

An Attributional (Causal Dimensional) Analysis of Perceptions of Sexual Harassment¹

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Female and male subjects read one of three scenarios depicting a social-sexual interaction between a man and a woman. The scenarios varied in severity of the stimulus male's behavior according to whether sexual harassment had occurred. Subjects then rated the offensiveness of his behavior and whether it constituted sexual harassment. Subjects also rated the stimulus male's behavior on Weiner's (1986) three basic dimensions of causality: locus of causality, or the perceived cause of the behavior as internal or external; stability, or the likelihood of its recurrence; and controllability, or the amount of volitional influence he exercised during the interaction. Additionally, subjects reported their anger at the target male and sympathy for the target female. Findings generally indicated that for both women and men, as the scenarios increased in severity, these ratings were elevated. Gender comparisons also showed elevations in these ratings for female but not for male subjects, and only in the scenarios of lesser severity. Regression analyses revealed attribution variables—control, stability, and anger—as reliable predictors of perceived offensiveness and harassment in the most severe scenario, whereas affects were the most reliable predictors in scenarios of lesser severity. The implications of these findings for perception of sexual harassment are discussed.

The study of sexual harassment has been described as an interdisciplinary endeavor involving law, sociology, organizational psychology, and social psychology (Brewer & Berk, 1982). Investigations from these fields have focused on various factors related to sexual harassment including conditions associated with persons' vulnerability to unwanted sexual attention, physical contact, coercion, intimidation, or other forms of social-sexual behavior occurring in the workplace (e.g., Mynatt & Allgeier, 1990; Tangri, Burt, & Johnson, 1982); the perception or labeling of social-sexual behaviors as harassment (e.g., Baker,

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Terpstra, & Cutler, 1990; Cohen & Gutek, 1985; Popovich, Licata, Nokovich, Martelli, & Zoloty, 1987); gender differences in the attribution of harassment (e.g., Jensen & Gutek, 1982; Pryor & Day, 1988; Thomann & Weiner, 1987), and variables affecting the likelihood of reporting perpetrators to appropriate authorities (e.g., Brooks & Perot, 1991; Riger, 1991).

Much research attention has focused on factors contributing to people's perception of behavior as sexual harassment (Pryor, 1985). As with other forms of social behavior whose meaning is often ambiguous and subject to construal (Bargh, 1988; Bruner, 1957; Srull & Wyer, 1979), interpretation of social-sexual behavior can vary widely among individuals (Terpstra & Baker, 1987). While some people may view certain forms of conduct as onerous, such as sexual joking or touching, others may not. Although unsupported by some data (Lees-Haley, Lees-Haley, Price, & Williams, 1994), a generally consistent finding is that women and men differ in the quality of behavior judged as harassing: women view a wider range of behaviors as sexual harassment than do men (Kenig & Ryan, 1986; Konrad & Gutek, 1986; Powell, 1986). Whereas women and men agree that blatantly oppressive manifestations of behavior, such as sexual bribery or sexual assault, constitute sexual harassment, women are more likely than men to see as harassment more subtle forms of behavior, such as sexual teasing or gestures (Adams, Kottke, & Padgitt, 1983; Collins & Blodgett, 1981; Kenig & Ryan, 1986; U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, 1981).

Because gender discrepancies in perception are implicated in affecting a range of outcomes for women, factors contributing to the perception of social-sexual behavior as sexual harassment are especially important to understand. For example, underutilization of grievance procedures by women are ascribed in part to failure in perceiving as offensive and harassing, unwanted sex-related behavior occurring in the workplace or in academia (Brooks & Perot, 1991; Fitzgerald et al., 1988; Livingston, 1982; Riger, 1991). Application of the reasonable person rule in the legal domain is sometimes complicated by gender differences in perception of behaviors constituting sexual harassment (e.g., Lees-Haley & Williams, 1994; Riger, 1991). Because men typically have more power in organizations, male definitions of offensive conduct are likely to predominate (Becker, 1967; Kanter, 1977).

The present investigation builds on earlier studies that have examined factors influencing perception of sexual harassment. We examined cognitive processes underlying the labeling of behaviors as sexual harassment and viewing them as offensive. The present research tested the efficacy of an influential theory of motivation and emotion—Weiner's (1985, 1986) attribution theory—for explaining how causal ascriptions influence these perceptions.

We hypothesized that one way in which social-sexual behaviors may be

labeled as sexual harassment and viewed as offensive is through causal interpretations of the behaviors. For example, if a man brushes up against a woman in an elevator, the action is more likely to be perceived as offensive and as sexual harassment if it is also perceived as controllable (intentional) rather than as uncontrollable (accidental), as stable (recurring) instead of as unstable (a single incident), and if the locus of the cause is seen as external to the woman (because of the man) as opposed to internal (because of the woman). Because negative outcomes ascribed to controllable causes elicit anger at perpetrators and sympathy for victims (Weiner, 1993), and because causal stability amplifies affective reactions (Weiner, 1986), the more controllable and stable unwanted social-sexual encounters are perceived, the more intense these affective reactions are likely to be. Emotional reactions, in turn, may elicit characterizations of the behaviors as offensive and as constituting sexual harassment, perhaps because affects function as unconscious primes or activators of social constructs such as sexual harassment (see Niedenthal & Cantor, 1986, for how affects guide inferences). Therefore, we examined how variation in causal ascription and affective reactions influence perceptions of offensiveness and sexual harassment.

