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# Identifying Factors That Produce Blame for Sexually Harassing Behavior

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Identifying Factors that Produce Blame for Sexually Harassing Behavior

by

Colin W. Key

A dissertation submitted to the faculty of

Brigham Young University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Psychology

Brigham Young University

August 2008

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BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE COMMITTEE APPROVAL

of a dissertation submitted by

Colin W. Key

This dissertation has been read by each member of the following graduate committee and by majority vote has been found to be satisfactory.

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As chair of the candidate's graduate committee, I have read the dissertation of Colin W. Key in its final form and have found that (1) its format, citations, and bibliographical style are consistent and acceptable and fulfill university and department style requirements; (2) its illustrative materials including figures, tables, and charts are in place; and (3) the final manuscript is satisfactory to the graduate committee and is ready for submission to the university library.

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## ABSTRACT

### Identifying Factors that Produce Blame for Sexually Harassing Behavior

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Doctor of Philosophy

This research investigated how individual differences impact ratings of blame for sexual harassers and their victims and whether or not any relationships could be explained by defensive attribution theory. This theory claims that blame is a product of the relevance of the situation and the actors within that situation. Participants completed an online questionnaire in which they read hypothetical cases of sexual harassment. They rated the relevance of the situation and the individuals in the scenarios, attributed blame to hypothetical harassers and victims, as well as other information expected to predict ratings of blame. Results suggested that 1) defensive attribution theory explains the effects of sexual harassment proclivity and gender on blame for sexual harassers; 2) defensive attribution theory may require revision to include the impact of situational relevance on personal relevance, and 3) blame for harassers and victims is explained by two different processes. This research has legal and organizational implications.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my wife, Jami, for all of her help and support. Without it, I would still merely be a master.

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## Identifying Factors that Produce Blame for Sexually Harassing Behavior

### *Sexual Harassment: An Important Social Issue*

Sexual harassment is a continuing social problem. Though estimates of its prevalence vary widely (Ilies et al., 2003), some research has indicated that the percentage of women who have experienced sexual harassment in their work environment is as high as 90% (Terpstra & Baker, 1987). Social scientists have researched the behaviors that constitute sexual harassment in an effort to better understand and hopefully prevent their commission. Numerous studies have examined what characteristics correlate with sexual harassment proclivities (e.g., Bartling & Eisenman, 1993; Bingham & Burleson, 1996; Pryor, 1987; Pryor, Giedd, & Williams, 1995; Pryor & Stoller, 1994) and the specific traits that correlate with attribution of blame in sexual harassment scenarios (e.g., Jensen & Gutek, 1982; De Judicibus & McCabe, 2001; Key, 2005; Kulik, Perry, & Pepper, 2003; Valentine-French & Radtke, 1989). Unfortunately, only little is understood about what causes some individuals to blame sexual harassers (and their victims) more than others.

The present study attempts to determine how sexual harassment proclivity and other individual differences (namely an individual's gender and intended career domain) explain attributions of blame in sexual harassment scenarios, as well as identify the underlying process that explains this relationship. In the following discussion, I will 1) explain the constructs of sexual harassment, harassment proclivity, and blame, 2) identify the correlates of sexual harassment and blame for sexual harassment, 3) describe a pertinent theory of how blame is attributed, and 4) address how this theory can be applied to explain blame for sexual harassment.

### *Understanding Sexual Harassment*

Sexual harassment is a familiar term to many Americans thanks in part to the confirmation hearings of Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas (Morse, Woodward, & Zweigenhaft, 1993). Though well known, it is not necessarily well understood. Numerous studies have assessed what behaviors people consider to constitute sexual harassment, suggesting that not everyone understands sexual harassment the same way. These differences in perceptions exist across cultures, (Li & Lee-Wong, 2005; Limpaphayom, Williams, & Fadil, 2006; Witkowska & Menckel, 2005), occupations (McCabe & Hardman, 2005), gender (Glomb & Espelage, 2005; Hayden, 2004; Smirles, 2004; Vance, Ensher, Hendricks, & Harris, 2004), ethnicities (Cortina, 2004; Lastella, 2004), and other behavioral and personality factors (Angelone, 2005; Olapegba, 2004). In an effort to make explicit exactly what is meant by “sexual harassment,” the legal definition of harassment (according to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission) and behavioral classifications of harassment are addressed below.

*Legal Definition.* The United States government first prohibited sexual harassment in the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title VII and later refined the prohibition in the Civil Rights Act of 1991. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), a division of the United States government that oversees this issue, defines sexual harassment as:

Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual’s employment; submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis of

employment decisions affecting the individual; or such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment. (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission [EEOC], 1980, p. 74677)

In this definition, the EEOC recognizes two forms of sexual harassment: *quid pro quo* and hostile environment harassment. The first portion of the definition above refers to *quid pro quo* harassment, which includes the request of sexual favors in exchange for the receipt or continuation of employment or benefits such as a promotion. The latter portion of the definition explains hostile environment harassment, which is conduct of a sexual nature that creates a work environment that could be considered offensive, intimidating, or otherwise difficult in which to work.

*Behavioral Models of Sexual Harassment.* Several typologies exist which define the domain of sexual harassment behaviorally. The earliest behavioral definition of harassment was provided by Till (1980; as cited by Fitzgerald, Swan & Magley, 1997), who analyzed the experiences of college women to create five categories of harassing behavior. The categories are: generalized sexist remarks and behavior; inappropriate and offensive, but sanction-free sexual advances; solicitation of sexual activity or other sex-related behavior by promise of reward; coercion of sexual activity by threat of punishment; and sexual crimes and misdemeanors. This initial model is valuable because it is based on actual experiences of college women. However, the categories are not "sharply delineated" (Till, 1980): some behaviors cannot clearly be placed into a single category. Furthermore, it has been argued that a distinction between bribery and threat is

not necessary, since one can assume that a statement of either bribery or threat assumes the other (Fitzgerald, Swan & Magley, 1997).

A second behavioral model of harassment is based on an analysis of court cases and other relevant literature (Gruber, 1992). According to Gruber's model, there are three main harassment categories: verbal requests, verbal comments, and nonverbal displays. Within each category are subcategories, organized according to severity of the behavior. Verbal requests include the following subtypes (listed from more to less severe): sexual bribery, sexual advances, relational advances, and subtle pressures and advances. Verbal comments include (from more to less severe) personal remarks, subjective objectification, and sexual categorical remarks. Nonverbal displays consist of (from more to less severe) sexual assault, sexual touching, sexual posturing, and sexual materials. Though specific, Gruber's model has been criticized for not separating the behaviors according to the two main types of harassment explained in the legal definition, thus limiting its usefulness (Fitzgerald, Swan & Magley, 1997).

A third model of harassment is based on a factor analysis of data from multiple studies (Fitzgerald, Gelfand, & Drasgow, 1995). In this factor analytic model, three groups of harassing behaviors were found: gender harassment, unwanted sexual attention, and sexual coercion. Gender harassment includes behavior that expresses hostile or degrading attitudes toward women; it is not aimed at sexual cooperation. Unwanted sexual attention refers to behavior of a sexual nature that is "unwelcome, offensive, and unreciprocated" (Fitzgerald, Swan & Magley, 1997, p. 10). Unwanted sexual attention can be verbal or nonverbal. Sexual coercion is the pursuit of sexual favors in exchange

for advantages (or the avoidance of disadvantages) in the workplace. The first two groups correspond closely to hostile environment harassment, sexual coercion to *quid pro quo*.

Fitzgerald, Swan, et al. (1997) note that this model is not as informative as Gruber's (1992) model at its lowest level in that it does not delineate between verbal and nonverbal behaviors. They offer an integration of the two models as a solution. This integration preserves Fitzgerald, Gelfand, et al.'s groupings and includes Gruber's separation of verbal and nonverbal behavior. Thus, in this integrative model, gender harassment and unwanted sexual attention can be further divided according to Gruber's verbal/nonverbal consideration (sexual coercion by definition only includes verbal requests). Verbal gender harassment includes personal remarks, subjective objectification, and sexual categorical remarks. Nonverbal gender harassment includes sexual posturing and sexual materials. Examples of verbal unwanted sexual attention are sexual advances, relational advances, and subtle pressures and advances. Nonverbal unwanted sexual attention includes sexual touching and sexual assault. This integrated model is preferable to the others due to its basis on diverse data, specificity of behaviors, and consistency of organization with the legal definition (see Table 1).

These behavioral models of sexual harassment demonstrate how researchers are conceptualizing sexual harassment and explain what specific behaviors fall under the umbrella of sexual harassment. It is important to note that the simple classification of *quid pro quo* and hostile environment harassment were used in this research due to the source of this classification. Because these subtypes are recognized by law, using the EEOC's groupings allows the present study to translate more readily to a legal application.

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*Table 1: An Integrated Taxonomy of Sexual Harassment and Its Relationship to Legal Concepts (adapted from Fitzgerald, Swan, & Magley, 1997)*

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<i>Sexual Harassment Subtype</i>	<i>Legal Equivalent</i>
<p><b><u>GENDER HARASSMENT</u></b></p> <p><i>Verbal remarks</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal remarks</li> <li>• Subjective objectification</li> <li>• Sexual categorical remarks</li> </ul> <p><i>Nonverbal displays</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sexual posturing</li> <li>• Sexual materials</li> </ul>	Hostile environment
<p><b><u>UNWANTED SEXUAL ATTENTION</u></b></p> <p><i>Verbal requests</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sexual advances</li> <li>• Relational advances</li> <li>• Subtle pressure/advances</li> </ul> <p><i>Nonverbal displays</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sexual touching</li> <li>• Sexual assault</li> </ul>	Hostile environment
<p><b><u>SEXUAL COERCION</u></b></p> <p><i>Verbal requests</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sexual bribery</li> <li>• Threat</li> </ul>	<i>Quid pro quo</i>

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### *Incidence Rate of Sexual Harassment*

As previously mentioned, sexual harassment is not a rare event. Many studies have attempted to identify just how frequently such behaviors occur. This information is necessary to understand how large of a problem sexual harassment is and whether sexual harassment interventions are effective (Ilies et al., 2003). Unfortunately, there is great discrepancy regarding how much sexual harassment is experienced in the workplace. Estimates have ranged from values as low as 28% (Gruber, 1990) to 90% (Terpstra & Baker, 1987). Though some variability is likely a result of sampling error, other explanations include differing definitions of who is studied (all workers vs. only female workers) and how sexual harassment is defined (Ilies et al., 2003).

*Incidence Rate by Vocational Domain.* Another explanation for the different harassment rates is that the amount of sexual harassment differs between different domains of vocations. In a meta-analysis of existing studies on incidence rates, Ilies et al. (2003) investigated whether or not there was a difference in the rates of sexual harassment between major vocational domains. Because sexual harassment is often linked to issues of power, the authors hypothesized that the larger that power differentials are between levels of an organization, the higher the incidence rate of sexual harassment would be. Thus, they hypothesized that rates of harassment in military settings would be highest (as these settings have the highest amount of power differentials between organizational levels) and academia would be lowest, with relatively moderate rates in the private sector and government domains.

The results of the meta-analysis supported these hypotheses: the average incidence rate among military samples was highest (mean incidence rate = 36%),

followed by government (M=31%), private sector (M=23%), and academia (M=16%).

These data suggest that there are different incidence rates of sexual harassment in different vocational domains, and that these differences may be explained by the amount of power differentials between organizational levels.

### *Sexual Harassment Proclivity*

Sexual harassment proclivity, or an individual's likelihood to engage in behaviors that constitute sexual harassment, is a growing body of research within the sexual harassment literature. The value of this subfield and methods of measurement are discussed below.

*Proclivity versus Actual Harassment.* A common issue in sexual harassment research is identifying and obtaining information from sexual harassers. It is often difficult to identify who these individuals are. Harassers come from all age groups, family structures, and professions (Gutek, 1985; Zalk, 1990). Harassers may not consider their behavior harassing and are unlikely to be willing to participate in research if they do recognize their behaviors as harassing (Zalk, 1990). There are also legal and ethical issues to consider which discourage many researchers from using actual harassers (Bingham & Burlison, 1996). Instead of sampling these individuals, some sexual harassment research uses individuals who have a proclivity to harass. Such participants are often unaware of this proclivity, reducing the likelihood of resistance to participation. Furthermore, they can be easily identified using one of the preexisting proclivity to sexually harass scales.

*Proclivity Scales.* The original and most frequently employed scale in harassment proclivity research is the Likelihood to Sexually Harass (LSH) Scale. This scale was

developed to measure the sexual harassment proclivity of males only (Pryor, 1987). It consists of ten work- and school-related scenarios in which the participant is instructed to imagine himself. Each vignette explains a situation in which the participants would have power over an attractive female, either by way of being her work superior or simply due to the nature of the situation (such as the woman making an error at work that has the potential for severe penalties like termination). Settings include academia, corporations, restaurants, and television production.

After the description of the scenario, three questions assess how the participant would act in this hypothetical situation. In the instructions for the questions, the participant is informed that there would be no punishment in these hypothetical scenarios no matter how he chooses to act. Each question is answered on a Likert-type scale, indicating how likely the participant would be to take each action. For each of the ten scenarios, one question asks the participant if he would resolve the manner in a seemingly appropriate manner (such as reporting the female's error to a superior); another question asks if he would try to elicit sexual favors from the woman; the last question asks if he would invite the woman to dinner to discuss the problem. Only the question asking about eliciting sexual favors is coded. Thus, this scale is a measure of only *quid pro quo* harassment proclivity.

The participants' responses on the sexual favors items are then summed to obtain a total score. High scores indicate a higher proclivity to harass than low scores. This scale has demonstrated high internal reliability ( $\alpha=.95$ ). A factor analysis extracted a single factor accounting for 68% of the variance. This scale also demonstrates construct validity. It is positively correlated with sex role stereotyping, adversarial sexual beliefs,

acceptance of interpersonal violence, rape myth acceptance, likelihood of rape, attitudes toward feminism, and fantasy. It is negatively correlated with perspective taking.

Bartling and Eisenman's Sexual Harassment Proclivities Scale (SHP; 1993) consists of ten short statements describing characteristics of women, followed by a Likert-type scale assessing agreement with each statement. Statements include "Women frequently use men to obtain status, security, or other things they want" and "Women often are flattered by sexual advances by their coworkers." Responses are summed across items to obtain a total score. Lower scores indicate a higher proclivity to engage in behaviors that may constitute hostile environment harassment. This measure has been tested to assess its validity and reliability in both males and females (Bartling & Eisenman, 1993). The SHP is internally reliable ( $\alpha=.86$  for men,  $.74$  for women). It has also demonstrated construct validity (Bartling & Eisenman, 1993).

With respect to males, the SHP has been shown to correlate positively with sex-role stereotyping, adversarial sexual beliefs, sexual conservatism, acceptance of interpersonal violence, rape myth acceptance, likelihood of rape, sexual activity, sexual exploitation, and attitudes toward feminism, and negatively with perspective taking and empathic concern. For females, the scale correlates with the same constructs as the males (all correlations in the same directions as those for the males) and also correlates negatively with fantasy and own sex-role satisfaction. Factor analysis reveals only one primary factor after oblique rotation.

Another proclivity measure was developed by Bingham and Burleson (1996). The Sexual Harassment Proclivity Index (SHPI) measures both *quid pro quo* and hostile environment harassment in males. Participants read a single scenario describing a female

in a work setting. After this scenario is a list of 16 “date-getting strategies” (p. 312) encompassing a variety of sexually harassing behaviors. Participants rate their likelihood to use each strategy on a Likert-type scale. A principle components factor analysis of the SHPI reveals two factors, which the authors term “*quid pro quo*” and “intrusive” harassments. Items in each of these two groupings are summed to find total scores for each harassment type. High scores on each subscale indicate higher proclivity to harass. Both subscales exhibit internal reliability. Intrusive harassment items have a Cronbach alpha of .89; *quid pro quo* items have an alpha of .87. Both harassment subscales also demonstrate convergent validity. The intrusive harassment subscale is positively correlated with Pryor’s LSH, adversarial sexual beliefs, attitudes supporting sexual harassment, tolerance of sexual harassment, and acceptance of rape myths. The *quid pro quo* subscale is positively correlated with all these constructs, as well as sex-role stereotyping and tolerance of violence toward women.

*Selecting a Measure.* An important consideration in selecting a proclivity scale for research is identifying what subtype of harassment one needs to study. There are a number of reasons why hostile environment harassment is preferable for research investigating the factors that relate to blame for sexually harassing behaviors. Bartling and Eisenman (1993) point out that hostile environment harassment can be much more subtle than *quid pro quo* harassment. Research has shown that hostile environment harassment cases require that the judge make a subjective assessment (Adler & Peirce, 1993; Gutek, 1995) that is not required when cases of relatively more objective *quid pro quo* harassment are considered. This ambiguity and subjective perception suggest that individuals may construe hostile environment harassment differently. Blame is another

process that requires construal, namely of situational evidence and actor accounts (see Austin, 1961). Differences in such construals are likely due to personality traits, which is the focus of this research.

Another important point is that the research pool at Brigham Young University generates a narrower distribution of scores on the LSH (measuring *quid pro quo*) than on a scale measuring the subtler hostile environment harassment proclivity (R. D. Ridge, personal communication, 2004). This could represent either a bias in self-report or a factual lower proclivity for this type of harassment. A possible explanation is that the social norms at a religious university such as Brigham Young may be less accepting of overt harassment like *quid pro quo*, but not prohibit subtle hostile environment harassment as strongly. Another explanation is that policies and interventions at this university, like many others, may be decreasing the frequency and acceptance of the most obvious forms of sexual harassment. For these reasons, a measure of hostile environment harassment is more practical given the pool of potential respondents.

The above mentioned factors demonstrate that a measure targeting hostile environment harassment proclivity would be more appropriate for research investigating blame for sexual harassment. These considerations exclude Pryor's LSH (1987), which exclusively measures *quid pro quo* harassment. Furthermore, the SHPI (1996) is inadequate for two reasons. First, about one half of the scale items are directed at *quid pro quo* proclivity. Second, the other subscale measures "intrusive harassment" proclivity. In a way, this subscale can be considered to measure hostile environment proclivity, but is not designed to do so. The intent of this scale is to measure the proclivity to commit a variety of harassing behaviors, not necessarily hostile environment

at any level specifically. Since it is directed explicitly and entirely to the measure of hostile environment harassment proclivity and because it is designed to be used with both males and females (both of which will participate in this research), the SHP was the most appropriate measure for this experiment.

#### *Correlates of Sexual Harassment Proclivity*

In an effort to better understand sexual harassment and the characteristics of sexual harassers, past research has addressed the question “what personal characteristics correlate with a proclivity to sexually harass?” Though the LSH may be less appropriate for use in the present study, it is nonetheless a valid measure of sexual harassment proclivity. Thus, research including this measure can help identify what correlates with harassment proclivity.

In the development of the LSH, Pryor (1987) correlated the likelihood to sexually harass with relevant scales for the purpose of establishing construct validity. Eight of these twelve scales correlated significantly. These significantly correlated constructs included the following: sex-role stereotyping, adversarial sexual beliefs, acceptance of interpersonal violence, the acceptance of myths about rape, proclivity to rape, negative attitudes toward feminism, propensity to fantasy, and perspective-taking. Thus, one who is likely to engage in *quid pro quo* harassing behaviors is also more likely to hold stereotypes about appropriate sex roles, have adversarial beliefs about sex and gender, be more accepting of interpersonal violence, have a proclivity to rape, hold negative attitudes towards feminism, have a propensity to fantasize and identify with literary characters, and have difficulty taking the perspective of others.

