, employees in lower administrative occupations, and women in male-dominated jobs (such as police officers, bus or taxi drivers, or soldiers)

are most likely to experience sexual harassment (Bergman & Drasgow, 2003; European Commission, 1998; Fitzgerald, Drasgow, & Waldo, 1999).

Not only occupational, but also organizational characteristics are critical in determining whether harassment will occur. For instance, in a meta-analytic review of the incidence of sexual harassment in the United States (Ilies, Hauserman, Schwochau, & Stibal, 2003), sexual harassment was more prevalent in organizations characterized by large power differentials among organizational levels, such as the military. In contrast, lower sexual harassment incidence rates are generally found in organizations that are less hierarchical and characterized by smaller power differentials, such as academia and government. Even within academia, areas such as medicine that are more hierarchical tend to have higher incidence rates than those that are less hierarchical.

Organizational culture is another critical variable explaining differential incidence rates. Organizational culture refers to the values, beliefs, and expectations of the employees (Lahiry, 1994). For example, O'Hare and O'Donohue (1998) found that cultural risk factors most strongly associated with sexual harassment are (a) an 'unprofessional environment' in the workplace (lacking respectful interactions and professional behaviors and appearance), (b) a sexist atmosphere, and (c) the lack of knowledge about the organization's formal grievance procedures. A similar picture emerges from survey data showing that sexual harassment experiences are less frequent in employee-oriented organizations, which focus more on creating a better work environment, and in organizations that allow women to achieve a better balance between work, private and family life (European Commission, 1998). Thus, the normative context and the general organizational climate seem to play a critical role in harassment, in both educational and work settings.

In most democratic countries, organizations are held responsible for preventing sexual harassment or for intervening once it has occurred. But what prevention strategies are available and what features should these interventions have in order to be successful? It has been argued that a strong, unequivocal, and detailed zero-tolerance policy against sexual harassment is one of the most important means of prevention and creates healthy organizations. For instance, results from a national study conducted in Germany (European Commission, 1998) have shown that in companies with a generic policy, 37% of the employees reported sexual harassment, as opposed to 21% in organizations with a detailed sexual harassment policy. However, such policies are unlikely to be effective unless additional conditions are met, including well-defined reporting channels, a consistent application of sanctions, extensive communication and awareness campaigns, the active involvement of management, investment in appropriate resources, and the implementation of regular assessment procedures. We consider the role of each of these factors below.

Regarding the specific characteristics of sexual harassment policies, Bell, Campbell Quick, and Cycyota (2002) suggest that an organization's policy against sexual harassment should be visible and provide multiple, safe-reporting channels. These authors also emphasize the importance of investigating complaints in a speedy and thorough manner so that harassment behaviors are appropriately and quickly sanctioned. In line with these recommendations, O'Leary-Kelly, Paetzold, and Griffin (2000) have argued that the *certainty* of punishment provides more effective prevention than the *severity* of punishment. In a similar vein, studies conducted in schools have shown that consistent responses to incidents of sexual harassment are a critical component of school-wide prevention programs (Corbett, Golder, & Hoffman, 1996; Meraviglia, Becker, Rosenbluth, Sanchez, & Robertson, 2003).

Moreover, any policy against sexual harassment should be accompanied by a communication strategy to promote the policy, increase awareness, and ultimately create a

general climate and culture opposing sexual harassment. Specifically, research has shown that increased awareness of sexual harassment and reduced rates of sexual harassment in schools depend on the clear communication of behavioral expectations and rules, and on the consistent enforcement of these rules (Corbett et al., 1996; Meraviglia et al., 2003). Interesting examples designed for school settings are the discussion-oriented program (including handouts, lessons, classroom activities, writing assignments, and homework) developed by Stein and Sjostrom (1994) for children in the 6 to 12 age group and educational interventions (focusing on awareness and training workshops for both potential victims and for potential harassers) proposed by Paludi and Barickman (1998) for elementary and secondary students.

Importantly, to create a solid and lasting organizational culture opposing sexual harassment, top management should be actively involved in formulating and communicating the organizational policy. Because management plays a central role in shaping the organization's culture and characteristics, its actions can have strong effects on the attitudes and behavior of the employees. In two studies conducted in the United Kingdom (European Commission, 1998), about 50% of the employees reported that employers or management were not effectively dealing with sexual harassment. The most commonly reported complaint was that sexual harassment was not taken seriously by management or by others in the workplace, frequently because the management was male-dominated. Thus, a clear management position on sexual harassment appears to be essential: top management should be held responsible for committing the necessary resources for regular assessment and training, and should systematically verify the appropriateness of women's roles, status, and positions. More generally, an effective policy against sexual harassment should also guarantee gender equity and ensure that women are not systematically relegated to low status and powerless positions throughout the organization.