In their development of the SHP, Bartling and Eisenman (1993) used many of the same measures as Pryor (discussed above) to establish construct validity for their own scale. Their research showed that all of the constructs that correlated significantly with the LSH also correlate significantly with the SHP in the same direction, except for the likelihood to rape, which was not significantly correlated. This demonstrates that sex-role stereotyping, adversarial sexual beliefs, acceptance of interpersonal violence, rape myth acceptance, feminism, fantasy, and perspective taking are all related to the proclivity to engage in hostile environment harassing behaviors. The research suggests that, as a whole, the factors related to quid pro quo harassment are also correlated (in the same direction) with hostile environment harassment.

Pryor and Stoller (1994) examined cognitive processes affecting scoring on the LSH, specifically, the cognitive link between sexuality and social dominance. Using a word pair frequency estimation task, high-LSH scorers were more likely to overestimate the frequency of sexuality-dominance word pairings than were low-LSH scorers. Thus, a proclivity to sexually harass correlates with a strong cognitive link between sexuality and social dominance.

Pryor, Giedd, and Williams (1995) reviewed individual difference factors that correlated with sexual harassment proclivity. These factors were divided into three main categories: those related to sexual violence, those related to gender roles, and those related to sexual behavior. The sexual violence category included the likelihood to rape, adversarial sexual beliefs, rape myth acceptance, attraction to sexual aggression, coercive sexual fantasy, and sexual aggressiveness. The gender role category included socially undesirable masculinity and stereotypical male sex role norms. These stereotypical male



sex roles included antifemininity (men should avoid stereotypically feminine activities and careers), status (a need to achieve the respect of others), and toughness (men should be mentally, emotionally, and physically self-reliant). The sexual behaviors category included a number of elements of the Nelson Functions of Sexuality scales (Nelson, 1979). These elements were dominance (a desire to control one's sexual partners), novelty (looking for sex to overcome boredom), recognition (using sex to impress others), and hedonism (sex purely for physical gratification). Overall, this study found a total of fifteen beliefs and attitudes that correlated with sexual harassment proclivity.

These studies identify characteristics that correlate with a proclivity to sexually harass. Individuals who are sexually aggressive, accept rape myths, and link sexuality and dominance cognitively are more likely to have a high proclivity to sexually harass. These findings help form a profile of a potential sexual harasser. Unfortunately, this body of research has not addressed how an individual's likelihood to sexually harass might impact his or her attribution of blame for sexual harassment. Before addressing this potential link more specifically, blame must be defined.

### *Understanding Blame*

Blame is a topic that has been discussed at length by philosophers for millennia (e.g., Aristotle, 4<sup>th</sup> Century B.C.E./1998; Kant, 1785/1998). This discussion has extended into the modern experimental social sciences, where there has been considerable debate about the empirical definitions of blame and related concepts as well as the conditions under which blame occurs. In order to understand the attribution of blame for sexual harassment, one must first understand the more fundamental construct that is blame.

*Defining Blame.* Of all the explanations that have been offered for blame, the description given by Austin (1961) has been frequently cited and used as the foundation for blame research (e.g., McGraw, 1987; Scott & Lyman, 1968; Shaver, 1985; Shaver & Drown, 1986). Austin (1961) explains blame relative to accounts. He defines accounts as a defense of one's conduct after being accused of doing something "bad, inept, unwelcome, or in some other of the numerous possible ways untoward" (p. 176). There are two types of accounts: justifications and excuses. Justifications are defined as instances where the person admits that he performed the act because it was a right or permissible action. Excuses are offered when the person is attempting to show that his responsibility for his action is limited by extenuating factors like clumsiness, aroused passions, thoughtlessness, or tactlessness. A justification for sexual harassment would involve the harasser characterizing it as good or permissible ("Yes, I came on to her, but, hey, we're both single and she was really flirting with me."). An excuse for this action would involve citing extenuating factors ("Yes, I came on to her, but I was mistaken in thinking that she had written a note to me. It was from someone else.").

Austin (1961) identifies two forms of blame. The first involves a question of the judge's disapproval of the action. In this case, there is no question of whether or not the target of blame intended to perform the action, only whether or not the action was unacceptable. In the other form of blame, there is no question of whether or not the action was "bad," but the extent of the target's responsibility for the action is in question. Austin argues that the first form of blame elicits a justification from the target for why the judge should not disapprove of the action; the second elicits an excuse from the target in order to influence the judge to not hold him responsible for the action.

*Application to Sexual Harassment.* These two types of blame can be applied to understanding blame attributed to sexual harassers. In an example of the first form of blame, a judge might blame a sexual harasser because he is certain that the harasser was responsible for the action and the judge generally views sexual harassment to be wrong. The harasser's response to this form of blame would be a *justification* of why his action was acceptable. There is certainty about the harasser's volition; the morality of the action is being contested. Consider the following example. Peter witnesses James make sexual comments about Linda's attire at work. Peter confronts and blames James. James admits to making the comments, but asserts that Linda always wears revealing clothing. In this example, Peter blames James because he is certain Peter intentionally committed the act and believes that the act was wrong. James offers a *justification*, claiming that he was responsible but that the action was permissible.

In an instance involving Austin's second type of blame, the judge might blame the harasser if he knows that sexually harassing someone is always wrong and is fairly certain about the harasser's responsibility. This form of blame should elicit an *excuse* focusing on the extenuating circumstances of the objectionable action. The immorality of the action is not argued, rather the extent of the harasser's volition is. Consider an example of this form of blame involving Sarah, Tom, and Andrea. Sarah hears from coworkers that Tom sent an e-mail to Andrea containing sexual content. Sarah blames Tom. Tom explains that he meant to send the e-mail to his college buddy Andrew but accidentally chose the wrong e-mail address from his contacts list. He says that it would be wrong to do something like that on purpose. In this example, Sarah blames Tom because she believes that Tom committed the act intentionally and is certain such an

action was wrong. Tom offers an *excuse*, admitting the action was wrong, but citing an extenuating circumstance. These two examples demonstrate under what circumstances blame is attributed and which accounts correspond.

*Defensive Attribution Theory.* From a failed replication came an important theory explaining the process by which blame occurs. In a study of how blame relates to the consequences of a blameworthy act, Walster (1966) found that more responsibility was assigned to the perpetrator if the consequences of an unintended act were more severe than if the consequences were mild. However, both Walster himself (1967) and Shaver (1970a, 1970b) failed to replicate the effect. In these attempted replications, Shaver found that less responsibility was assigned to the perpetrator if the judge felt that it was a strong possibility that he could cause such an occurrence himself. Shaver postulated that if a certain level of situational relevance (defined below) is present, the judge will enter a “self-protective motivation of attribution” (Shaver, 1970b; Shaw & McMartin, 1977). This has been called the “defensive attribution hypothesis” (Burt & DeMello, 2002; Salminen, 1992) or “defensive attribution theory” (Bladen, 1998) and has been demonstrated by a number of studies (e.g., Bladen, 1998; Salminen, 1992; Sorrentino & Boutilier, 1974).

There are two important factors in this theory called “relevances” (Shaver, 1970b). In order to activate the protective motivations of this theory (which are described below), there must first be a sufficient level of relevance due to situational similarity, or “situational relevance” (Shaver, 1970b; Shaw & McMartin, 1977). Situational relevance can be defined as the ability of the judge to imagine him- or herself in the scenario for which he is the judge. This includes any information present that is not directly pertinent

to the perpetrator or victim. Thus, in order to trigger the self-protective motivations of attribution, there must be sufficient elements or information about the situation (other than the actors) that would allow the judge to imagine being an individual in the account. Shaver mentions a crash of a military plane to demonstrate situational relevance. He notes that this occurrence would have little relevance to a female college student, but would be an important event to another military pilot.

The other determinant of how a judge is motivated to protect himself according to this theory is relevance due to personal similarity, or “personal relevance” (Shaver, 1970b; Shaw & McMartin, 1977). Personal relevance is the degree to which a judge identifies with the perpetrator of the act in question. If a judge can find many similarities between himself and the perpetrator (e.g., gender, race, job, socioeconomic status, political affiliation), then there will be high personal relevance. A perception of fewer similarities (or more differences) will result in an assessment of low personal relevance. For example, a white male Republican would find higher personal relevance in another white male Republican than in a black female Democrat (all other factors being equal).

Assuming situational relevance, the degree of personal relevance will determine which of two attributional tendencies is employed (Shaw & McMartin, 1977). The first of these is called “harm-avoidance” and is activated by low personal relevance. Under this condition, increased blame is attributed to the perpetrator. This is an attempt to avoid the negative consequences of experiencing a similar event. Individuals hearing about a negative event are not willing to attribute blame for the event to mere chance because this would imply that such a negative event could happen to anyone, including themselves (Bladen, 1998). In order to avoid being a victim of such an act in the future, he would

attribute more blame to the perpetrator as a punishment to discourage the perpetrator from committing the act again.

The second attributional tendency is called “blame-avoidance” and is activated by high personal relevance. In this scenario, less blame is attributed to the perpetrator. Because the judge can imagine himself as the perpetrator, he can also imagine himself performing the blameworthy act and also being the target of blame for the action. In order to avoid blame for himself in future situations, he attributes less blame to the similar perpetrator (perhaps in order to set a precedent for how blame should be attributed in future situations). Shaver notes “a subject hoping to protect himself from causing future disasters would hardly want to establish harsh standards by which he might later be judged” (1970b, p. 102).

*Examples.* Shaver explains how these two attributions (harm- and blame-avoidance) may occur:

When the circumstances surrounding an accident are sufficiently similar to threaten the subject, he might . . . assign responsibility to the stimulus person and assure himself that he will avoid the accident because he is “a different kind of person.” This assumed personal difference prevents his making the same mistakes that he implicitly accuses the stimulus person of making. But when in the presence of situational [relevance] it is also made clear to the subject that he is the same kind of person as the perpetrator, there might be no way for him to keep from admitting that he could cause such an accident. Under these conditions subjects might have preferred to ascribe the occurrence to chance – asserting that

all reasonable precautions had been taken – rather than blame the stimulus person, lest they be blamed should they cause similar accidents. (1970b, p. 106)

Thus, people attribute blame in a manner that is likely to be self-protective in future situations.

To further explicate how Shaver's theory might impact blame attribution for sexual harassment, consider the following examples. Let us assume that two individuals, called "A" and "B," are employees at the same company along with a third individual, "C." Though they work at the same company as C, A and B do not know C personally. C has been accused of sexually harassing someone at work. Because A and B work at the same company as C, they are familiar with the type of work, the physical environment, and the social climate in which the alleged sexual harassment occurred. Since the situation is relevant (due to the above mentioned factors) to both A and B, both will experience self-protective motivations.

Let us assume that A and C are very similar. They attended the same college, live in the same community, and are both relatively young. These similarities signify that C is personally relevant to A. Defensive attribution theory predicts that, due to high situational and personal relevance, A would engage in blame-avoidance. Since A is so much like C, he can imagine being in C's situation and imagine himself being blamed. Subsequently, A would blame C less in order to avoid blame for himself should he find himself the target of blame (perhaps to set a precedent or to try to influence others).

However, B and C are relatively dissimilar. B is of a different race, political party, and age bracket than C. B and C have differing income levels and live in different communities. These factors represent low personal relevance between the two. According

to the theory, B would engage in harm-avoidance. When B pictures the situation involving the alleged sexual harassment, he has difficulty identifying with C. B finds sexual harassment offensive and wants to make sure that this does not happen to others in the future. To safeguard against any recurrences, A blames C more (also perhaps in an attempt to set a precedent or to try to influence others). Thus, the blame attributed to C by A and B diverges based on their personal relevance.

*(Quasi-) Experimental Application.* When applied to the present investigation, defensive attribution theory may explain a relationship between individual differences (such as gender, career domain, and harassment proclivity) and attributions of blame. In order to activate the self-protective motivations of attribution, situational relevance must be sufficient. Those who do not find sufficient situational relevance in a given scenario will not attribute blame in a manner that is consistent with the predictions of defensive attribution theory. In the present study, situations were presented that are in physical settings that should be relevant to all college students (the study's participants). Differences in assessments of situational relevance would be expected between those who anticipate encountering sexual harassment in their future work often versus those who do not expect to deal with sexual harassment as frequently.

Differences in expectations of sexual harassment (as potentially reflected in vocational domain) should translate into differential assessments of situational relevance. If this is accurate, it means that judges intending to work in careers with higher rates of sexual harassment should blame in a manner that is consistent with defensive attribution theory (engaging in blame- and harm-avoidance), whereas judges intending to work in



careers with lower incidence rates of sexual harassment should blame in a manner that is not consistent with defensive attribution theory.

Let us also assume that the experimental design limits the amount of information that the judge has available to him or her about the perpetrator. In the case of this study, this information would consist primarily of the perpetrator's gender and sexually harassing behavior. Since little other information is available about the perpetrator, a judge's primary method to assess personal relevance would be by how relevant the perpetrator's gender and action (sexual harassment) is to him- or herself. A judge who has a high proclivity to sexually harass should find the action to be more consistent with his or her own behaviors or intentions than would a judge with a low proclivity.

These differences should translate into differential assessments of the perpetrator's personal relevance between male and female judges and between those with high and low harassment proclivities. If this logic is cogent and the differences are sufficient, the two different mechanisms described in Shaver's (1970b) theory (blame-avoidance and harm-avoidance) would be activated. Judges who have a high sexual harassment proclivity or are of the same gender as the perpetrator should find the perpetrator to have higher personal relevance, engage in blame-avoidance, and blame the perpetrator less. Judges with low sexual harassment proclivity or of opposite gender from the perpetrator should find the perpetrator to be less personally relevant, engage in harm-avoidance, and blame the perpetrator more.

#### *Blame in Sexual Harassment Scenarios*

These hypotheses concerning the application of defensive attribution theory to the attribution of blame for sexually harassing behaviors are supported by logic.

Furthermore, there exists a literature to sustain these claims. This literature is reviewed in a broader context, investigating what individual differences relate to attributions of blame. Gender and harassment proclivity will then be discussed individually.

*Personal Characteristics of Sexual Harassment Judges.* Jensen and Gutek (1982) identified factors that affect attributions of blame for sexually harassing behaviors. These factors were gender, previous experience as a victim of sexual harassment, and sex-role beliefs. The relationships between these factors and blame were assessed by analyzing participants' endorsement of statements that were related to an attribution of responsibility for sexual harassment. Significantly more men than women in the study endorsed the statement "When a woman is asked by a man at work to engage in sexual relations, it's usually because she did something to bring it about," suggesting that men blame the victim more than women. Furthermore, significantly more women who had not been sexually harassed agreed with the statement "Women who are asked by men at work to engage in sexual relations could have done something to prevent it" than those who had experienced harassment. This suggests that women who have not experienced sexual harassment are more likely to blame the victim than those who have. A significant correlation was found between victim blame and a sex-role scale, indicating that those who hold traditional sex-role beliefs are more likely to blame the victim.

Instead of using the endorsement of statements about responsibility, Valentine-French and Radtke (1989) performed a series of experiments testing attributions of blame using a single vignette, which related an instance of a male sexually harassing a female. Results showed that females and respondents with less traditional attitudes (regardless of gender) attributed more blame to the harasser in the vignette than did men and those with

more traditional attitudes. The results also showed that men were more likely than women to assign blame to the victim when the victim was self-blaming. The authors attribute this to a general gender difference in experience of self-blame. Thus, gender and traditional attitudes have been shown to correlate with blame attribution.

In another test of the factors relating to harassment blame attribution, De Judicibus and McCabe (2001) focused on gender, sexist attitudes, experiences of sexual harassment, age, work (or student) status, belief in a just world, and gender role identity. To measure the amount of blame attributed to the victim, the authors developed a new measure (entitled the “Blame” scale). Scores from scales measuring the above-mentioned dimensions were compared to those from the “Blame” scale; results showed that sexist attitudes, gender, and worker (or student) status were significantly correlated with blame attribution in a positive direction. This means that males, workers (as opposed to students), and individuals with more sexist attitudes assigned more blame to the *victim* of harassment.

Other research has found individual differences that correlate with third party judgments of sexual harassment. Individuals who have similar experiences or a vulnerability to experience sexual harassment may be better able to take the perspective of the victim (Batson et. al., 1996; Gowan & Zimmerman, 1996). Thus, individual differences that correlate with sexual harassment experience or vulnerability are also likely to correlate with perception of blame (Kulik et al., 2003). Studies have looked at race (Gowan & Zimmerman, 1996; Plater & Thomas, 1998), gender (e.g., Blumenthal, 1998; Gutek, 1995; Pryor & Day, 1988; Rotundo, Nguyen, & Sackett, 2001), and age (e.g., Baker, Terpstra, & Cutler, 1990; Ford & Donis, 1996; Foulis & McCabe, 1997) as

possible correlates of vulnerability to sexual harassment. No significant correlations were found.

Kulik et al. (2003) assessed the relationships between personal characteristics of federal judges and their rulings in cases involving claims of sexual harassment, specifically how race, gender, age, and party affiliation affected the outcomes of cases of hostile environment harassment. There was a significant effect of party affiliation and age on judge decision, but no effect of gender or race. In other words, younger judges appointed by Democratic presidents were more likely to find for the plaintiff (the victim of sexual harassment) than older, Republican-appointed judges. The recency and novelty of these findings suggest that there still are a number of factors affecting blame attribution yet to be identified.

*Gender and Blame for Sexual Harassment.* A common finding in studies investigating blame for sexual harassment regards gender (e.g., Blumenthal, 1998; Gutek, 1995; Nguyen & Sackett, 2001; Valentine-French & Radtke, 1989). Males have been found to blame sexual harassers less and victims of sexual harassment more than do females. Though some research has failed to demonstrate this effect, the studies that have found the effect have consistently demonstrated the effect in the same direction.

*Proclivity and Blame: An Integration*

A recent investigation of the correlates of attributions of blame for sexually harassing behaviors investigated how sexual harassment proclivity impacts attributions of blame for sexually harassing behaviors (Key, 2005). Furthermore, this study tested whether or not defensive attribution theory (Shaver, 1970b) explains the relationship

between harassment proclivity and attributions of blame. This study was limited to the study of males because:

Traditionally, men are the perpetrators of sexual harassment (see Gutek, 1985; Martindale, 1990; U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, 1981, 1988) and have been studied in the majority of harassment investigations (Pryor, 1987; Pryor, Giedd, & Williams, 1995; Pryor, LaVite, & Stoller, 1993; Pryor & Stoller, 1994). Consistent with this body of research, all participants in this study were male. (Key, 2005, p. 23)

It was hypothesized that those high in the proclivity to sexually harass would attribute less blame to sexual harassers in hypothetical scenarios than those low in the proclivity to harass. Key also hypothesized that ratings of personal relevance of harassers would differ according to harassment proclivity (high proclivity individuals rating hypothetical harassers as more personally relevant). One hundred nineteen male college students completed Bartling and Eisenman's (1993) Sexual Harassment Proclivities Scale (SHP) and a scale designed to measure blame and the principle elements of Shaver's theory (personal and situational relevance). Scores on the SHP were used to classify high and low harassment proclivity groups according to a tertile split. Significant statistical analyses indicated that those high in the proclivity to sexually harass found harassers more personally relevant than low proclivity participants. Furthermore, the high proclivity group attributed significantly less blame to harassers and more blame to victims of harassment than did the low proclivity group. No significant differences were found in attributions of blame as a function of whether or not the harasser in the vignette was punished, nor were differences found in attributions of blame as a function of the

behavioral subtype of hostile environment harassment. Ratings of situational relevance were high across proclivity groups with no significant differences between the groups.

This study gives a clearer picture of who blames whom in sexual harassment situations, which has implications for the design of harassment interventions. These interventions may be able to identify those who will blame victims before an incident and take steps to mitigate potential blame. There are also important implications for the (de)selection of jurors in sexual harassment litigation. Counsel might be well served to include measures of sexual harassment proclivity (such as the SHP) in their supplemental juror questionnaires (or “SJQ”) to identify unfavorable jurors for deselection. These findings also reestablish the validity of Shaver’s defensive attribution theory, representing a successful evaluation of the theory over 30 years since its formulation.

Lastly, these findings could help more victims report sexually harassing behaviors. Research has shown that few victims report sexual harassment (e.g., Cammaert, 1985; Tangri, Burt, & Johnson, 1982). It is believed that the fear of being blamed figures into victims’ decisions to report harassment (De Judicibus & McCabe, 2001; Valentine-French & Radtke, 1989). Valentine-French and Radtke note that by looking at attributors of blame, researchers could better identify the validity of this fear and offer information that could be valuable in developing a strategy to increase harassment reporting. Results of this study demonstrated that those who are more likely to harass are also more likely to blame the victim. If victims of sexual harassment were aware of this commonality, they might be more willing to discount blame they receive (since it would be coming from a potential harasser). Since fear is considered an important factor in deciding whether or not to report sexual harassment, if the fear of

blame is diminished or eliminated because of a change in perception of those who blame, victims might be more likely to report sexual harassment incidents.

### *The Present Study*

Key's (2005) application of defensive attribution theory to blame for sexual harassment was an important first step. However, this initial study was limited in scope and needs to be replicated to confirm the validity of its findings. The present study attempted to address these shortcomings and expand upon this design by 1) replicating the results of the original study, 2) expanding the scope to investigate other factors (gender match and intended career domain) that might contribute to situational and personal relevance, 3) altering the research design to allow for meaningful investigations of victim blame, 4) explaining gender differences in blame attributions using defensive attribution theory, and 5) determining whether or not there is a causal structure consistent with defensive attribution theory (Shaver, 1970b). These goals are detailed below.

*Goal 1: Replication.* One expressed goal of the present study was to replicate the findings of Key (2005), which may represent a new understanding of the process by which sexual harassers and victims of harassment are blamed. This study attempted to confirm those findings and increase external validity using a larger and more diverse sample.

*Goal 2: Investigation of Other Individual Differences.* Another aim of the present study was to extend the scope of this research to include women. Key (2005) only sampled from males; his rationale was that males are most often the perpetrators of sexual harassment. The exploration of any effect of sexual harassment proclivity should limit itself to where an effect might be found – in males. Though with a lesser frequency,

women are also perpetrators of sexual harassment. Thus, to fully understand how harassment proclivity relates to attributions of blame, all types of potential harassers must be studied. Furthermore, defensive attribution theory makes no gender distinction in its application (except for gender as a factor in determinations of personal relevance). Therefore, there is no theoretical necessity for the exclusion of females.

This study also investigated whether or not attributions of blame (for both harassers and victims) can be predicted from a larger set of individual differences. Key (2005) found that harassment proclivity was a factor that could explain different ratings of personal relevance (and thus blame). The present study retained harassment proclivity and added gender match (between the participant and hypothetical harassers/victims) as potential individual differences that explain personal relevance.

The present study also assessed whether or not intended career domain is a factor that can explain variability in situational relevance. Research has shown that there are different incidence rates of sexual harassment between different vocational domains (Ilies et al. 2003). This study assessed whether these real differences correspond to differences between participants entering different domains in how much sexual harassment they *expect* in their field. The expectation of encountering sexual harassment should be a factor related to situational relevance, as those expecting to deal with sexual harassment in their careers should find situations involving sexual harassment to be more relevant than those not expecting to deal with such situations.

In the case that there was a correspondence between real and expected incidence rates, this study also assessed whether or not individuals entering vocations with high sexual harassment incidence rates (military and government) find scenarios about sexual



harassment to be more situationally relevant than those entering vocations with lower incidence rates (private sector, academia). Furthermore, this study then assessed whether those entering high incidence rate vocations blame in a manner consistent with defensive attribution theory and whether those entering low incidence vocations do not.

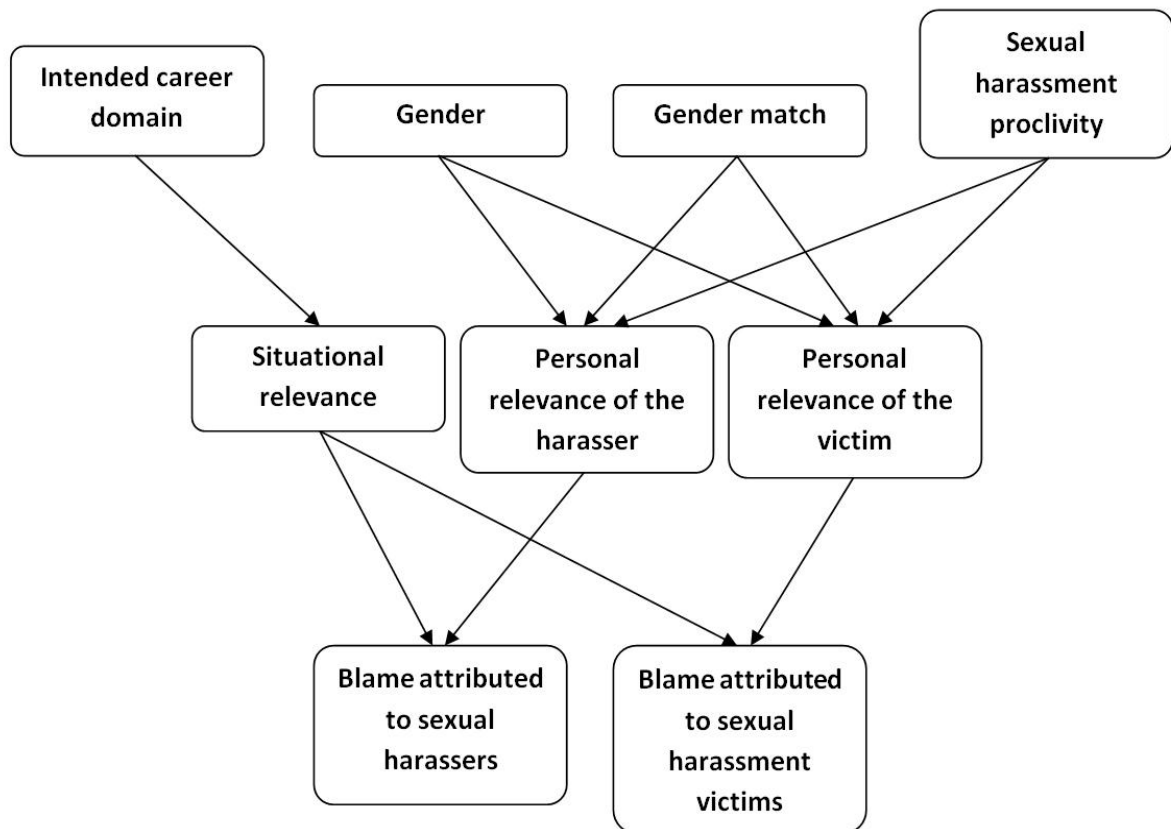
In the case of no correspondence between real and expected incidence rates, this study included expected incidence rates (as opposed to the real rates) in order to relate to assessments of situational relevance and subsequent patterns of blame.

*Goal 3: Victim Blame.* Key (2005) did not allow for any investigation of how defensive attribution theory might explain victim blame. Though assessments of the personal relevance of and blame attributed to the victim were present, these were included only as distracters. Furthermore, no manipulation of the personal relevance of the victim was available. In the present study, personal relevance and blame for the victim were assessed, as were the match between the participant's and victim's genders. It was hypothesized that a gender match between the participant and victim yields higher personal relevance, which in turn impacts ratings of blame.

*Goal 4: Gender and Blame.* The sexual harassment literature has repeatedly demonstrated that men blame harassers less than do women. This may be due to the fact that men identify with sexual harassers more than do women. Another goal of the present study was to attempt to replicate this gender difference and demonstrate that it is a result of perceptions of personal relevance. (This goal is different from the above discussion regarding gender match because, consistent with existing literature, the effect should emerge regardless of the harassers' gender.) Gender differences were tested for harasser and victim blame.

*Goal 5: Causal Structure.* Finally, this study attempted to determine whether or not the data obtained from the sample explain a causal structure that is consistent with defensive attribution theory (Shaver, 1970b). This was determined using a path analysis. According to defensive attribution theory and the design of this study, paths should exist from gender and harassment proclivity to personal relevance and from intended career domain to situational relevance. There should also be paths from situational and personal relevance to blame. This would suggest that these demographic factors determine ratings of situational and personal relevance which, in turn, produce attributions of blame consistent with defensive attribution theory. (A diagram of this causal structure is displayed in Figure 1.)

*Figure 1: Hypothesized Causal Structure for Attributions of Blame.*



*Rationale for the study.* Though research has begun to explore attributions of blame for sexually harassing behaviors, relatively little attention has been given to the impact sexual harassment proclivity has upon these attributions. One reason this factor should impact attributions of blame stems from previously discovered correlates of the two constructs. Both sexual harassment proclivity (Bartling & Eisenman, 1993) and sexual harassment blame attribution (Jensen & Gutek, 1982) correlate positively with sex role stereotypes. Sexist attitudes also correlate positively with both harassment proclivity and blame attribution (Bartling & Eisenman, 1993; De Judicibus & McCabe, 2001; Pryor, 1987). These covariates common to both constructs suggest that a relationship between proclivity and blame may exist.

Furthermore, Pryor (1987) found a negative correlation between perspective taking and sexual harassment proclivity, suggesting that individuals who are more likely to sexually harass are also more likely to have difficulty seeing the world from another's point of view. Thus, sexual harassers may have difficulty seeing things through the eyes of their victims (among other people). According to Shaver's (1985) explanation of blame, blame is attributed by a perceiver who evaluates the excuses and justifications of the individual in question. A difference in perspective taking may translate to differences in how a judge may appraise the perpetrator's account. In other words, if there is a difference among those who score high and low on a harassment proclivity measure in how well they can take the perspective of others, and if blame is a perception of the validity of others' excuses and justifications, then those who have difficulty seeing things from the point of view of others may also have difficulty perceiving the validity of their

claims. Therefore, the likelihood to sexually harass may relate to attributions of blame in sexual harassment scenarios.

Another rationale for this research comes from De Judicibus and McCabe's (2001) discussion of sexist attitudes. The authors found that sexual harassment proclivity correlates positively with both sexist attitudes (see Baker, Terpstra, & Larntz, 1990; Bartling & Eisenman, 1993; Mazer & Percival, 1989; Walker, Rowe, & Quinsey, 1993) and attributions of blame, demonstrating that an individual with a higher harassment proclivity is more likely to hold strong sexist attitudes and blame the victim more strongly. Thus, an individual with highly sexist attitudes is more likely to have a proclivity to harass and also assign more blame to the victim of sexual harassment. Unfortunately, the authors did not extend their work to examine the relationship between proclivity and blame.

Another explanation for why a relationship might exist between sexual harassment proclivity and blame stems from Shaver's defensive attribution theory (1970a, 1970b). Defensive attribution theory explains that, assuming a sufficient level of situational relevance, a judge with low personal relevance to the target of blame is likely to assign more responsibility to him or her for the unwanted act in an effort to avoid a negative outcome, while a judge with high personal relevance to the stimulus individual is motivated to assign less blame in an effort to avoid being blamed should he or she be involved in such an event in the future. Assuming that the information provided about the harasser is somewhat limited (including his actions), a judge with a low proclivity to harass would assign more blame to the harasser because there is low personal relevance.

Alternatively, a judge with a high proclivity to harass should assign less blame as a result of perceived high personal relevance.

Furthermore, there is a precedent for using defensive attribution theory in sexual harassment research. Researchers have asserted that defensive attribution theory is the most likely explanation for gender differences in perceptions of sexual harassment (see Bladen, 1998; Jensen & Gutek, 1982). Not only is defensive attribution theory a plausible explanation for such a relationship, its application is not novel to this field (Key, 2005).

*Specific Hypotheses.*

*H<sub>1</sub> – Situational relevance*

*H<sub>1a</sub> – Student-relevance:* Participants will rate the student-relevant scenarios in the dependent measure as significantly more situationally relevant than the student-irrelevant scenarios.

*H<sub>1b</sub> – Situational relevance and proclivity:* There will be no difference between high and low proclivity groups in their ratings of situational relevance.

*H<sub>1c</sub> – Situational relevance and intended career:* Participants who intend to have careers in high incidence rate domains (military or government) will rate scenarios (both student-relevant and -irrelevant) as more situationally relevant than will participants who intend to pursue careers in low incidence domains (academia and private sector), because they anticipate being in careers where they will experience harassment more frequently, which makes current situations describing sexual harassment more relevant to them.

*H<sub>2</sub> – Personal relevance (harassers and victims)*

*H<sub>2a</sub> - Personal relevance of the harassers (proclivity):* The high proclivity group will find the harassers in the scenarios to be significantly more personally relevant than the low proclivity group.

*H<sub>2b</sub> - Personal relevance of the harassers (gender):* Females will find the harassers in the scenarios to be significantly less personally relevant than will males.

*H<sub>2c</sub> - Personal relevance of the victims (gender):* Females will find the victims in the scenarios to be significantly more personally relevant than will males.

*H<sub>2d</sub> - Personal relevance of the harassers (gender match):* Participants will find the harassers in the scenarios to be significantly more personally relevant when they are the same gender than when they are not.

*H<sub>2e</sub> - Personal relevance of the victims (gender match):* Participants will find the victims in the scenarios to be significantly more personally relevant when they are the same gender than when they are not.

*H<sub>3</sub> – Blame attributions (harassers and victims)*

*H<sub>3a</sub> – Blame for the harassers (proclivity):* The high proclivity group will blame the harassers in the scenarios less than the low proclivity group (limited to participants intending careers in high harassment incidence domains).

*H<sub>3b</sub> – Blame for the harassers (gender):* Females will blame the harassers in the scenarios more than will males (limited to participants intending careers in high incidence domains).

*H<sub>3c</sub> – Blame for the victims (gender):* Females will blame the victims less than

will males (limited to participants intending careers in high incidence domains).

*H<sub>3d</sub> – Blame for the harassers (gender match):* Participants will blame the harassers in the scenarios less when they are the same gender than when they are not (limited to participants intending careers in high incidence domains).

*H<sub>3e</sub> – Blame for the victims (gender match):* Participants will blame the victims in the scenarios less when they are the same gender than when they are not (limited to participants intending careers in high incidence domains).

*H<sub>3f</sub> – Blame for the harassers (intended career domain):* For participants who intend to have careers in low harassment incidence rate domains (academia and private sector), there will be no difference in attributions of blame for the harassers between those who find the harassers to be relatively more personally relevant and those who find them to be relatively less personally relevant.

*H<sub>3g</sub> – Blame for the victims (intended career domain):* For participants who intend to have careers in low harassment incidence rate domains (academia and private sector), there will be no difference in attributions of blame for the victims between those who find the victims to be relatively more personally relevant and those who find them to be relatively less personally relevant.

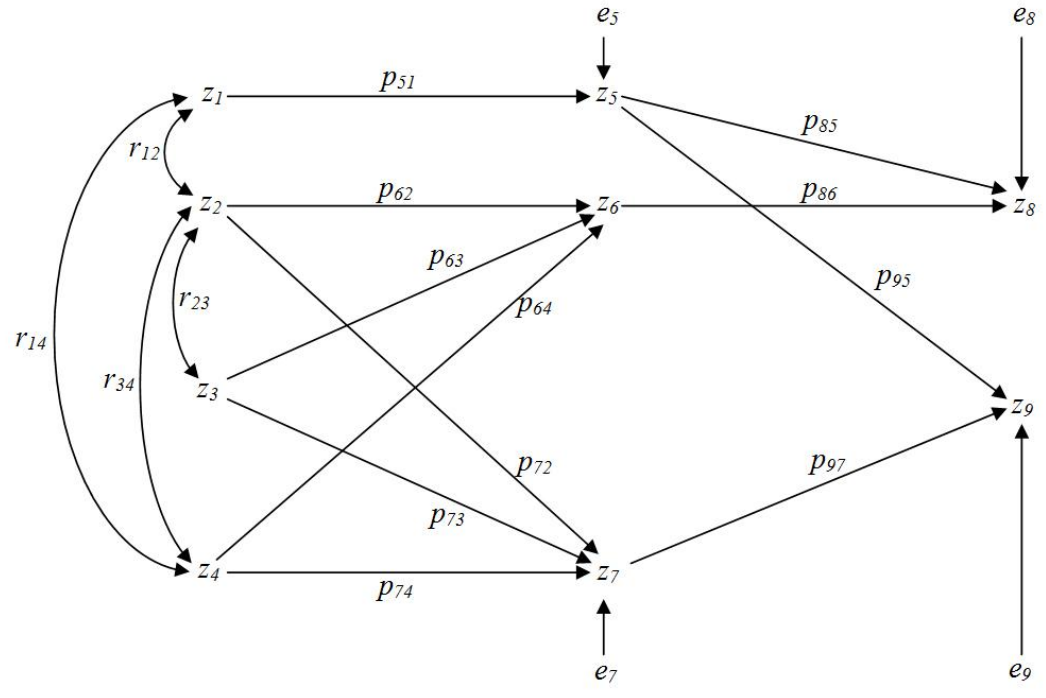
*H<sub>4</sub> – Path analysis:* A path analysis will reveal a variable structure that

corresponds to the structure outlined in defensive attribution theory and the hypotheses above will be supported by the data (see Figures 1 & 2). This structure includes intended career domain, gender, gender match, and sexual harassment proclivity as exogenous variables, blame for the harassers and blame for the victims as endogenous variables, and situational relevance, personal relevance of the harassers, and personal relevance of the victims as mediator variables.

*Operational Definitions.* In this study (consistent with Key, 2005), *situational relevance* was operationally defined as the response to questions on the dependent (blame and relevance) instrument that asks, “How likely is it that you could be in this kind of situation?” To demonstrate that these evaluations are relatively high (that participants perceive a relatively high level of situational relevance), situational relevance was subdivided into two categories: student-relevant and student-irrelevant. *Student-relevant* was the set of vignettes designed to be situationally relevant to students (participants in this study); student-irrelevant was the set of vignettes designed not to be situationally relevant to students. Thus, student-relevant was defined as the average score for responses to the questions addressing situational relevance for those vignettes designed to be personally relevant to students (vignettes 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, and 8). *Student-irrelevant* was defined as the average score for responses to the questions addressing situational relevance for the vignettes designed to not be situationally relevant to students (vignettes 1 and 5). Participants’ assessments of situational relevance should be higher for the student-relevant than the student-irrelevant items (Key, 2005).



Figure 2: Path Diagram for the Initial Causal Model for Attributions of Blame (including hypothesized significant correlations between exogenous variables).