In order to proactively address the problem of sexual harassment in organizations, it is important to regularly assess sexual harassment incidence rates, which allows human resource managers and policy-makers to create appropriate interventions and to subsequently assess their effectiveness. In order to avoid under-reporting, such assessments should involve specific rather than generic questions. For example, results from a meta-analysis by Ilies and collaborators (2003) have shown that directly querying respondents about whether they had experienced sexual harassment results in substantially lower estimates of sexual harassment incidence rates as compared to using questionnaires providing lists of specific behaviors that constitute sexual harassment. This difference can be accounted for by two factors: (1) employees may be reluctant to label offensive behavior as sexual harassment, and (2) employees may not be able to correctly recognize relatively benign, but particularly frequent episodes (such as sexist jokes) as sexual harassment. To overcome these problems, estimates of incidence rates should include measures assessing both employees' experience with and their perception of sexually harassing behaviors, the level of workplace sexualization, job satisfaction, as well as more objective measures including a list of experiences that constitute sexual harassment. Besides aiding in the implementation of prevention programs, the use of such measures also communicates the importance of detecting sexual harassment and signals the value placed on harassment-free work environments and on healthy organizational relationships. In the case of sexual harassment policies in schools, it would be desirable to use separate teacher, parent, and student surveys. Specifically, the inclusion of parents in school surveys on sexual harassment could increase their awareness of this issue, which in turn aids them in becoming better advocates for their children and ensuring that schools are safe places for students.

As this brief overview illustrates, there are many indications about how to best implement sexual harassment prevention strategies in the workplace and in educational settings. However, most of these interventions are aimed at defining norms and enforcing conformity to these norms, if necessary through punishment. Although able to raise awareness and provide complaint procedures for the victims, these strategies are risky and may, indeed, backfire, especially when applied to men whose social identity derives from their group-based superiority compared to women. Males whose gender identity is at stake may feel threatened when their privileges are challenged or when they are accused of harassing conduct towards their female co-workers.

Over the past two decades, an alternative approach has been developed, generally known as diversity training. Diversity training is part of many diversity management programs and generally aims at creating a work environment 'where "we" is everyone' (Thomas, 1990, p. 109). Although quite compatible with social identity theory, diversity training theory and research has largely been confined to business and management journals and, to date, has received relatively little attention from psychologists (see Pendry, Driscoll, & Field, 2007, for an exception).

Diversity training programs differ from traditional sexual harassment prevention programs primarily in two respects: they are generally broader in scope (not focusing on a single minority group) and they typically combine instructional (e.g., lectures, education, videos) with interactive (e.g., discussions, role-playing, simulations) approaches. Thus, active involvement is an important ingredient of the learning experience. Illustrative examples are Peggy McIntosh's 'walking through white privilege exercise' or related privilege-walk workshops, and Jane Elliott's well-known blue-eyed/brown-eyed simulation (see Stewart, La Duke, Bracht, Sweet, & Gamarel, 2003, for an evaluation). During these exercises employees experience privileges and discrimination on the basis of trivial categorization criteria (such as hair colour, being right- or left-handed, wearing a beard, etc.). Similarly, employees may participate in role-play and demonstrations (such as taking the IAT, see Pendry et al., 2007) intended to increase prejudice awareness (for an overview see King, Gulick, & Kravitz, 2011). These experiences generally serve as a starting point for a more profound elaboration of the aims of the diversity training.

Although a wide range of diversity training programs are now available, systematic evaluations of their efficacy in terms of awareness raising, workplace behavior, and organizational outcomes are still relatively rare. There is evidence that such programs produce positive short-term effects in both majority and minority employees, but at this point relatively little is known about their long-term effects (Kulik & Roberson, 2008; Waight & Madera, 2011). Therefore, at present, we can only state that this is a promising type of intervention that may produce less reactance than purely normative interventions, especially for males whose harassing conduct is driven by gender-protective motives.

If little research exists on the effectiveness of prevention programs for sexual harassment, even less is known about the effects of sexual harassment on the Internet and ways to prevent it. Although it is practically impossible to change the culture of Internet use because of its self-contained nature and the diversity of its users, Barak (2005) has suggested that much can be done in local online communities 'through the exercise of responsible, dedicated leadership endorsing a firm anti-sexual harassment policy. Such an approach can be implemented through continuous messages … as well as by transparent sanctioning against any deviation from these standards' (p. 86). Obviously, this kind of leadership will not prevent sexual harassment on the Internet as a whole. Nevertheless, one way to combat sexual harassment on the Internet is to circulate online guides that contain explanations, recommendations, and instructions to be posted on numerous sites in order to highlight this important issue. Unfortunately, educational

efforts will not prevent people with high proclivities to sexually harass from doing so; nevertheless, these educational efforts may make them aware of the negative consequences of their behavior for potential victims.