- $z_1$  = intended career domain
- $z_2$  = gender
- $z_3$  = gender match
- $z_4$  = sexual harassment proclivity
- $z_5$  = situational relevance
- $z_6$  = personal relevance of the harasser
- $z_7$  = personal relevance of the victim
- $z_8$  = blame attributed to the harasser
- $z_9$  = blame attributed to the victim

Because situational relevance is a necessary factor for the motivations of attribution to occur in defensive attribution theory (Shaver, 1970b), the questions regarding personal relevance and blame for the student-irrelevant vignettes (those designed not to be situationally relevant) were not included in the corresponding index scores. Thus, *personal relevance* was operationally defined as the sum of the responses to the questions addressing personal relevance of the harasser, “How much is [the male in the vignette] like you?” for the six student-relevant vignettes. *Blame* was operationally defined as the sum of the responses to the questions addressing blame for the harasser, “How much is [the male in the vignette] to blame for [his] behavior toward [the female in the vignette]?” for the six student-relevant vignettes (the gender is reversed for vignettes where females harass males).

*Gender* was operationally defined as participants’ responses to the close-ended question, “What is your gender?” *Gender match with harassers* was operationalized as a dichotomous variable indicating whether or not the gender of the participant was the same as that of the sexual harassers in the vignettes. *Gender match with victims* was operationalized similarly.

*Intended career* was defined by the open-ended question, “What do you intend to do for your future career?” *Intended career domain* was operationalized as the response to the question, “Into which ONE of the following categories does your future career fit?” (The options for this close-ended question are military, government, private sector, academia, and other.) These categories were then collapsed into two groups: high and low *incidence domain groups*. Having two groups is consistent with the dichotomy regarding situational relevance in defensive attribution theory (situationally relevant or

not situationally relevant). The high incidence domains group consisted of military and government jobs; the low incidence domains group consisted of private sector and academic jobs. The groups were split in this manner because 1) it placed an equal number of domains in each group, which was likely to result in group sizes that are more equal than using a different split (assuming that the number of people entering these fields is roughly the same), and 2) the incidence rates were most different if split in this manner. By splitting the incidence rate in this manner, there was an 8% difference in incidence rates between the domains closest in rates. Alternative splits have differences of only 5 and 7%. Those who select “other” as their vocational domain were placed into incidence domain groups according to a median split of the responses to the follow-up question, “In your future job, how much MORE power do you expect your boss to have than you?”

*Expected harassment incidence rate* were assessed using the question, “From 0 to 100%, what percent of people in your future career do you believe will experience or be affected by sexual harassment?” These scores were then dichotomized into two groups (high and low expected incidence rates) according to a median split in order to match the dichotomous nature of situational relevance in defensive attribution theory.

*Sexual harassment proclivity* was scored using the SHP (Bartling & Eisenman, 1993). Participants were divided into two groups according to a tertile split on their summed SHP scores (following the methodology of Key, 2005). This dichotomy is consistent with the dichotomous nature of personal relevance in defensive attribution theory. Thus, harassment proclivity was operationally defined as two proclivity groups dichotomized according to their summed SHP scores.

## Method

### *Participants*

Two hundred fifty nine surveys were begun on the Qualtrics online survey system. Of those, 221 were completed; the other surveys were incomplete due to computer, web, or user error and were removed from subsequent analyses. All 221 completed surveys were taken by undergraduate students from Brigham Young University, 99 of whom were psychology majors. There were 108 males and 113 females. Of the 221 participants, 188 (85.1%) described themselves as Caucasian, 14 (6.3%) as Asian or Pacific Islander, eight (3.6%) as mixed ethnicity, six (2.7%) as Latin or Hispanic, four (1.8%) as an “other” ethnicity, and one (0.5%) as Native American. The majority were single (n=164, 74.2%) and Mormon (n=214, 96.8%); most were college seniors (n=107, 48.4%). Participants were recruited using the SONA system or the recruitment overhead in Appendix B. Participants received course credit or extra credit as offered by their instructor.

### *Instruments*

*Sexual Harassment Proclivities Scale (SHP; Bartling & Eisenman, 1993).* The SHP measures the proclivity to engage in hostile environment harassment (Appendices A & C). It consists of questions that ask respondents to indicate their agreement with 10 statements about attitudes toward the opposite sex, such as *women who dress in a sexy manner at work are deliberately sending a sexual message to men* and *women often are flattered by sexual advances by their coworkers*. Responses are indicated according to a five-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly agree, 5 = strongly disagree). Scores are obtained by summing across all ten items. Scores can range from 10 to 50, with lower

scores indicating a higher proclivity to engage in hostile environment sexual harassment. This measure has previously demonstrated validity and high internal reliability for both males ( $\alpha=0.86$ ) and females ( $\alpha=0.74$ ). The scale demonstrated an acceptable level of internal reliability in this sample among males ( $\alpha=0.70$ ), among females ( $\alpha=0.69$ ), and overall ( $\alpha=0.70$ ).

*Blame and relevance instrument, male harassers (Key, 2005).* This scale was developed specifically for previous research investigating how defensive attribution theory could explain attributions of blame for sexual harassment. It was designed to present participants with a variety of behaviors that would be classified as hostile environment harassment and assess participants' judgments of situational relevance, personal relevance, and blame. Initially, a pool of vignettes describing harassing encounters was developed for potential inclusion in the final measure. This item pool represented all four subtypes of hostile environment harassment: verbal and nonverbal gender harassment, and verbal and nonverbal unwanted sexual attention (Fitzgerald, Swan, & Magley, 1997). Each of these vignettes described a situation in which a *male* committed potentially harassing behaviors at the expense of a *female*. A focus group of three experts active in sexual harassment research evaluated the item pool on situational relevance to students, the reality of the vignettes, and the diversity of the behaviors in the vignettes to adequately represent the variety of behaviors considered hostile environment harassment. A second focus group of 12 undergraduate university respondents similar to potential participants reviewed the instrument. This focus group offered feedback on the vignettes, the questions, and the overall layout and clarity of the scale. Adjustments were made to the instructions and length of the questionnaire as suggested by the group.

This process resulted in a scale that contains a total of eight short vignettes (Appendix A). In order to test whether or not a relatively high level of situational relevance is established, six of the vignettes are designed to be situationally relevant to participants (“student-relevant”, vignettes 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, and 8); two are designed to be not situationally relevant (“student-irrelevant”, vignettes 1 and 5). To test for differences in perceptions as a function of negative outcome for the behavior, half of the vignettes (three student-relevant, one -irrelevant) contain a punishment for the harassment; the other half do not.

Following each vignette are five questions assessing: 1) situational relevance (*How likely is it that you could be in this kind of situation?*); 2) personal relevance of the harasser (*How much is [the harasser in the vignette] like you?*); 3) personal relevance of the victim (*How much is [the victim in the vignette] like you?*); 4) how much the harasser is to blame (*How much is [the harasser in the vignette] to blame for his behavior toward [the victim]?*); and 5) how much the victim is to blame (*How much is [the victim in the vignette] to blame for [the harasser’s] behavior toward her?*). Each of these items is scored using a nine-point Likert-type scale (e.g., 1 = not at all to blame, 9 = entirely to blame). Scoring for situational relevance ( $\alpha=0.74$ ), personal relevance of the harassers ( $\alpha=0.80$ ), personal relevance of the victims ( $\alpha=0.84$ ), blame attributed to the harassers ( $\alpha=0.79$ ), and blame attributed to the victims ( $\alpha=0.91$ ) is performed by averaging values across the six student-relevant vignettes to obtain index scores. Only the questions for the student-relevant vignettes are analyzed because defensive attribution theory requires situational relevance for the self-protective motivations to occur. Scores on each index can range from one to nine. High scores on each index indicate high situational relevance

of the vignettes, high personal relevance of the harassers, and high blame attributed to the harassers.

*Blame and relevance instrument, female harassers.* This instrument was adapted from the blame and relevance instrument described above (Key, 2005; Appendix A). It is the same format as the original, with the names in the vignettes altered to reflect females harassing males. Other necessary adjustments related to the reversal of gender were necessary (e.g., changing “boyfriend” to “girlfriend”). A pretest demonstrated that reviewers found these adjustments to result in clear and realistic vignettes that were behaviorally similar to those in the original scale. Reliability analyses demonstrated that the situational relevance ( $\alpha=0.71$ ), personal relevance of the harassers ( $\alpha=0.79$ ), personal relevance of the victims ( $\alpha=0.84$ ), blame attributed to the harassers ( $\alpha=0.88$ ), and blame attributed to the victims ( $\alpha=0.93$ ) scales have similar internal reliabilities to those of the original measure.

*Measure of vocational domain and related sexual harassment.* This measure (Appendices A & C) assesses in which vocation participants expect to work in the future using the open-ended question “What job are you intending to work in primarily?” Vocational domain is then assessed by asking participants to classify this job into one of five domains: military, government, private sector, academia, or other. To verify the groupings as functions of power differentials, participants were asked a follow-up question assessing how much power differential they expect between hierarchy levels in their job: “In your future job, how much MORE power do you expect your boss to have than you?” The measure then assessed how much sexual harassment participants expect

in their career. Participants rated their expectations according to what percent of people in their future career will experience sexual harassment (ranging from 0 to 100%).

*Demographic questionnaire.* This measure includes questions designed to obtain basic demographic data (Appendix A). Questions identify age, gender, marital status, race, class standing, religion, and college major. This questionnaire was included to describe the sample and to delineate groupings for data analysis.

### *Procedure*

The recruitment overhead presented to students had a web address on it for the students to visit at their convenience. Upon entering the web address in an internet browser, participants were directed to the survey (see Appendix A). This survey was stored on qualtrics.com and was created using its web-based software. The online survey contained electronic versions of the consent form, the demographic questionnaire, the SHP, the measure of vocational domain and related sexual harassment, and the two forms of the blame and relevance instrument. The participants first saw the consent page, where they were asked to carefully read the overview then electronically sign and date the form or discontinue. The survey did not permit participants to move forward to the next page until they indicated their consent by typing their name and the date.

Following the consent form, participants were given instructions explaining how to complete the online survey. Participants indicated their responses by typing information in text boxes, selecting choices from drop down menus, or marking their answers using a sliding scale. Links at the bottom of each page helped navigate participants forward through the questionnaire. Participants could not navigate to previous pages to alter their answers. Once participants completed the survey, they read a



page that thanked them for their participation and listed contact information should they have any questions about their participation. The survey data were stored on the secure Qualtrics server until it was downloaded by the experimenter. At the completion of data collection, all data were erased from the Qualtrics server.

Two independent judges rated to which domain the listed vocations of participants belonged. Only in the cases where the independent raters unanimously differed from the domain group selected by the participant were the participants' ratings be changed. Domains were changed for 45 participants, 35 of which were changed from the "other" category or had a missing value completed. The inter-rater reliability demonstrated near perfect agreement<sup>1</sup> (Cohen's  $\kappa=0.85$ ). Of the 220 jobs categorized (one data point was missing), the judges' ratings were the same for 207 (94.1%).

## Results

### *Situational Relevance Analyses*

Initial statistical analyses were performed to ensure that situational relevance was properly manipulated. To test that participants found the scenarios designed to be situationally relevant as relatively more relevant than the irrelevant scenarios, assessments of situational relevance on the student-relevant and –irrelevant scenarios were compared using a related-samples *t*-test. The *t*-test was significant ( $t=19.26$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), indicating that participants found the vignettes designed to be situationally relevant ( $M=6.08$ ) to be, in fact, more situationally relevant than those designed not to be ( $M=3.43$ ). The size of the effect for this difference was quite large ( $d=1.44$ ;  $1-\beta\approx 1.00$ ). Thus, the hypothesis was supported by the analysis.

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<sup>1</sup> This claim is consistent with Landis and Koch's (1977) criteria for classifying the strength of inter-rater reliability. According to the authors, a Cohen's kappa of 0.81 or higher demonstrates "almost perfect agreement."

It was hypothesized that there would be no impact of sexual harassment proclivity on situational relevance. To test this, an independent-samples *t*-test was used with proclivity group as the independent variable and situational relevance as the dependent variable. The *t*-test was not significant ( $t=-0.38, p=0.71$ ). This finding indicates that there was no difference between proclivity groups in their assessments of situational relevance, confirming the hypothesis.

It was hypothesized that participants' judgments of situational relevance would be affected by their intended career path. To test this, career choices were grouped into those with high rates of sexual harassment ("high incidence group;" military and government positions;  $n=16$ ) and relatively lower rates ("low incidence group;" academic and private sector positions;  $n=194$ ). These groups were compared in an independent-samples *t*-test with situational relevance as the dependent variable. Contrary to the hypothesis, there was no difference in the perceived situational relevance of the vignettes between the harassment incidence domain groups ( $t=-1.22, p=0.22$ ). Even when keeping each of the four domains separate (military, academics, government, and private sector), there was no significant difference ( $F=1.52, p=0.21$ ). To further investigate the potential link between harassment incidence and situational relevance, participants' ratings of the expected harassment incidence in their future field and their expectations regarding the difference in power between themselves and their future boss (a hypothesized explanation for the observed incidence rates between career domains; see Ilies et al., 2003) were dichotomized according to tertile splits. There was no difference in ratings of situational relevance between high and low expectations of harassment ( $t=-1.45, p=0.15$ ) nor between those expecting small and large power differences ( $t=0.74, p=0.46$ ). Due to

the lack of a significant effect (and thus the disconfirmation of the hypothesis), intended career (in its various forms) was removed from the related planned analyses (hypotheses  $H_{3f}$  and  $H_{3g}$  were not tested).

#### *Personal Relevance Analyses*

According to defensive attribution theory, personal relevance is an assessment of similarity between the judge and target (Shaver, 1970). Thus, the included individual differences (gender, gender match, and sexual harassment proclivity) were hypothesized to be the chief determinants of personal relevance. To test this, a 2x2x2 multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) with gender, gender match, and harassment proclivity group as the IVs and personal relevance of the harassers and personal relevance of the victims as the DVs was calculated. The MANOVA revealed significant differences for gender ( $\Lambda=0.90$ ,  $F=8.96$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) and harassment proclivity group ( $\Lambda=0.96$ ,  $F=3.54$ ,  $p=0.03$ ). However, the omnibus statistic was not significant for gender match ( $\Lambda=0.98$ ,  $F=1.96$ ,  $p=0.15$ ). Subsequent univariate analyses demonstrated that the high proclivity group ( $M=2.72$ ) found the harassers to be significantly more personally relevant than the low proclivity group ( $M=2.22$ ;  $t=2.45$ ,  $p=0.02$ ,  $d=0.39$ ,  $1-\beta=0.79$ ), but the groups did not differ in their assessments of personal relevance of the victims ( $t=-0.17$ ,  $p=0.87$ ). Also, male participants ( $M=2.68$ ) found the harassers to be more personally relevant than did females ( $M=2.22$ ;  $t=2.76$ ,  $p=0.006$ ;  $d=0.37$ ,  $1-\beta=0.86$ ), whereas males ( $M=4.28$ ) found the victims to be less personally relevant than females ( $M=5.36$ ;  $t=-4.75$ ,  $p<0.001$ ,  $d=0.64$ ,  $1-\beta\approx 1.00$ ). Furthermore, there was no difference between participants who read scenarios where the harasser was of the same gender and those who read about harassers

of the opposite gender in assessments of personal relevance of the harassers<sup>2</sup> ( $t=-1.23$ ,  $p=0.22$ ). However, participants whose gender matched with the victims ( $M=5.07$ ) found the victims to be significantly more personally relevant than did those who did not match ( $M=4.56$ ;  $t=-2.15$ ,  $p=0.03$ ,  $d=0.29$ ,  $1-\beta=0.69$ ). Thus, the MANOVA partially supported the hypotheses: differences were demonstrated between proclivity groups and genders for the personal relevance of the harassers and between genders and gender match conditions for the personal relevance of the victims.

Additionally, the MANOVA revealed an unexpected significant interaction effect between gender and gender match on the combined personal relevance dependent variable (harassers and victims;  $\Lambda=0.94$ ,  $F=4.90$ ,  $p=0.009$ ). Subsequent univariate analyses revealed a significant interaction for the personal relevance of harassers ( $F=10.29$ ,  $p=0.002$ , partial  $\eta^2=0.05$ ,  $1-\beta=0.89$ ; see Figure 3) and the personal relevance of victims ( $F=5.31$ ,  $p=0.02$ , partial  $\eta^2=0.02$ ,  $1-\beta=0.63$ ; see Figure 4). For harassers, men and women did not differ in their assessments of personal relevance when there was a gender match, whereas women found male harassers ( $M=2.08$ ) to be *less* personally relevant than female harassers (a gender match;  $M=2.38$ ) and men found female harassers ( $M=3.04$ ) to be *more* personally relevant than male harassers ( $M=2.30$ ). In the case of the victims, men did not differ in ratings of personal relevance regardless of the gender match, whereas women found the victims to be *less* personally relevant when the victims were female ( $M=4.83$ ) than when they were male (in other words, a mismatch of gender with the harasser;  $M=5.84$ ).

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<sup>2</sup> Because the effect of gender match on the personal relevance of sexual harassers was a planned comparisons according to this study's hypotheses, subsequent univariate analysis was run even though the omnibus statistic was not significant. The primary purpose of the MANOVA was to protect against alpha inflation, not to determine which effects merited further investigation.

Figure 3: Interaction Effect of Gender and Gender Match on Personal Relevance of Harassers.

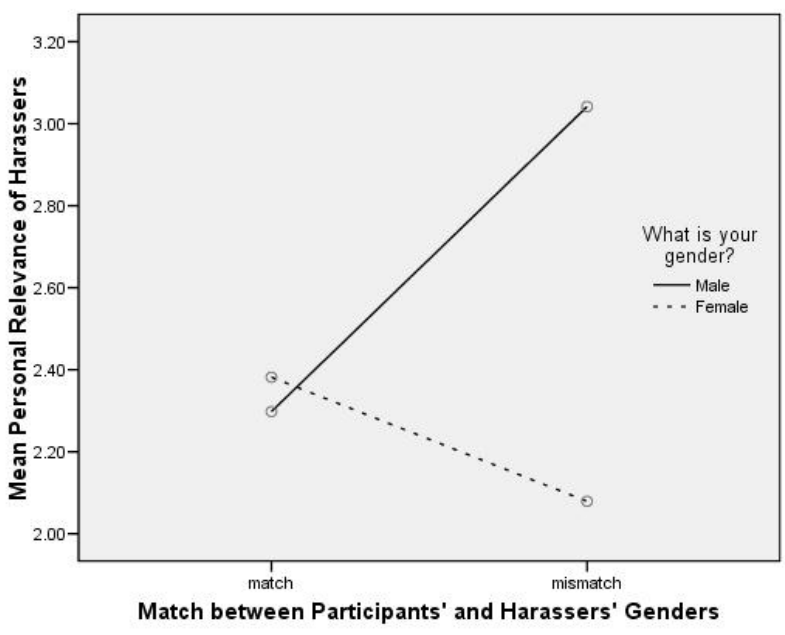
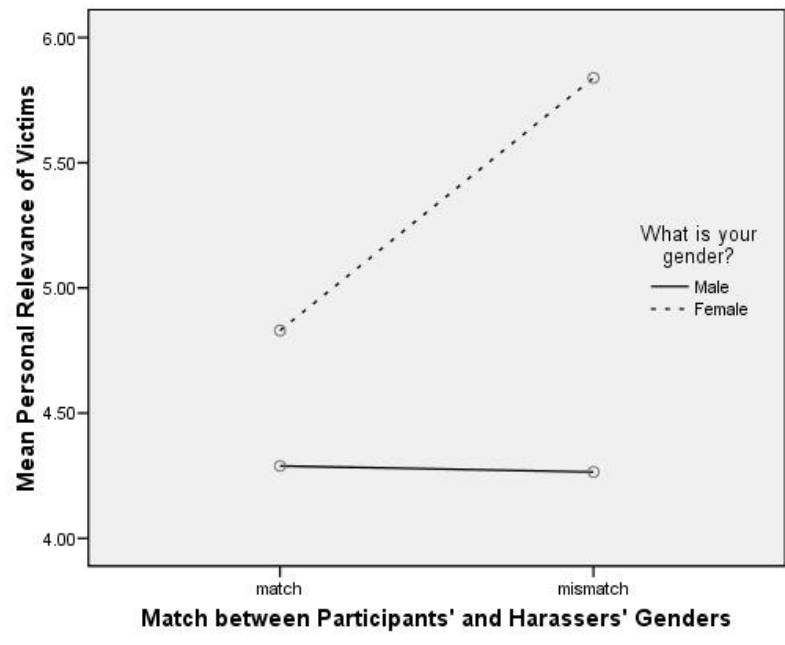


Figure 4: Interaction Effect of Gender and Gender Match on Personal Relevance of Victims.



### *Blame Analyses*

According to defensive attribution theory, personal relevance is the primary factor determining how individuals will attribute blame (Shaver, 1970). Since individual differences were hypothesized to impact ratings of personal relevance, by the transitive property, these individual differences were hypothesized to impact participants' attributions of blame. To test this, a 2x2x2 MANOVA with gender, gender match, and harassment proclivity group as the IVs and blame attributed to the harassers and the victims as the DVs was run. This MANOVA revealed a significant difference between harassment proclivity groups ( $\lambda=0.96$ ,  $F=3.20$ ,  $p=0.04$ ). However, the omnibus statistics<sup>3</sup> were not significant for gender ( $\lambda=0.99$ ,  $F=0.93$ ,  $p=0.40$ ) nor gender match ( $\lambda=1.00$ ,  $F=0.18$ ,  $p=0.84$ ). Subsequent univariate analyses demonstrated that the high proclivity group ( $M=6.96$ ) blamed the harassers significantly less than did the low proclivity group ( $M=7.52$ ;  $t=-2.64$ ,  $p=0.009$ ,  $d=0.42$ ,  $1-\beta=0.84$ ), but the groups did not differ in their assessments of blame for the victims ( $t=-1.45$ ,  $p=0.15$ ). Also, male participants ( $M=7.10$ ) blamed the harassers significantly less than did females ( $M=7.50$ ;  $t=-2.18$ ,  $p=0.03$ ;  $d=0.29$ ,  $1-\beta=0.69$ ), but there was no gender difference in attributions of blame for the victims ( $t=0.65$ ,  $p=0.52$ ). Furthermore, there was no difference between participants who read scenarios where the harasser was of the same gender and those who read about harassers of the opposite gender in assessments of blame for the harassers ( $t=-0.40$ ,  $p=0.69$ ) nor for the victims ( $t=0.02$ ,  $p=0.98$ ). Overall, the MANOVA partially supported the hypotheses, revealing that proclivity and gender impact blame for harassers, while gender has an effect on blame for the victims.

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<sup>3</sup> Because the effects of gender and gender match on blame were planned comparisons, subsequent univariate analyses were run even though the omnibus statistics were not significant.

It was hypothesized that personal relevance would have a direct effect on blame attributions. To test this hypothesis, the personal relevance variables (victims and harassers) were dichotomized according to tertile splits. These dichotomized personal relevance variables were submitted as the independent variables to independent-samples t-tests with the corresponding measure of blame as the dependent variable. Individuals who found the harassers to be relatively more personally relevant ( $M=7.04$ ) blamed the harassers less than did those who found the harassers to be less personally relevant ( $M=7.62$ ;  $t=2.60$ ,  $p=0.01$ ,  $d=0.41$ ,  $1-\beta=0.81$ ). However, no significant difference in blame for victims was found between those who found the victims relatively more and less personally relevant ( $t=0.49$ ,  $p=0.63$ ), disconfirming the hypothesis. Thus, there was a link between personal relevance and blame for the harassers, but not for the victims.

#### *Path Analysis*

It was hypothesized that the data would reveal a casual structure consistent with defensive attribution theory. To examine how the investigated variables interacted to produce blame, a causal structure was devised. This initial causal model (see Figure 2) was subjected to a path analysis by comparing observed correlations with reproduced correlations (using path reconstruction). The initial model was not supported by the data: reproduced correlations did not match the observed correlations. Furthermore, none of the predictors significantly predicted blame for the victims. Thus, this variable was removed from the model. Other exogenous variables that were not predictive of the remaining endogenous variable (blame for the harassers) were removed, namely gender match and personal relevance of the victims. Subsequent adjustments were made by adding and removing causal paths and retesting the model until an adequate fit was

uncovered through path decomposition (see Table 2). This revised model (see Figure 5) consists of situational relevance, gender, and sexual harassment proclivity as the exogenous variables and personal relevance of the harassers and blame attributed to the harassers as endogenous variables. All reproduced correlations were within 0.05 of the observed correlation except for the path from gender to blame attributed to the harasser ( $\hat{\rho}_{25}$ , see Table 3). This overall similarity between correlations meets the criteria for model fit (Mertler & Vannatta, 2001), indicating that the data support the revised model of the causal structure.

*Table 2: Path Decompositions for the Revised Model.*

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$$\hat{r}_{14} = p_{41} + r_{12}p_{42} + r_{13}p_{43}$$

$$\hat{r}_{15} = p_{51} + p_{54}p_{41} + r_{12}p_{54}p_{42} + r_{13}p_{53} + r_{13}p_{54}p_{43}$$


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$$\hat{r}_{24} = p_{42} + r_{12}p_{41} + r_{23}p_{43}$$

$$\hat{r}_{25} = p_{54}p_{42} + r_{12}p_{54}p_{41} + r_{12}p_{51} + r_{23}p_{54}p_{43} + r_{23}p_{53}$$


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$$\hat{r}_{34} = p_{43} + r_{23}p_{42} + r_{13}p_{41}$$

$$\hat{r}_{35} = p_{53} + p_{54}p_{43} + r_{13}p_{51} + r_{13}p_{54}p_{41} + r_{23}p_{54}p_{42}$$

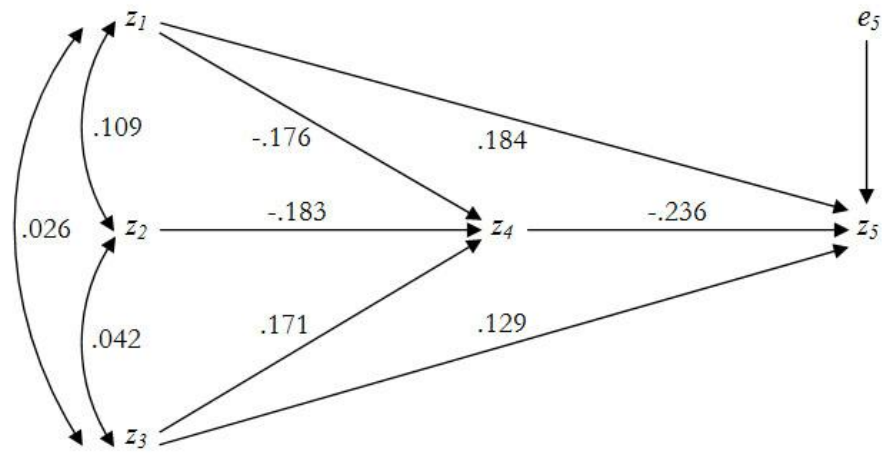

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$$\hat{r}_{45} = p_{54}$$


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Figure 5: Path Diagram for the Revised Causal Model for Attributions of Blame.



$z_1$  = sexual harassment proclivity

$z_2$  = gender

$z_3$  = situational relevance

$z_4$  = personal relevance of the harasser

$z_5$  = blame attributed to the harasser

Table 3: Empirical and Reproduced Correlations for the Revised Model.

	<u>Observed Correlations</u>					<u>Reproduced Correlations</u>				
	$z_1$	$z_2$	$z_3$	$z_4$	$z_5$	$z_1$	$z_2$	$z_3$	$z_4$	$z_5$
$z_1$	1.00					1.00				
$z_2$	.109	1.00				.109	1.00			
$z_3$	.026	.042	1.00			.026	.042	1.00		
$z_4$	-.176	-.183	.171	1.00		-.175	-.183	.172	1.00	
$z_5$	.184	.146*	.129	-.236	1.00	.184	.066*	.129	-.240	1.00

\* Difference between observed and reproduced correlation is greater than 0.05.

This causal structure partially confirmed the hypothesis, demonstrating that harassment proclivity and situational relevance had direct effects on blame attributed to the harasser and indirect effects through the personal relevance of the harasser, whereas gender only had an indirect effect on blame through personal relevance. Approximately 9% of the variability in personal relevance of the harasser was explained by harassment proclivity, gender, and situational relevance ( $R^2=.091$ ,  $p<0.001$ ; see Table 4), while 10% of the variability in blame attributed to the harassers was accounted for in harassment proclivity, situational relevance, and personal relevance of the harassers ( $R^2=.103$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). The direct, indirect, and total effects of each variable are summarized in Table 4.

*Table 4: Summary of the Causal Effects for the Revised Model.*

<i>Outcome</i>	<i>Determinant</i>	<i>Causal Effects</i>		
		<i>Direct</i>	<i>Indirect</i>	<i>Total</i>
Personal Relevance of Harassers ( $R^2=.091$ )	Proclivity	-.161*	-	-.161
	Gender	-.173*	-	-.173
	Situational Rel.	.183*	-	.183
Blame Attributed to Harassers ( $R^2=.103$ )	Proclivity	.137*	.039	.176
	Gender	-	.042	.042
	Situational Rel.	.166*	-.044	.122
	PR <sup>a</sup> of Harasser	-.240*	-	-.240

\* *Direct effect is significant at the 0.05 level.*

<sup>a</sup> *PR = personal relevance.*

### *Post-Hoc Analyses*

Results demonstrated that the harassment proclivity groups differed in their assessments of blame for hostile environment harassment. This finding could be

interpreted to mean that the proclivity groups viewed hostile environment harassment as a whole differently, or perhaps that proclivity groups differed very strongly in their attributions of blame for one or two specific subtypes of hostile environment harassment; potential differences between harassment subtypes may have resulted in a significant finding for the difference in hostile environment harassment as a whole. To better explain this result, a post-hoc analysis investigated differences between proclivity groups in their attributions of blame as a function of what subtype of hostile environment harassment was enacted by the harasser. The subtypes of sexual harassment were coded according to Fitzgerald, Swan, and Magley's (1997) integrated model of sexual harassment. Only three of the four subtypes were present in the student-relevant vignettes: verbal gender harassment (vignette 6), verbal unwanted sexual attention (vignettes 2, 3, 4, and 7), and nonverbal unwanted sexual attention (vignettes 2 and 8). Vignette 1 included nonverbal gender harassment. However, this was a student-irrelevant vignette. As in the other tests of personal relevance and blame, including this vignette would not make sense because there is not sufficient situational relevance. Participants' scores on the blame index were subdivided into blame for each of these three harassment subtypes. These blame scores were submitted as the dependent variable to a repeated measures factorial ANOVA (2x3) with harassment proclivity groups (between subjects) and harassment subtypes (within subjects) as the independent variables. There was no significant interaction between the harassment subtype and proclivity group variables ( $F=0.37, p = 0.54$ ). These data suggest that there was no difference between proclivity groups in their attributions of blame of the harassers in the vignettes as a function of what subtype of hostile environment harassment was exhibited by the harasser.

Another potential explanation for the effect could relate to the outcome for the harassers in the vignettes. The student-relevant vignettes contained two types of outcomes: punishment by a superior for the harassing behavior (vignettes 3, 6, and 7) and no punishment for the behavior (vignettes 2, 4, and 8). To test whether or not the presence of punishment was a mediator between proclivity groups in their attributions of blame, the blame scores were submitted as the dependent variable to a repeated measures factorial ANOVA (2x2) with harassment proclivity groups (between subjects) and the presence of punishment (within subjects) as the independent variables. There was no significant interaction between the harassment subtype and punishment variables ( $F=0.75, p = 0.39$ ). These data suggest that there was no difference between proclivity groups in their attributions of blame for the harassers as a function of whether or not the harassers were punished for their behaviors.

### Discussion

The results of this investigation can be interpreted at multiple levels. To ensure that the relevant information is adequately explained, the findings will be discussed at each level. First, each specific hypothesis will be discussed; then the goals of the investigation will be evaluated. Finally, the broader implications for the literature and practical application will be discussed, followed by an explanation of the limitations of this research.

#### *Situational Relevance Hypotheses*

$H_{1a}$  – *Student-relevance*. The results confirmed the hypothesis that participants would rate the student-relevant scenarios in the dependent measure as significantly more situationally relevant than the student-irrelevant scenarios, indicating that the

manipulation was successful: participants found the vignettes designed to be relevant to be relatively more situationally relevant than those designed not to be.

This finding suggests that participants may have perceived these vignettes to be “sufficiently” situationally relevant to enact the motivations for blame in defensive attribution theory (Shaver, 1970). The establishment of this necessary element of defensive attribution theory suggests that any subsequent findings demonstrating the impact of variables on ratings of personal relevance and blame could be explained within the framework of defensive attribution theory.

*H<sub>1b</sub> – Situational relevance and proclivity.* The expectation that there would be no difference between high and low proclivity groups in their ratings of situational relevance was confirmed by the data, suggesting that harassment proclivity did not impact ratings of situational relevance, a result that would not be consistent with the variable structure explained by defensive attribution theory.

*H<sub>1c</sub> – Situational relevance and intended career.* Participants who intend to work in high incidence rate domains (military or government) were hypothesized to rate scenarios (both student-relevant and -irrelevant) as more situationally relevant than participants who intend to pursue careers in low incidence domains (academia and private sector), because they anticipate being in careers where they will experience harassment more frequently, which makes current situations describing sexual harassment more relevant to them. The results did not support this hypothesis, regardless of how intended career was operationalized.

These null results may be explained by the insufficient variability in the intended career path variable. Only two participants (0.9% of the sample) intended to work for the

military, only fourteen (6.3%) for the government. When combined into the incidence domain groups (high and low), this combined group only represents 7.2% of the sample. Such a limited group size is problematic because it fails to adequately represent the distribution of scoring on a given variable. In the case of situational relevance each individual (with the exception of two) rated the situational relevance of the vignettes differently. It is difficult to gain an understanding (statistical or otherwise) of the pattern of responses when they vary somewhat widely (range=6.33 points out of a possible 8) with such a small sample size. This issue was likely the result of convenience sampling; a random or quota sampling procedure might have produced a sample that is more varied with respect to career domain.

#### *Personal Relevance Hypotheses*

*H<sub>2a</sub> - Personal relevance of the harassers (proclivity).* Results confirmed the hypothesis that the high proclivity group would find the harassers in the scenarios to be significantly more personally relevant than the low proclivity group. This finding suggests that the harassment proclivity of an individual is a relevant factor in determining how personally relevant a sexual harasser will be to that individual. Without being made explicitly aware of their own proclivity, high proclivity participants recognized qualities of the sexual harassers in themselves and rated the harassers as more personally relevant than those low in harassment proclivity.

*H<sub>2b</sub> - Personal relevance of the harassers (gender).* Results supported the hypothesis that females would find the harassers in the scenarios to be significantly less personally relevant than would males, demonstrating that males find sexual harassers to be relatively more personally relevant, regardless of the gender of the harasser.

*H<sub>2c</sub> - Personal relevance of the victims (gender):* As hypothesized, women found the hypothetical victims of sexual harassment to be more personally relevant than did men. Parallel to the finding regarding the personal relevance of harassers, women found themselves to be more similar to the victims independent of the victims' gender.

*H<sub>2d</sub> - Personal relevance of the harassers (gender match).* The hypothesis that participants would find the harassers in the scenarios to be significantly more personally relevant when they are the same gender than when they are not was not supported: no difference was found, nor were the means in the hypothesized direction. This suggests that participants did not find similarity in gender to be an important element of the personal similarity of the harassers.

*H<sub>2e</sub> - Personal relevance of the victims (gender match).* As hypothesized, participants found the victims in the scenarios to be significantly more personally relevant when they were the same gender than when they were not. Unlike the result for harassers, this result suggests that participants did find similarity in gender to be an important element of the personal similarity of the victims.

#### *Blame Attribution Hypotheses*

*H<sub>3a</sub> - Blame for the harassers (proclivity).* Results confirmed the hypothesis that the high proclivity group would blame the harassers in the scenarios less than the low proclivity group. This effect, coupled with the findings on the effect of proclivity on personal relevance of the harassers, suggests that the high proclivity group perceived the harassers to be personally relevant, engaged in blame avoidance, and blamed the harassers less, whereas the low proclivity group found the harassers to be less personally relevant, engaged in harm avoidance, and blamed the harassers more.

*H<sub>3b</sub> – Blame for the harassers (gender).* The hypothesis that females would blame the harassers in the scenarios more than would males was supported by data analysis. This finding, when considered with the gender difference in ratings of personal relevance of the harassers, suggests that males perceived the harassers to be personally relevant, engaged in blame avoidance, and blamed the harassers less, whereas females found the harassers to be less personally relevant, engaged in harm avoidance, and blamed the harassers more.

*H<sub>3c</sub> – Blame for the victims (gender).* The results did not support the hypothesis that females would blame the victims less than males – there was no significant difference, nor were the means in the hypothesized direction. These data suggest that, though there may be a gender difference in attributions of blame for harassers, there is no difference between men and women in attributions of blame for victims.

*H<sub>3d</sub> – Blame for the harassers (gender match).* The hypothesis that participants would blame the harassers in the scenarios less when they are the same gender than when they are not was not supported by the results: no difference was found, though the means were in the hypothesized direction. These results suggest that gender match does not impact the blame attributed to sexual harassers.

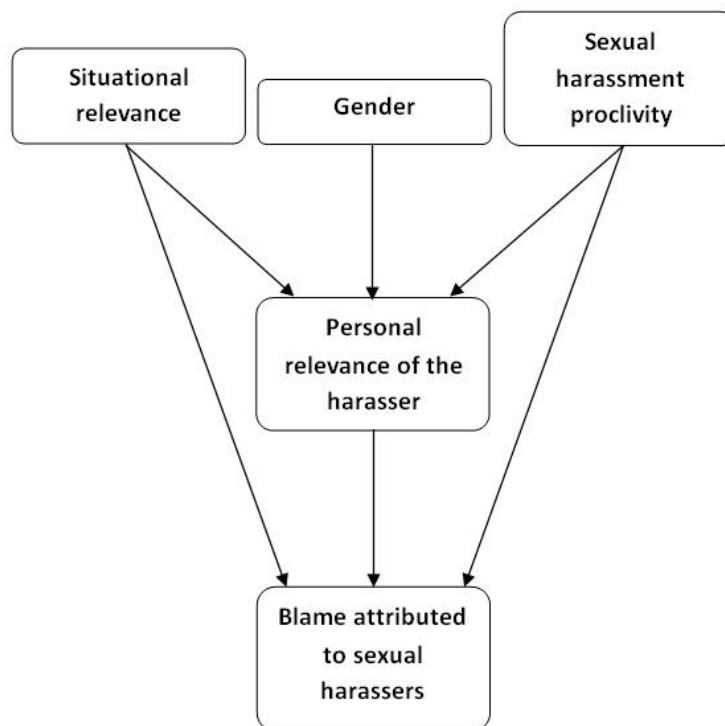
*H<sub>3e</sub> – Blame for the victims (gender match).* The results did not confirm the hypothesis that participants would blame the victims in the scenarios less when they are the same gender than when they are not: there was no difference, though the means were in the hypothesized direction. As with the harassers, these results suggest that gender match does not impact the blame attributed to sexual victims.