CONCLUSION

Sexual harassment in its various forms is widespread in Western countries, and its effects can be very severe, disrupting both the personal and the work life of the victims. Because organizational factors, such as organizational climate, social support, and zero-tolerance rules, can reduce the frequency and severity of sexual harassment in the work place, detailed prevention policies within organizations should not only be encouraged, but also considered assets for society as a whole. Specifically, one could expect spillover effects going from general laws, via organizational policies, to normative behavior across social contexts progressively characterized by respectful social interactions.

The study of sexual harassment also has important connections with other areas of research, such as bullying, discrimination, sexism, and homophobia, some of which have only partially been explored. In addition, research connections may profitably be made to work on stereotype threat and objectification, which also emphasize the role of gender, sex, and sexualization, in both interpersonal and group relations. Therefore, research on stereotype threat and on objectification provide important theoretical and empirical links to the study of sexual harassment that should be developed further in future studies. Such integrative work could help identify the common underlying processes of these seemingly distinct phenomena, ideally leading to broader, overarching models of gender-related harmful conduct. Such an integrative view may also facilitate policy and prevention, as illustrated by the fact that some organizations have started to address different problem areas (such as harassment and bullying) within common guidelines and intervention programs.

Another area whose connection with sexual harassment appears very promising is the social psychology of communication and media. Our research (Galdi et al., 2013) has shown that watching objectifying TV programs for a mere three minutes leads to a significant increase in sexual harassment by men. Likewise, Ward (2002) has found that young women (but not men) exposed to primetime TV images depicting men as sex-driven and women as sexual objects showed stronger endorsement of these stereotypes than did women exposed to control video clips. Similarly, exposure to magazine ads featuring women as sexual objects produced stronger acceptance of gender role stereotyping and rape myths among male undergraduates (Lanis & Covell, 1995; MacKay & Covell, 1997).

The connection between sexual harassment and media is also important for the purpose of prevention, considering that young girls are the most vulnerable targets of sexualized media role models. For example, Durham (2009) has analyzed the exploitive and distorted ways in which girls' sexuality is represented by the commercial media, and Brookes and Kelly (2009) have shown how the 'consumer-media culture' has established itself as one of the most powerful influences in processes of self-formation for young people. More generally, recent studies have shown that the use of sex as a commodity in Western media is associated with an increase in the level of sexualization in self-image and interpersonal relations (see Dittmar, 2008; Grabe, Chapter 25 this volume). Therefore, it is important to study the effects of such media culture in relation to sexual harassment, considering that it is a powerful vehicle for sexualized social norms by (1) providing legitimacy to potential male harassers and (2) increasing the vulnerability of women

(or men) and young girls (or boys) as possible targets of sexual harassment. We hope that future research will profit from linking media culture, social norms, and sexual harassment.

From a methodological point of view, sexual harassment research, because it addresses a real-life issue, has mostly employed correlational methods, especially in organizations and educational settings (schools, universities). Comparably few experimental studies have been conducted, despite their obvious advantage in allowing the researcher to draw stronger causal inferences. Given the ethical difficulties in simulating 'real' harassment in the lab and given the limited ecological validity of such studies, the best strategy appears to be a multimethod approach, combining correlational research conducted in the field with experimental designs.

It is important to realize that several research questions related to sexual harassment have been relatively under-investigated. Among others, little attention has been given to sexual harassment in public places (on public transportation and streets), sexual harassment involving male victims (either gay or heterosexual men who do not conform to traditional gender roles), harassment in geographical areas other than the relatively culturally homogeneous areas of North America and Europe, and the important role of bystanders who may or may not intervene in defense of the victim (see Ryan & Wessel, 2012). Also, little is known about the relative efficacy of traditional normative prevention programs versus more experiential intervention strategies, such as those typically employed in diversity training. Finally, from a theoretical and practical point of view it is important to fully understand the match between victim and perpetrator characteristics, given the paradoxical finding that traditional women are at the greatest risk according to some studies, whereas other studies suggest that non-traditional women are the prime targets of harassment. We have argued here that different forms of harassment are driven by different motivations (sex, power, or identity protection) and that these different motivations are likely to lead men to choose different types of victims and possibly also different forms of harassment. It is conceivable that traditional women are more at risk for quid pro quo sexual harassment, and nontraditional women for hostile environment sexual harassment. If confirmed, this would also imply that different types of perpetrators and victims require different intervention strategies.

NOTES

1 Throughout this chapter we use the term gender in reference to females versus males, and the term sex in reference to sexuality.
2 http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32002L0073:EN:HTML (retrieved 19.2.2013)
3 Although revictimization is generally defined as the victimization of an adult who was victimized as a child, the definition here is more general as it may also include prior victimization that has occurred after childhood (for instance, as a young adult).
4 Besides degrading women, men may also derive pleasure from posting pornography in the workplace which may explain why they sometimes post pornography in all-male environments.
5 An example of the sexist jokes used in the experiment is: What is the difference between a battery and a woman? The battery has at least one positive side.

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