*Path Analysis*



The hypothesis that a path analysis would reveal a variable structure that corresponds to the structure outlined in defensive attribution theory was not initially supported by the data. Subsequent alterations revealed a model that offered limited support for the hypothesis, predicting personal relevance and blame only for the harassers using gender, situational relevance, and harassment proclivity as the exogenous variables (see Figures 5 and 6). In other words, the data supported a partially mediated model of harasser blame.

*Figure 6: Revised Causal Structure for Attributions of Blame.*



#### *Post-Hoc Analyses*

The post-hoc analyses attempted to better explain the observed difference between proclivity groups in their attributions of blame. Results demonstrated that this

difference was not affected by which subtype of hostile environment harassment was present nor by whether or not the sexual harasser was punished for his behavior. Thus, the observed difference between proclivity groups in attributions of blame is best explained as high proclivity individuals mitigating blame for hostile environment sexual harassment defined broadly, regardless of whether or not the harasser received some form of punishment for his/her actions.

#### *Additional Findings*

Interesting and unexpected results were found regarding the interaction effects between gender and gender match on ratings of personal relevance. Men found female harassers to be *more* personally relevant than male harassers; women found female victims to be *less* personally relevant than male victims. These results are contrary to the predictions of defensive attribution theory: similarity in gender should lead to higher ratings of personal relevance when all else is held constant. These findings are not logical given how personal relevance was operationally defined in the instructions for the blame and relevance measures: gender was specifically listed as a component of personal relevance (see Appendix A). Given the lack of available logical explanations, it is likely that these interaction effects are spurious findings.

#### *Stated Goals of the Present Study*

Specific goals were outlined at the outset of this study to guide the purpose of the present investigation. Building upon the specific hypotheses, the achievement of these goals will be reviewed below in light of the statistical results.

*Goal 1: Replication.* Results of the present study replicated the findings of Key (2005), which found effects of harassment proclivity on assessments of personal

relevance and blame for harassers. When considered with previous research, these results suggest that harassment proclivity has a real impact on blame for sexual harassers.

*Goal 2: Investigation of Other Individual Differences.* Another aim of the present study was to extend the scope of this research to include women. This study's confirmation of previous results (Key, 2005) utilizing both males and females as participants, harassers, and victims indicates that the effects generalize across gender lines.

The results were mixed whether or not attributions of blame can be predicted from a larger set of individual differences than only sexual harassment proclivity: gender functioned as a predictive factor for both personal relevance and blame for harassers, but gender match did not. Furthermore, intended career did not impact ratings of situational relevance. These findings suggest that other individual differences may impact ratings of blame (such as gender), but further investigation is required to better identify this set of factors.

*Goal 3: Victim Blame.* The goal to expand the scope of predictions of blame to include victims of sexual harassment was not achieved. Little information was gained about why individuals blame the victims of sexual harassment. The fact that there was no impact of personal relevance on the blame attributed to the victim was perhaps the strongest evidence that defensive attribution theory does not explain blame for victims of harassment.

*Goal 4: Gender and Blame.* The goal to replicate and explain the commonly observed gender difference in blame for sexual harassers was achieved: male participants blamed the sexual harassers less than did female participants. Furthermore, males found

the harassers to be more personally relevant. Together, these findings suggest that this well documented gender difference may be explained by defensive attribution theory.

*Goal 5: Causal Structure.* Finally, the goal to explain a causal structure for blame that is consistent with defensive attribution theory was partially achieved. No causal structure was generated that could explain the blame attributed to the victims; some exogenous variables were not predictive; and unexpected direct paths were found between exogenous and endogenous variables (instead of all of these effects being mediated through personal relevance). On the other hand, both of the key elements of defensive attribution theory (situational and personal relevance) were included in the revised causal model explaining blame for harassers. Thus, the elements of defensive attribution theory seem to cause attributions of blame, but not in the manner outlined by Shaver (1970).

#### *Primary Implications*

Though a number of hypotheses and stated goals of this study were not met, important implications can be drawn from the data. The study adds to the literature on sexual harassment proclivity and the causes underlying blame for the commission of harassment. Beyond these general points, this research contributes four specific implications for understanding blame for sexual harassment and merit further discussion: 1) defensive attribution theory may explain the effect of harassment proclivity on blame; 2) defensive attribution theory potentially accounts for gender differences in attributions of blame; 3) defensive attribution theory may require alteration to better predict attributions of blame; and 4) blame attributed to sexual harassers and victims of harassment may have different causes and processes underlying these causes. These

points will be presented in turn, followed by a discussion of the broader implications of this research.

*Proclivity and defensive attribution theory.* Overall, the data generally supported the notion that defensive attribution theory can explain blame in sexual harassment scenarios, at least with respect to blame attributed to harassers. The manipulation checks on situational relevance were successful, suggesting that the necessary level of situational relevance were met. Consistent with previous findings (Key, 2005), sexual harassment proclivity had an impact on ratings of personal relevance and blame for the harasser in a pattern suggesting blame avoidance for those high in the proclivity to harass and harm avoidance for low proclivity individuals. Furthermore, a difference in blame was found between the high and low personal relevance groups in blame for the harassers, demonstrating that personal relevance has a direct effect on blame. The difference was consistent with the theory: those who perceived the harassers to be more personally relevant blamed the harassers less than those who found them to be less personally relevant. In other words, individuals who are relatively more likely to be or become harassers mitigate blame for other sexual harassers, partially due to perceptions of similarity.

The findings established in previous research (Key, 2005) were replicated with a larger and more diverse sample. Furthermore, the effect found a broader application to include both possible forms of heterosexual harassment (male to female, female to male). Collectively, the findings suggest that defensive attribution theory explains the blame that is attributed to sexual harassers.

*Gender and defensive attribution theory.* Another important contribution of this study was that gender differences in attributions of blame for sexual harassers may be explained by defensive attribution theory. Gender differences were found in assessments of personal relevance and blame in a pattern that suggests that men engaged in blame avoidance and women engaged in harm avoidance: men found harassers to be more personally relevant than did women and blamed them less. Gender differences in blame for sexual harassment have been well established in the literature (e.g., Blumenthal, 1998; Gutek, 1995; Nguyen & Sackett, 2001; Valentine-French & Radtke, 1989). This study offers a simple explanation for this effect: those who are similar to the harassers may find the harassers to be more personally relevant and blame them less.

This finding, though seemingly simplistic, is quite provocative. One might expect men to identify with sexual harassers because men are more likely to engage in sexual harassment than women (U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, 1981). However, in the present study, gender of the harasser was varied: half of participants read about males harassing females; the other half read about females harassing males. The findings indicated that men identified more with harassers than did women, regardless of the gender of the harasser.<sup>4</sup>

The effect of gender similarity on personal relevance was reflected in analyses using the gender match variable. Interestingly, these effects were nonsignificant (with the exception of personal relevance of victims). In other words, those who read about harassers of the same gender did *not* find the harassers to be more personally similar than those who read about harassers of the opposite gender. Taken together, these findings

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<sup>4</sup> The same effect was found when comparing the effect of gender in only those participants who read about female harassers, indicating that the effect across conditions was not driven solely by a large effect for those who read about male harassers.

suggest that more personal similarity was perceived between male participants and harassers than male participants and the men in the scenarios.

The effect of gender on the personal relevance of harassers might be explained by the incorporation of sexual harassment into gender stereotypes. People might consider sexual harassment to be stereotypically male behavior. Because the majority of heterosexual sexually harassing behaviors are perpetrated by men (U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, 1981) and because sexual harassment is a well-known phenomenon, participants may have been aware of the gender difference in incidence of harassment and formed a gender-based expectation about those who engage in it. In other words, men might have found harassers to be more personally relevant (regardless of the actual gender of the harasser) because they believed such behavior to be consistent with their gender (stereotypically masculine). The same rationale could explain the effect in reverse. Females may have found the sexual harassers (regardless of gender) to be less personally relevant because women are relatively less frequent sexual harassers.

Though few significant results were found regarding the victims in the scenarios, an important link was uncovered between gender and ratings of personal relevance of the victims. Females in the sample found the victims of sexual harassment to be more personally relevant than did males, regardless of the gender of the victim. The same effect used to account for the link between gender and personal relevance of the harassers might also explain this result. Research has demonstrated that females are more frequently the victims of harassment (as high as 90% for women compared to approximately 17% for men; see Terpstra & Baker, 1987; U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, 1981). Because women are more frequently the victims of sexual harassment,

when people hear about a case of sexual harassment, they might expect that the victim is a woman. In parallel to the finding for harassers and male participants, female participants may have considered victims to be more personally relevant because they deemed being the target of such behavior to be consistent with their gender. Overall, these findings may suggest that factual gender differences in the commission and victimization of sexual harassment have caused the development of gender stereotypes about sexual harassers and their victims. Research should investigate whether or not such a gender-based harassment stereotype exists.

*Reconstructing defensive attribution theory.* The results of the path analysis might suggest that the elements of defensive attribution theory need to be reorganized. Both of the key elements of defensive attribution theory (situational and personal relevance) were included in the final causal model. However, a curious relationship was found between these variables: the path analysis supported an indirect effect of situational relevance on blame through the personal relevance variable. Such a structure suggests that the relationship between these variables is not as suggested by sexual harassment theory: instead of being two independent exogenous variables, situational relevance, in part, causes personal relevance.

This finding may indicate that individuals rate the similarity of individuals differently depending upon whether or not they could imagine themselves in the given situation. Such an explanation for the effect is not illogical. Situational relevance may impact personal relevance because the characteristics of familiar situations might spillover into assessments about individuals in that situation. Those who are better able to



imagine themselves in a situation are also better able to see themselves as an actor in the situation.

Consider an example of a student hearing about two cases of sexual harassment: one at a university, the other within a large corporation. This student would be more likely to find an individual in the school setting to be more personally relevant than a similar individual in a corporate setting because the student might make assumptions about the undisclosed characteristics of these people. In the case of the individual involved in a claim of sexual harassment in a university setting, the student might assume that the individual involved is likely highly educated and interested in academic pursuits (because of a representativeness heuristic – relying on the information available to the student about individuals who work in such a setting). In a parallel case of harassment in a corporate setting, the student might assume that the individual involved is career driven with a relatively higher level of income (again, possibly due to stereotypes about individuals who work in such a setting). The student would likely then find the individual in the university setting to be relatively more personally relevant than the individual in the corporate setting because the student's own personal characteristics match better with the assumptions made about that individual. The student is, in a sense, filling in information about the individuals' personal characteristics based upon information about the situation.

Though the direct effect of sexual harassment proclivity on blame is not necessarily inconsistent with defensive attribution theory as it may identify an effect outside of the scope of the theory, there is no provision for this effect of situational relevance on personal relevance in this theory. Assuming that subsequent research

confirms this finding, defensive attribution theory may require modification to allow for this causal flow. A revised defensive attribution theory that is consistent with the results of this research would still explain blame by these two primary factors. However, situational relevance would be considered to be not only a necessary factor for the enacting of the two motivations of blame (harm- and blame-avoidance), but also a contributing factor to the variable that determines which motivation is employed (personal relevance). Further study is needed to confirm the observed causal structure and ensure that it is not an artifact of unexplained factors peculiar to this sample.

*Harasser versus victim blame.* Another critical implication of this study is that blame attributed to harassers and victims occurs for different reasons. In contrast to the sexual harassers, relatively few findings were found demonstrating an explainable effect on the personal relevance and blame for victims. More importantly, 1) personal relevance of the victims did not impact attributions of blame for the victims, and 2) using the same variables as for harassers, no causal structure was discovered that could explain blame for the victims. Collectively, these results suggest that there is an entirely different process that produces blame for the victims of sexual harassment than that for harassers.

This is not entirely unexpected, as defensive attribution theory was designed to explain blame attributed to the perpetrator (in this study, the harasser). Though it does not explicitly exclude the possibility, the theory makes no specific claims about blame for the target of the behavior (or the victim). This study suggests that defensive attribution theory may explain blame attributed to the harasser, but not the victim; victim blame occurs according to a different (and, based solely upon the findings of this study, unknown) process. A possibility beyond the context of sexual harassment is that defensive

attribution explains blame attributed to perpetrators but not to targets of the blameworthy behavior.

The findings further suggest that blame for sexual harassment is not a zero-sum proposition. In other words, in the context of sexual harassment, there is not a sum total of blame being attributed to one of two sources (the harasser or victim), where a decrease in blame to one would lead to an increase for the other. In fact, subsequent correlational analysis revealed a *positive* relationship between blame for harassers and victims ( $r=0.25$ ,  $p<0.001$ ;  $\rho=0.22$ ;  $p=0.001$ ); that is, as blame for the harasser increases, so does blame for the victim. This finding suggests that, when a blameworthy event occurs, judges may spread blame among individuals involved in the event. Perhaps victims are blamed due to spillover from the harasser: the victim is blamed because of his or her association with the harasser. This perspective might explain why victims of other unwanted events are blamed, such as rape victims being blamed for the attack because of the style of clothing they wore. Perhaps the cause of this kind of claim is that individuals are trying to rationalize their desire to spread the blame around for the negative event.

An alternate explanation of these findings is that there are individual difference factor(s) that make some individuals more likely to blame others, regardless of whether the recipient of blame is the perpetrator or victim. In other words, the observed positive relationship between blame for harassers and victims may simply be due to the fact that some individuals blame people in general more for negative events while others blame less. Identification of such factors may help explain the process which underlies victim blame.

### *General Implications*

*Those who mitigate blame.* This research contributes to the broader understanding of sexual harassers, proclivity, and sexual harassment blame attribution. Combining the present findings with previous research, a clearer picture of individuals who are likely to mitigate blame for sexual harassers develops: men (Jensen & Gutek, 1982; Valentine-French & Radtke, 1989) who hold sexist attitudes, are workers as opposed to students (De Judicibus & McCabe, 2001), and have a high sexual harassment proclivity blame harassers less. Research on the correlates of sexual harassment proclivity suggests that these individuals are also sexually conservative, accepting of interpersonal violence, accept myths about rape, have a higher proclivity to rape, have difficulty taking the perspectives of others, and are more sexually active (Bartling & Eisenman, 1993).

*Cognitive processes and consciousness of proclivity.* The fact that the data indicate that defensive attribution theory predicts blame attributions may give an insight into the cognitive processes of actual and potential sexual harassers. Defensive attribution theory states that assessments of high personal relevance result in “blame-avoidance” (or a decrease in blame). Male judges high in the proclivity to sexually harass may be identifying the behavior of sexual harassers as consistent with their own and consider any behaviors they might commit themselves to be worthy of relatively little blame. Future studies should attempt to directly address the cognitive processes by which these individuals mitigate blame for the purpose of developing more effective interventions.

A related cognitive issue is whether or not the attribution of blame for a sexual harasser is a conscious or unconscious process. One component of this process that might be a conscious decision is the evaluation of personal relevance. It seems that those high in the proclivity to harass are aware of their own proclivity because they are actively rating

sexual harassers to be more personally relevant. These ratings were not obtained through observation, but rather by asking the participant to rate the individual themselves, an active process, and thus likely conscious.

On the other hand, the fact that their ratings of personal relevance were defined as high because of the relation to the ratings of others might not suggest consciousness because there was no manner for these participants to make comparisons to the ratings of low proclivity individuals. Additionally, it is likely that, if participants were aware of their own harassment proclivity, they would respond in a socially desirable manner to mask their disposition considered socially undesirable by others. Results from a subsample of participants found no significant relationship between scores on the SHP and the Marlowe-Crowne (1960) social desirability scale ( $r=0.12$ ,  $p=0.44$ ;  $\rho=0.16$ ,  $p=0.32$ ;  $n=42$ ). This lack of a relationship between harassment proclivity and social desirability suggests that participants were not aware of their own proclivity; otherwise, there should have been a negative relationship between the variables. This reasoning suggests that at least this component of blame attribution is an unconscious process. However, direct evidence that addresses the consciousness of this process is required in order to draw definitive conclusions.

*Labeling sexual harassment.* This difference in perceptions may extend to the recognition of sexual harassment. Previous research has focused on what factors lead victims to define their experiences as sexual harassment (e.g., Ellis, Barak, & Pinto, 1991; Fitzgerald et al., 1988; Giuffre & Williams, 1994; Stockdale & Vaux, 1993) for the purpose of increasing rates of harassment reporting. Strangely absent in this discussion is a focus on what factors lead harassers to define their *own* behavior as sexual harassment

or not. If males and those high in the proclivity to sexually harass consider harassing behaviors to be worthy of relatively little blame, they may view these behaviors to be acceptable and not consider them to fall under the umbrella of sexual harassment. The implication is straightforward and practical: if harassers do not recognize their own behaviors as harassing, they may be less likely to find their behavior to be untoward or detrimental. By understanding what factors impact harassers' self-definition of harassment, subsequent research can develop interventions aimed at altering harassers' perceptions of their behavior and its impact.

*Acceptance of accounts.* Furthermore, the present study may have implications for understanding the evaluation of accounts for sexual harassment. The results of this study illustrated that assessments of personal similarities can lead individuals to mitigate blame for instances of sexual harassment in the absence of any accounts. This perceived similarity may also influence individuals to be more accepting of the accounts (especially justifications) offered by sexual harassers to explain their behaviors. Research addressing the acceptance of accounts should investigate whether or not males and those high in the proclivity to sexually harass are more accepting of the accounts offered by sexual harassers than females and those low in the proclivity to harass. Such research would further elucidate how sexual harassers attribute blame and have direct implications for jury decisions in civil cases on sexual harassment.

*Legal application.* This study may have other implications for legal proceedings. Jensen and Gutek (1982) assert that the most salient information to the plaintiff's lawyer would be the sex-role beliefs of the judge and jury. This claim is based on their study's findings, which showed that sex-role beliefs significantly correlate with blame. Using the

same logic, the findings of the current study suggest that the gender and sexual harassment proclivities of the judge or jury are important to the lawyer of the victim in tailoring a case.

A lawyer can easily observe gender and might be able to use supplemental jury questionnaires to identify those high in the proclivity to sexually harass. Counsel could use an understanding of the effects of these factors in the voir dire process to deselect whichever jurors might view their client's plight less favorably. For example, a lawyer representing a defendant in a sexual harassment suit (in other words, an alleged sexual harasser) should deselect women and those low in the proclivity to sexually harass, as these individuals are more likely to be predisposed against the client. Although there are practical limitations to deselecting jurors based upon gender (e.g., if opposing counsel were able to completely deselect the opposite gender, no jurors would remain) as well as legal constraints upon the use of demographics (e.g., *Batson v. Kentucky*, 1986), research like the present study could establish clear effects of demographics on jurors' decisions regarding sexual harassment. Though unlikely, it is possible that this could potentially help clear the way to allow challenges for cause for jurors exhibiting demographic factors known to predispose in sexual harassment cases.

Demographic factors may seem trivial in comparison to attitudinal and experiential variables in the prediction of blame. Though research may not demonstrate them to have a greater predictive ability, they are easier to apply in a legal setting. It is often difficult for the attorney to select the questions posed in voir dire; quite often, the judge selects and even poses the questions (Lieberman & Sales, 2007). Thus, the attorney must rely on the information available to him or her in order to make determinations

about which jurors are predisposed against the client. Information such as ethnicity, age, and, to a lesser extent, socioeconomic status can be collected simply by looking at a potential juror. If an attorney can know how important these factors are in determining personal relevance, he or she can make important decisions about the make-up of the jury that might result in more favorable outcomes for the client where the evidence is somewhat ambiguous. Though this research may not have identified the most predictive factors of blame for sexual harassment, it might have a stronger legal application.

*General support for the theory.* Lastly, this research provides general support for using Shaver's (1970b) defensive attribution theory to explain attributions of blame. The elements of defensive attribution theory were established and resulted in a difference in attributions of blame as predicted by the theory. This research demonstrated that defensive attribution theory can predict how individuals attribute blame for sexual harassers. Defensive attribution theory, though 28 years old, may still have other novel applications. Initially, it could be applied to blame for behaviors similar to sexual harassment, such as rape, sexual assault, or other forms of coercion. Assuming significant results, the theory could then be applied more broadly to other criminal and socially unacceptable behaviors.

#### *General Limitations*

An important limitation of the present study was the sample participating in this research. The convenience sampling procedure resulted in a sample that consisted entirely of college students and primarily of Caucasians. The median age was 22; only six participants were 30 years old or older. Furthermore, the items on the dependent measure were designed to apply to students and did not represent many potential scenarios of



sexual harassment in the workplace. Since sexual harassment does not occur exclusively among this population and in this context, future research should replicate this study with a more diverse sample with respect to age, race, religion, and occupation and should focus more on sexual harassment in career work settings.

The use of Bartling and Eisenman's SHP (1993) also limits the generalizations that can be made from this study in two key ways. First, the SHP measures harassment proclivity, not actual sexually harassing behaviors. Though this is a common remedy for the difficulty in recruiting admitted sexual harassers, it limits the validity of this research. Future studies might replicate this research using individuals who have admitted to sexual harassment and compare their assessments against individuals who have never engaged in sexually harassing behaviors. Also, though the SHP has been shown to be valid in its measurement of hostile environment sexual harassment, it does not claim to measure *quid pro quo* harassment proclivity. Thus, this study offers no direct evidence about the relationship between blame and the proclivity to engage in *quid pro quo* harassment. Studies could replicate this design, employing instead Pryor's LSH (1987) or Bingham and Burlinson's SHPI (1996). This conceptual replication could broaden the understanding of the relationship between harassment proclivity and blame to include both forms of sexual harassment.

Another limitation is that, though all four subtypes of hostile environment sexual harassment were included in the instrument (Fitzgerald, Swan, & Magley, 1997), only three of the four were represented in the student-relevant vignettes – verbal gender harassment, verbal unwanted sexual attention, and nonverbal unwanted sexual attention. Because the student-relevant items were the only vignettes used in the subsequent

analyses, only three of the four subtypes could be included in the post-hoc analysis of differences between subtypes. Key's (2005) dependent measure should have been augmented to incorporate nonverbal gender harassment so that all four subtypes of hostile environment harassment are represented in the student-relevant vignettes.

Important limitations in the ability of this study to adequately address the hypotheses were the methodological issues surrounding the intended career variable. The operationalization of this variable was altered in order to fit the available sample: career was changed to intended career in order to be salient to a student sample. This may have limited the impact of career on situational relevance by asking individuals to make projections instead of collecting an appropriate sample and asking them about present circumstances. Furthermore, adjustments were not made to the dependent measure to match the projective nature of the variable. Situational relevance in the instructions for the dependent measure was defined as the relevance of the situation to an individual in his or her present circumstances. If a projected career were to affect ratings of situational relevance, then the situational relevance variable should have also allowed for projections. It would have been more appropriate to either match how variables are operationalized or simply use a sample that is of an age where they have begun their careers.

The fact that this research was conducted on the internet presents further potential limitations. Individuals may be more likely to give dishonest answers, receive help on their answers, or complete the questionnaires in a distracting environment. Furthermore, there is no guarantee that the participants are who they claim to be. Such participant reactivity may result in a misrepresentation of the demographics of the sample or even

underaged individuals participating in this research without offering parental consent for the minors. Replications of this study might be better conducted in person (in a group administration format with an experimenter present or as a person to person or phone interview), as this allows the experimenter a degree of oversight and unspoken influence over the participants to help prevent this reactivity.

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## Appendix A.

## Text Versions of Elements of the Internet Survey

Research Participant Informed Consent Page, pg. 92

Demographic questionnaire, pg. 93

Blame and relevance measure for male harassers, pg. 94

Blame and relevance measure for female harassers, pg. 101

Sexual Harassment Proclivities Scale (SHP; Bartling & Eisenman, 1993), pg. 108

Measure of vocational domain and related sexual harassment, pg. 110

*Research Participant Informed Consent Form*

# Consent to be a Research Participant

**Introduction:** This research is being conducted by Colin Key in the psychology department at Brigham Young University under the supervision of Dr. Robert Ridge to examine the interrelationships between individuals' attitudes and how they view others' behavior. You are participating because you voluntarily responded to an invitation to participate in one of your undergraduate psychology courses.

**Procedures:** You will be asked to complete an online survey containing multiple questionnaires. It will take you between 30-45 minutes to participate. The questionnaires will ask you for basic demographic information (e.g., marital status, age, year in school), impressions of other people's behavior in academic and work settings, and your agreement with specific statements about women. More specifically, you will be asked to evaluate the blameworthiness of individual's behaviors towards the opposite sex in hypothetical scenarios.

**Risks/Discomforts:** There are minimal risks for participation in this study. You may feel some emotional discomfort when answering questions regarding your attitudes or others' behavior.

**Benefits:** There are no direct benefits to you. The benefits to society include learning about how individuals' attitudes may be related to their impressions of others' behavior.

**Confidentiality:** All information provided will remain confidential and will only be reported as group data with no identifying information. All data will be kept on a secure server and only those directly involved with the research will have access to them. After the research is completed, the data will be erased.

**Compensation:** You will receive extra credit if authorized by your instructor. If not, there is no compensation.

**Participation:** Participation in this research study is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at anytime or refuse to participate entirely without jeopardy to your class status, grade or standing with the university.

**Questions about the Research**

If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact Colin Key by phone at 380-3596 or e-mail him at colinkey@gmail.com.

**Questions about your Rights as Research Participants**

If you have questions you do not feel comfortable asking the researcher, you may contact Christopher Dromey, PhD, IRB Chair, 422-6461, 133 TLRB, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT 84602, Christopher\_Dromey@byu.edu.

I have read, understood, and received a copy of the above consent and desire of my own free will and volition to participate in this study.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*Demographic questionnaire***Demographic Questionnaire**

(This form will be used only for the purpose of describing the entire group of participants and not for personal identification.)

*Please answer the following questions about yourself.*

1. **Age:** \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. **Gender** (check only one):  
Male \_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_
  
3. **Marital status** (check only one):  
Single (never married) \_\_\_\_ Married \_\_\_\_ Divorced \_\_\_\_ Widowed \_\_\_\_  
Separated \_\_\_\_
  
4. **Race** (check only one):  
Caucasian \_\_\_\_ African-American \_\_\_\_ Hispanic \_\_\_\_  
Asian \_\_\_\_ Native American \_\_\_\_  
Other (specify): \_\_\_\_\_
  
5. **Class standing** (check only one):  
Freshman \_\_\_\_ Sophomore \_\_\_\_ Junior \_\_\_\_ Senior \_\_\_\_  
Graduate Student \_\_\_\_ Other (specify): \_\_\_\_\_
  
6. **Religion** (specify): \_\_\_\_\_
  
7. **Major** (specify): \_\_\_\_\_

*Blame and relevance measure for male harassers*

Below are eight scenarios describing events that could take place at school or work. The scenarios are divided into two parts. After reading the first part, you are asked to assess the **situational relevance** of the scenario. In other words, you are asked to determine the extent to which you could see yourself in a situation like the one described in the vignette. For example, a scenario describing an argument on the set of a major motion picture would probably have relatively *low* situational relevance for you since it is unlikely that you would typically find yourself in such a situation. On the other hand, a scenario describing a conversation between a student and a professor would probably have relatively *high* situational relevance for you since, as a student, you are probably more likely to find yourself in such a situation. You should respond to the situational relevance question by considering your **present** circumstances in life.

After reading the second part of the scenario, you are asked to assess the **personal relevance** of the characters. In other words, you are asked to determine the extent to which you consider yourself to be similar to the people in the vignette. For example, an older man who is an accountant, who is shy, and who enjoys racquetball may have relatively *low* personal relevance to a young college student who is very outgoing and prefers to play football. Someone who would be personally relevant **to you** would be similar to you in such areas as age, status, career, attitudes, gender, personal preferences, or personality.

Finally, you are asked to assess blame in each of the scenarios. Specifically, you are to judge how much the people in the scenarios are to blame for how an individual has acted.

For all questions, you are to respond by circling the number that corresponds to your feelings. The written designations under the scales identify the anchors for the scales. For example, circling a "1" on the first question would indicate that it is very unlikely that you could imagine the given situation occurring in your life. **Please do not skip any questions. Circle only one number per question. Do not mark intermediate values.**

1. Melanie plays violin in the city orchestra. She has been in the orchestra for five years and enjoys it very much. She is currently finishing a rehearsal.

**How likely is it that you could be in this kind of situation?**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
very unlikely								very likely

At the end of rehearsal, Melanie is getting ready to go home. She drops her rosin on the floor and bends down to pick it up. As she gets up, she notices Adam, a fellow violinist, clearly looking down her shirt. "You're looking good today," Adam remarks with a smile. Melanie tells Adam she doesn't appreciate his comments and leaves.



**How much is Adam like you?**

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9  
 not at all      very much  
 like me      like me

**How much is Melanie like you?**

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9  
 not at all      very much  
 like me      like me

**How much is Adam to blame for his behavior toward Melanie?**

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9  
 not at all      entirely to  
 to blame      blame

**How much is Melanie to blame for Adam's behavior toward her?**

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9  
 not at all      entirely to  
 to blame      blame

2. Rachel has been getting extra help from her TA, Steven. One study session goes so late that Steven offers to order take out so they can continue working. They order Chinese and split the bill.

**How likely is it that you could be in this kind of situation?**

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9  
 very      very  
 unlikely      likely

After dinner, Steven leans over, kisses Rachel, and says, "you're one of my favorite students." Rachel gets up and leaves. For the rest of the semester, Rachel goes to another TA for help.

**How much is Steven like you?**

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9  
 not at all      very much  
 like me      like me

**How much is Rachel like you?**

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9  
 not at all      very much  
 like me      like me

**How much is Steven to blame for his behavior toward Rachel?**

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9  
 not at all      entirely to  
 to blame      blame

**How much is Rachel to blame for Steven's behavior toward her?**

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9  
 not at all      entirely to  
 to blame      blame

3. Jason and Danielle work at the same store at the mall. The store sells athletic clothing. Both are college students earning money for school.

**How likely is it that you could be in this kind of situation?**

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9  
 very      very  
 unlikely      likely

Jason has asked Danielle out several times over the past few weeks. Danielle declined his requests. Ever since then, Jason has avoided Danielle. Jason asks the manager not to be scheduled at the same time as her. The manager asks why. Jason explains his interest in Danielle and her rejection. The manager reminds Jason of the company policy against dating coworkers. The manager says this incident will be written in his file and that he will be fired if anything else like this happens again.

**How much is Jason like you?**

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9  
 not at all      very much  
 like me      like me

**How much is Danielle like you?**

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9  
 not at all      very much  
 like me      like me

**How much is Jason to blame for his behavior toward Danielle?**

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9  
 not at all      entirely to  
 to blame      blame

**How much is Danielle to blame for Jason's behavior toward her?**

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9  
 not at all      entirely to  
 to blame      blame

4. Ryan is an undergraduate TA offering a review session for an exam. The class he is a teaching assistant for is difficult. Many of the students have been struggling, so the professor asked Ryan to review some of the more difficult material before the exam.



**How much is Joanna like you?**

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9  
 not at all      very much  
 like me      like me

**How much is Greg to blame for his behavior toward Joanna?**

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9  
 not at all      entirely to  
 to blame      blame

**How much is Joanna to blame for Greg's behavior toward her?**

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9  
 not at all      entirely to  
 to blame      blame

6. Jared and Susan work at the same restaurant. Tips have been very low all evening. Jared and Susan rely on their tips to pay bills and rent.

**How likely is it that you could be in this kind of situation?**

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9  
 very      very  
 unlikely      likely

Susan and Jared are complaining to each other. Jared remarks, "Maybe you'd have better luck if you showed some more skin." Susan tells the manager that Jared is making her uncomfortable. This is not the first complaint about Jared. A week later, Jared is transferred to a restaurant in a different part of town.

**How much is Jared like you?**

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9  
 not at all      very much  
 like me      like me

**How much is Susan like you?**

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9  
 not at all      very much  
 like me      like me

**How much is Jared to blame for his behavior toward Susan?**

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9  
 not at all      entirely to  
 to blame      blame

**How much is Susan to blame for the Jared's behavior toward her?**

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9  
 not at all      entirely to  
 to blame      blame

7. Allen and Sarah work at a large bookstore. Both are cashiers. The work is easy and pays fairly well.

**How likely is it that you could be in this kind of situation?**

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9  
 very      very  
 unlikely      likely

Allen has asked Sarah out a number of times, but has been rejected. Allen tells everyone that Sarah is just playing hard to get and keeps asking her out. Sarah files a complaint with the store management. Allen is placed on two weeks suspension.

**How much is Allen like you?**

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9  
 not at all      very much  
 like me      like me

**How much is Sarah like you?**

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9  
 not at all      very much  
 like me      like me

**How much is Allen to blame for his behavior toward Sarah?**

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9  
 not at all      entirely to  
 to blame      blame

**How much is Sarah to blame for Allen's behavior toward her?**

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9  
 not at all      entirely to  
 to blame      blame

8. Todd is Jami's TA for an English class. Jami is a good student and asks many good questions in class.

**How likely is it that you could be in this kind of situation?**

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9  
 very      very  
 unlikely      likely

One day on campus, Todd sees Jami walking ahead of him. He runs up behind her, tickles her waist, and gives her a side hug. Jami tells Todd not to touch her or she'll tell her boyfriend.

**How much is Todd like you?**

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9  
 not at all      very much  
 like me      like me

**How much is Jami like you?**

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9  
 not at all      very much  
 like me      like me

**How much is Todd to blame for his behavior toward Jami?**

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9  
 not at all      entirely to  
 to blame      blame

**How much is Jami to blame for Todd's behavior toward her?**

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9  
 not at all      entirely to  
 to blame      blame

*Blame and relevance measure for female harassers*

Below are eight scenarios describing events that could take place at school or work. The scenarios are divided into two parts. After reading the first part, you are asked to assess the **situational relevance** of the scenario. In other words, you are asked to determine the extent to which you could see yourself in a situation like the one described in the vignette. For example, a scenario describing an argument on the set of a major motion picture would probably have relatively *low* situational relevance for you since it is unlikely that you would typically find yourself in such a situation. On the other hand, a scenario describing a conversation between a student and a professor would probably have relatively *high* situational relevance for you since, as a student, you are probably more likely to find yourself in such a situation. You should respond to the situational relevance question by considering your **present** circumstances in life.

After reading the second part of the scenario, you are asked to assess the **personal relevance** of the characters. In other words, you are asked to determine the extent to which you consider yourself to be similar to the people in the vignette. For example, an older man who is an accountant, who is shy, and who enjoys racquetball may have relatively *low* personal relevance to a young college student who is very outgoing and prefers to play football. Someone who would be personally relevant **to you** would be similar to you in such areas as age, status, career, attitudes, gender, personal preferences, or personality.

Finally, you are asked to assess blame in each of the scenarios. Specifically, you are to judge how much the people in the scenarios are to blame for how an individual has acted.

For all questions, you are to respond by circling the number that corresponds to your feelings. The written designations under the scales identify the anchors for the scales. For example, circling a "1" on the first question would indicate that it is very unlikely that you could imagine the given situation occurring in your life. **Please do not skip any questions. Circle only one number per question. Do not mark intermediate values.**

1. Adam plays violin in the city orchestra. He has been in the orchestra for five years and enjoys it very much. He is currently finishing a rehearsal.

**How likely is it that you could be in this kind of situation?**

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>
very unlikely								very likely

At the end of rehearsal, Adam is getting ready to go home. He drops his rosin on the floor and bends down to pick it up. As he gets up, he notices Melanie, a fellow violinist, clearly looking at his buttocks. "You're looking good today," Melanie remarks with a smile. Adam tells Melanie he doesn't appreciate her comments and leaves.

**How much is Adam like you?**

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9  
 not at all      very much  
 like me      like me

**How much is Melanie like you?**

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9  
 not at all      very much  
 like me      like me

**How much is Melanie to blame for her behavior toward Adam?**

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9  
 not at all      entirely to  
 to blame      blame

**How much is Adam to blame for Melanie's behavior toward him?**

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9  
 not at all      entirely to  
 to blame      blame

2. Steven has been getting extra help from his TA, Rachel. One study session goes so late that Rachel offers to order take out so they can continue working. They order Chinese and split the bill.

**How likely is it that you could be in this kind of situation?**

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9  
 very      very  
 unlikely      likely

After dinner, Rachel leans over, kisses Steven, and says, "you're one of my favorite students." Steven gets up and leaves. For the rest of the semester, Steven goes to another TA for help.

**How much is Steven like you?**

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9  
 not at all      very much  
 like me      like me

**How much is Rachel like you?**

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9  
 not at all      very much  
 like me      like me

**How much is Rachel to blame for her behavior toward Steven?**

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9  
 not at all      entirely to  
 to blame      blame



**How much is Steven to blame for Rachel's behavior toward him?**

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9  
 not at all      entirely to  
 to blame      blame

3. Jason and Danielle work at the same store at the mall. The store sells athletic clothing. Both are college students earning money for school.

**How likely is it that you could be in this kind of situation?**

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9  
 very      very  
 unlikely      likely

Danielle has asked Jason out several times over the past few weeks. Jason declined her requests. Ever since then, Danielle has avoided Jason. Danielle asks the manager not to be scheduled at the same time as him. The manager asks why. Danielle explains her interest in Jason and his rejection. The manager reminds Danielle of the company policy against dating coworkers. The manager says this incident will be written in her file and that she will be fired if anything else like this happens again.

**How much is Jason like you?**

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9  
 not at all      very much  
 like me      like me

**How much is Danielle like you?**

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9  
 not at all      very much  
 like me      like me

**How much is Danielle to blame for his behavior toward Jason?**

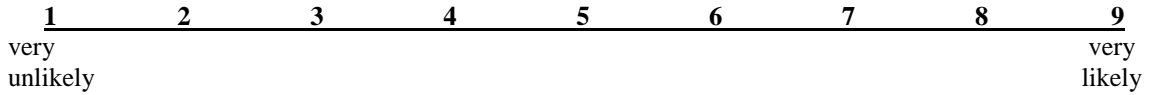
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9  
 not at all      entirely to  
 to blame      blame

**How much is Jason to blame for Danielle's behavior toward him?**

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9  
 not at all      entirely to  
 to blame      blame

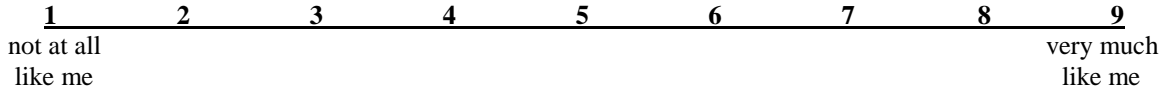
4. Helen is an undergraduate TA offering a review session for an exam. The class she is a teaching assistant for is difficult. Many of the students have been struggling, so the professor asked Helen to review some of the more difficult material before the exam.

**How likely is it that you could be in this kind of situation?**

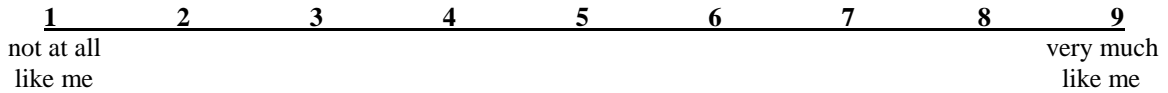


Helen finds Ryan, one of the students, to be very attractive. After the review session is over, Helen stops Ryan and asks him out on a date. Ryan declines. Helen keeps trying to get Ryan to go out with her. Ryan tells Helen that she’s making him feel uncomfortable and to cut it out.

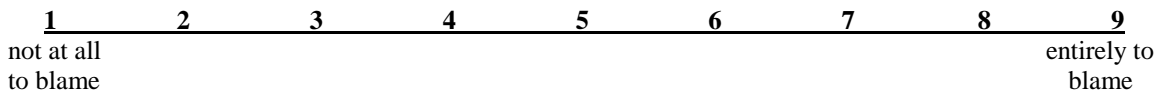
**How much is Ryan like you?**



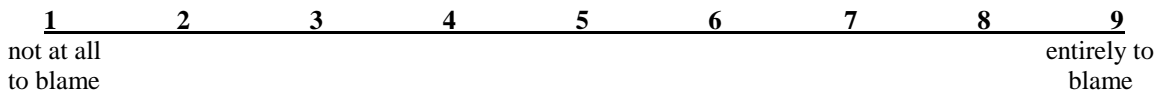
**How much is Helen like you?**



**How much is Helen to blame for her behavior toward Ryan?**

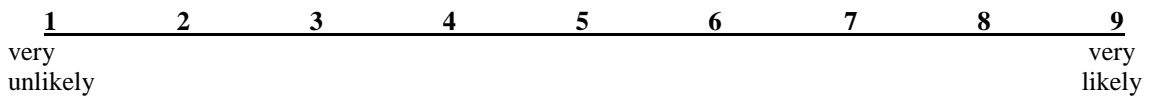


**How much is Ryan to blame for Helen’s behavior toward him?**



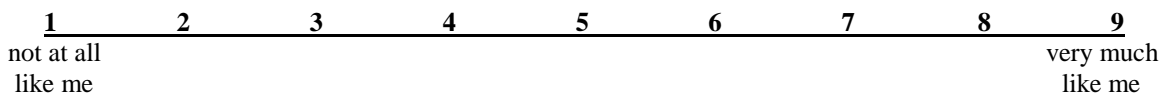
5. Greg and Joanna are lawyers at the same firm. They have been working together on a complicated case dealing with copyright infringement. Both are reviewing depositions late one night.

**How likely is it that you could be in this kind of situation?**



Greg calls Joanna over for some help. As he is reading a statement out loud, Joanna comes up behind Greg and puts her hands on his shoulders. Greg tells her that he is uncomfortable and leaves. The next morning, when Joanna gets to work, her secretary tells her that one of the partners has opened an investigation to address her touching Greg.

**How much is Greg like you?**



**How much is Joanna like you?**

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9  
 not at all      very much  
 like me      like me

**How much is Joanna to blame for her behavior toward Greg?**

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9  
 not at all      entirely to  
 to blame      blame

**How much is Greg to blame for Joanna's behavior toward him?**

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9  
 not at all      entirely to  
 to blame      blame

6. Jared and Susan work at the same restaurant. Tips have been very low all evening. Jared and Susan rely on their tips to pay bills and rent.

**How likely is it that you could be in this kind of situation?**

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9  
 very      very  
 unlikely      likely

Susan and Jared are complaining to each other. Susan remarks, "Maybe you'd have better luck if you showed your muscles off in a tighter shirt." Jared tells the manager that Susan is making him uncomfortable. This is not the first complaint about Susan. A week later, Susan is transferred to a restaurant in a different part of town.

**How much is Jared like you?**

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9  
 not at all      very much  
 like me      like me

**How much is Susan like you?**

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9  
 not at all      very much  
 like me      like me

**How much is Susan to blame for her behavior toward Jared?**

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9  
 not at all      entirely to  
 to blame      blame

**How much is Jared to blame for Susan's behavior toward him?**

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9  
 not at all      entirely to  
 to blame      blame

7. Allen and Sarah work at a large bookstore. Both are cashiers. The work is easy and pays fairly well.

**How likely is it that you could be in this kind of situation?**

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9  
 very      very  
 unlikely      likely

Sarah has asked Allen out a number of times, but has been rejected. Sarah tells everyone that Allen is just playing hard to get and keeps asking him out. Allen files a complaint with the store management. Sarah is placed on two weeks suspension.

**How much is Allen like you?**

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9  
 not at all      very much  
 like me      like me

**How much is Sarah like you?**

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9  
 not at all      very much  
 like me      like me

**How much is Sarah to blame for her behavior toward Allen?**

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9  
 not at all      entirely to  
 to blame      blame

**How much is Allen to blame for Sarah's behavior toward him?**

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9  
 not at all      entirely to  
 to blame      blame

8. Jami is Todd's TA for an English class. Todd is a good student and asks many good questions in class.

**How likely is it that you could be in this kind of situation?**

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9  
 very      very  
 unlikely      likely

One day on campus, Jami sees Todd walking ahead of her. She runs up behind him, tickles his waist, and gives him a side hug. Todd tells Jami not to touch him or he'll tell Jami's boyfriend about it.

**How much is Todd like you?**

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9  
not at all      very much  
like me      like me

**How much is Jami like you?**

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9  
not at all      very much  
like me      like me

**How much is Jami to blame for her behavior toward Todd?**

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9  
not at all      entirely to  
to blame      blame

**How much is Todd to blame for Jami's behavior toward him?**

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9  
not at all      entirely to  
to blame      blame

*Sexual Harassment Proclivities Scale (SHP; Bartling & Eisenman, 1993)*

Indicate the extent of your agreement or disagreement to these 10 statements by circling the appropriate number.

1. Women are flattered by sexual advances from men even when they fail to respond positively to these advances.

Strongly Agree      1    2    3    4    5      Strongly Disagree

2. It is natural for men to be more aggressive when it comes to sexual relations with women.

Strongly Agree      1    2    3    4    5      Strongly Disagree

3. Women are often inconsistent in terms of their non-verbal communications with men.

Strongly Agree      1    2    3    4    5      Strongly Disagree

4. Women often mean "maybe" or even "yes" when they say "no" to sexual advances by men.

Strongly Agree      1    2    3    4    5      Strongly Disagree

5. It is important for men to control the initial development of their relationships with women.

Strongly Agree      1    2    3    4    5      Strongly Disagree

6. Women frequently use men to obtain status, security, or other things they want.

Strongly Agree      1    2    3    4    5      Strongly Disagree

7. Women who dress in a sexy manner at work are deliberately sending a sexual message to men.

Strongly Agree      1    2    3    4    5      Strongly Disagree

8. Highly attractive individuals (opposite in gender to me) "drive me crazy" and I sometimes do or say things around them that I can't help.

Strongly Agree      1    2    3    4    5      Strongly Disagree

9. Pregnant women use their conditions to justify doing less work on many jobs in comparison to their coworkers.

Strongly Agree      1    2    3    4    5      Strongly Disagree

10. Women often are flattered by sexual advances by their coworkers.

**Strongly Agree**      1   2   3   4   5      **Strongly Disagree**

*Measure of vocational domain and related sexual harassment*

**PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS BY FILLING IN THE BLANK, CHECKING THE APPROPRIATE SPACE, OR CIRCLING THE NUMBER THAT BEST REPRESENTS WHAT YOU THINK.**

1. If you had to pick one job or career that you would do for the rest of your life, what career or area of work would you do? \_\_\_\_\_

2. Into which **ONE** of the following categories does your future career fit?

\_\_\_\_ Military (any branch)

\_\_\_\_ Academics (teaching elementary or high school, college, tutoring)

\_\_\_\_ Government (politics, government administration job, police officer, FBI, CIA)

\_\_\_\_ Private sector (business, sales, marketing, corporate positions)

\_\_\_\_ Other

3. In your future job, how much MORE power do you expect your boss to have than you?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
No								Much
More								more

4. From 0 to 100%, what percent of people in your future career do you believe will experience or be affected by sexual harassment (meaning what percent of people will be the recipient of sexual harassment, harass others, or witness some form of sexual harassment)? \_\_\_\_\_%

5. From 0 to 100%, how much does the thought of potential sexual harassment impact your decision to work in the career you wrote down above? \_\_\_\_\_%



Appendix B.  
Supplemental Materials

Participant Recruitment Transparency, pg. 112

## Internet Research Opportunity

**Purpose:** This research is being conducted by Colin Key, a doctoral candidate in psychology Brigham Young University under the supervision of Dr. Robert Ridge to examine the interrelationships between personal beliefs and ratings of others' behaviors.

**Procedures:** Participants will be asked to complete an online survey using the web link below. Participation will take approximately 30 to 45 minutes to complete. The survey will ask for basic demographic information (e.g., marital status, age, year in school), impressions of other people's behavior, and your attitudes. Specifically, you will be asked to evaluate behaviors in hypothetical scenarios and to rate your agreement with statements about women.

**Compensation:** Participants will receive extra credit if authorized by the instructor. If not, there is no compensation.

HERE IS THE WEBSITE (PLEASE WRITE THIS DOWN IF YOU WISH TO PARTICIPATE):

**THANK YOU!**

Appendix C.

Screenshots of the Web-Based Survey

## Consent Form Screenshot, part 1



The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying a consent form. The browser's address bar shows the URL: [http://new.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_aWx8LHVQYtLE3305VID=Prod](http://new.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_aWx8LHVQYtLE3305VID=Prod). The page features the Brigham Young University logo at the top center, consisting of the letters "BYU" in a large, bold, blue font, with "BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY" in a smaller, blue, sans-serif font below it. The main heading of the form is "Consent to be a Research Participant" in a bold, blue font. Below this heading, there are five sections of text, each starting with a bolded section header:

- Introduction:** This research is being conducted by Colin Key in the psychology department at Brigham Young University under the supervision of Dr. Robert Ridge to examine the interrelationships between attitudes and ratings of others' behavior. You are participating because you voluntarily responded to an invitation to participate in one of your undergraduate psychology courses.
- Procedures:** You will be asked to complete an online questionnaire which will follow this page. It will take you between 30 minutes to one hour to participate. The questions will ask you for basic demographic information (e.g., marital status, age, year in school), impressions of other people's behavior, and your attitudes. Specifically, you will be asked to evaluate interpersonal behaviors in hypothetical scenarios and to rate your agreement with statements about women.
- Risks/Discomforts:** There are minimal risks for participation in this study. You may feel some emotional discomfort when answering questions regarding your attitudes or others' behavior.
- Benefits:** There are no direct benefits to you. The benefits to society include learning about how people's attitudes may be related to their impressions of others' behavior.
- Confidentiality:** All information provided will remain confidential and will only be reported as group data with no identifying information. All data will be kept on a secure server and on a computer disk maintained in a

The browser window also shows a taskbar at the bottom with several open applications, including "start", "Qualtrics - Win...", "https://orcs.b...", "Qualtrics Surv...", "Microsoft Excel...", "Calendar - Mc...", and "Document1...". The system clock in the bottom right corner indicates the time is 2:42 PM.

## Consent Form Screenshot, part 2 (this is a single web page, scrolled down)

**Confidentiality:** All information provided will remain confidential and will only be reported as group data with no identifying information. All data will be kept on a secure server and on a computer disk maintained in a secure location. Only those directly involved with the research will have access to the information on the server or disk. After the research is completed, the data will be removed from both the server and the disk.

**Compensation:** You will receive extra credit if authorized by your instructor. If not, there is no compensation.

**Participation:** Participation in this research study is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at anytime or refuse to participate entirely without jeopardy to your class status, grade or standing with the university.

**Questions about the Research:** If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact Colin Key by phone at 380-3596 or e-mail him at [colinkey@gmail.com](mailto:colinkey@gmail.com).

**Questions about your Rights as a Research Participant:** If you have questions you do not feel comfortable asking the researcher, you may contact Christopher Dromey, PhD, IRB Chair, 422-6461, 133 TLRB, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT 84602, [Christopher\\_Dromey@byu.edu](mailto:Christopher_Dromey@byu.edu).

**BY TYPING YOUR NAME, AGE AND TODAY'S DATE IN THE BOXES BELOW, YOU INDICATE YOUR CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH.**

YOUR NAME (first and last)

YOUR AGE (you MUST be 18 to participate)

TODAY'S DATE (MM/DD/YYYY)

0%  100%

## SHP Screenshot, part 1

Qualtrics Survey Engine - Windows Internet Explorer

http://new.qualtrics.com/SE/FSID=GV\_aWx8UHVQyYLe338SVID=Prod

Qualtrics Survey Engine

**BYU**  
BRIGHAM YOUNG  
UNIVERSITY

Indicate the extent of your agreement or disagreement to these 5 statements by checking the box for the appropriate number (ONLY ONE PER STATEMENT PLEASE).

	1 (strongly agree)	2	3	4	5 (strongly disagree)
Women are flattered by sexual advances from men even when they fail to respond positively to these advances.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It is natural for men to be more aggressive when it comes to sexual relations with women.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Women are often					

Done

start | Internet | 150% | 2:44 PM

## SHP Screenshot, part 2

Qualtrics Survey Engine - Windows Internet Explorer

http://new.qualtrics.com/SE/FSID=SV\_aWx9LHvQyLe3386SVID=Prod

Qualtrics Survey Engine

Women are flattered by sexual advances from men even when they fail to respond positively to these advances.

It is natural for men to be more aggressive when it comes to sexual relations with women.

Women are often inconsistent in terms of their non-verbal communications with men.

Women often mean "maybe" or even "yes" when they say "no" to sexual advances by men.

It is important for men to control the initial development of their relationships with women.

0% 100%

>>

Done

start | Internet | 150%

Qualtrics - Wi... | https://orca.b... | Qualtrics Surv... | Microsoft Exc... | Calendar - Nic... | Document1 - ... | 2:44 PM

## SHP Screenshot, part 3

Qualtrics Survey Engine - Windows Internet Explorer

http://new.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\_aWx8LHvQYtL43305VID=Prod

Qualtrics Survey Engine

**BYU**  
BRIGHAM YOUNG  
UNIVERSITY

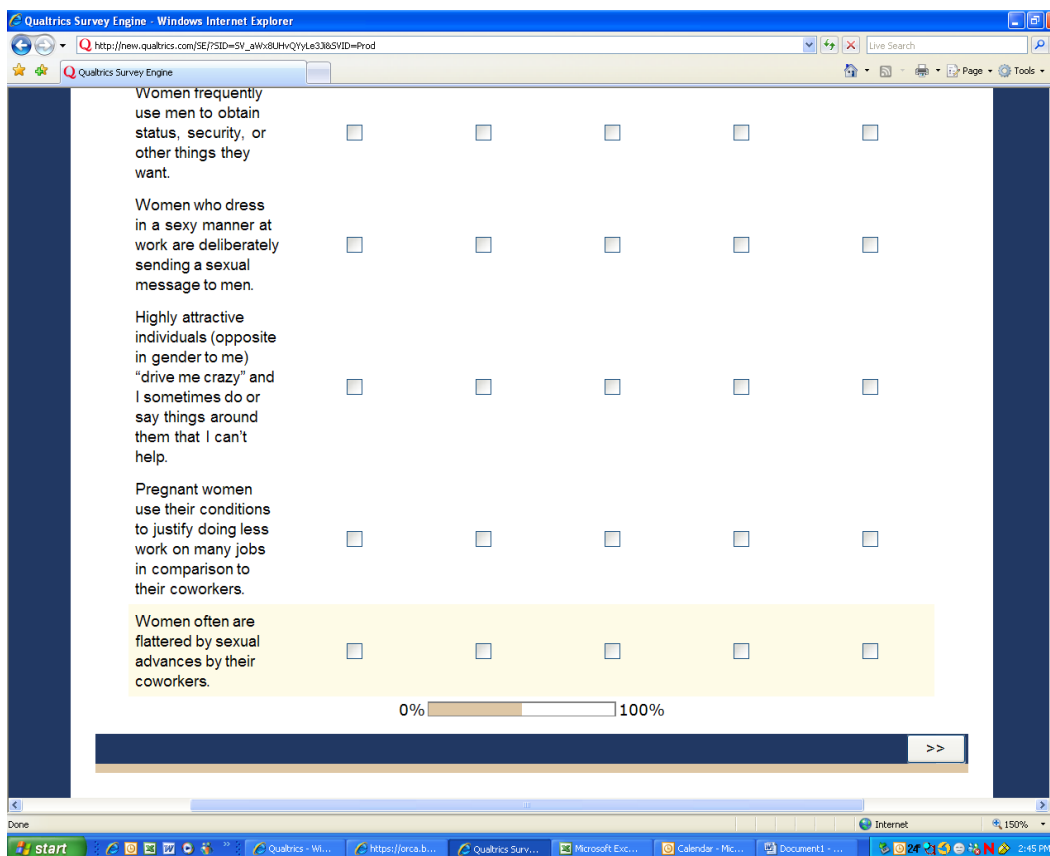
Indicate the extent of your agreement or disagreement to these 5 statements by checking the box for the appropriate number (ONLY ONE PER STATEMENT PLEASE).

	1 (strongly agree)	2	3	4	5 (strongly disagree)
Women frequently use men to obtain status, security, or other things they want.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Women who dress in a sexy manner at work are deliberately sending a sexual message to men.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Highly attractive individuals (opposite in gender to me)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

start | Internet | 2:45 PM



## SHP Screenshot, part 4



## Measure of Vocational Domain and Related Harassment, part 1

Qualtrics Survey Engine - Windows Internet Explorer

http://new.qualtrics.com/SE/PSID=SV\_aWx8UHVQyLe338SVID=Prod

Qualtrics Survey Engine

**BYU**  
BRIGHAM YOUNG  
UNIVERSITY

**PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS BY FILLING IN THE BLANK, CHECKING THE APPROPRIATE SPACE, OR CIRCLING THE NUMBER THAT BEST REPRESENTS WHAT YOU THINK.**

---

If you had to pick one job or career that you would do for the rest of your life, what career or area of work would you do?

---

Into which ONE of the following categories does your intended career fit?

- Military (any branch)
- Academics (teaching elementary or high school, college, or tutoring)
- Government (politics, government administration, police officer, FBI, CIA)

Done

start | Qualtrics - Wi... | https://orca.b... | Qualtrics Surv... | Microsoft Exc... | Calendar - Nic... | Document1 - ... | Internet | 150% | 2:46 PM

## Measure of Vocational Domain and Related Harassment, part 2

Qualtrics Survey Engine - Windows Internet Explorer

http://new.qualtrics.com/SE/PSID=SV\_aWx8UHVQyLe338SVID=Prod

Qualtrics Survey Engine

Government (politics, government administration, police officer, FBI, CIA)

Private Sector (business, sales, marketing, corporate positions, or any other business)

Other

In your future job, how much MORE power do you expect your boss to have than you?

1 (no more power)    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9 (much more power)

From 0 to 100%, what percent of people in your future career do you believe will experience or be affected by sexual harassment (meaning what percent of people will be the recipient of sexual harassment, harass others, or witness some form of sexual harassment)?

Expressed as a percent, how much does the thought of potential sexual harassment impact your decision to work in the career you listed earlier? (Please enter a number between 0 and 100.)

0%  100%

>>

Done

start    Internet    150%

Qualtrics - Wi...    https://orca.b...    Qualtrics Surv...    Microsoft Exc...    Calendar - Nic...    Document1 - ...    2:46 PM