Weiner's Attribution Theory

Attribution theory begins with the premise that individuals are motivated to understand the causes of events. This need is presumed to grow out of human desire to comprehend, predict, and control the environment (Heider, 1958; Jones & Davis, 1965; Kelley, 1967). Following negative or unexpected outcomes, people are especially motivated to seek their cause (Wong & Weiner, 1981). Attribution theorists contend that while people generate innumerable reasons for why outcomes occurred, these manifest causes can nevertheless be clustered into a few underlying properties (e.g., Heider, 1958; Rotter, 1966). Weiner (1985, 1986) has proposed three latent properties of causes: locus of causality, or the extent to which a cause is perceived as internal or external to the actor; stability, or the extent to which a cause is seen as fixed or changeable over time; and controllability, or the amount of volitional influence exerted during an event.

These latent properties of causes are associated with distinct cognitive, affective, and behavioral consequences. Observers or targets of questionable social-sexual behavior may consider whether the perpetrator's actions were intentional (controllable) or accidental (uncontrollable), whether they are likely to continue (stable) or cease (unstable), and whether the cause of the behavior resides within (internal locus) or outside the perpetrator (external locus). Negative behaviors attributed more to controllable than uncontrollable

causes, and more to stable than unstable causes, for example, are likely to arouse anger at the perpetrator and sympathy for the victim. These increases may be linked to heightened perceptions of offensiveness and to increased probability that the behaviors constitute sexual harassment.

Present Investigation

The present research examined, (a) differences in how people categorize the cause of social-sexual behavior, and differences in how they react emotionally, when the behavior varies in severity with respect to sexual harassment; (b) gender differences in causal categorization and affective reactions as severity of behavior increases; and (c) the consequences of these categorizations and emotional reactions for perceptions of offensiveness and sexual harassment. Because perceived negativity and unexpectedness of outcomes are linked to increases in causal search (Weiner, 1986; Wong & Weiner, 1981), increases in the salience of causal information (controllability, stability, and locus) likely follow from the perceived severity of social-sexual behavior. These increases may augment affective reactions (i.e., anger and sympathy) that, in turn, guide category-based inferences (Niedenthal & Cantor, 1986), making social constructs such as offensiveness and sexual harassment more accessible in memory. Further, because women are more sensitive to subtler forms of social-sexual behavior than are men (Adams et al., 1983), gender differences in causal attributions, affective reactions, and perceptions of offensiveness and sexual harassment are likely to be greater in subtle than in blatant forms of conduct.

To investigate these hypotheses, male and female subjects read scenarios depicting an interaction between male and female targets where the nature of the interaction varied in severity. We expected subjects exposed to severe social-sexual behaviors to perceive the male's conduct as more controllable, stable, and as having greater internal locus than would subjects exposed to less severe behaviors. These persons were also expected to be angrier with the male perpetrator and more sympathetic toward the female victim, and to be more inclined to label as sexual harassment and view as offensive the perpetrator's behavior. It was further expected that in the milder, but not in the severe, scenarios this pattern of data would be greater for women than for men.

Method

Subjects

The subjects were 271 students (140 male and 131 female) enrolled in

undergraduate psychology courses at a community college in Texas. Age of subjects ranged from 17 to 48 years ($M = 20.1$, $SD = 4.5$). Students participated as part of a course requirement.

Materials and Procedure

Male and female subjects were randomly assigned to read one of three vignettes of an interaction between a man and a woman. The scenarios were adapted from Cohen and Gutek (1985) and varied in severity of behavior.³ In all of the versions, the man was the initiator and the woman was the target. The scenarios are now presented in order of increasing severity:

Scenario 1: Donna is walking down the hall at work. Jim, who works for the same company as Donna, walks up from behind. As Jim passes, Donna sees him look briefly at her rear as he says, "You must be doing a lot of running these days; your body looks terrific."

Scenario 2: Jane is walking down the hall at work. Dave, who works for the same company as Jane, walks up from behind. As Dave passes Jane, he pats her on the rear and says, "You must be doing a lot of running these days; your body looks terrific."

Scenario 3: Rachel is walking down the hall at work. Bob, who works for the same company as Rachel, walks up from behind. As Bob passes Rachel, he suddenly presses her against the wall with his body as he grabs her rear and says, "Why do you keep saying you won't go out with me; don't you know you really turn me on?" Rachel struggles to free herself from his grasp.

After reading a scenario, subjects responded to seven 10-point Likert scales: (a) offensiveness—"To what extent do you view the man's behavior as offensive?" *not at all* (1) to *completely* (10); (b) sexual harassment—"To what extent do you view the man's conduct as sexual harassment?" *definitely not sexual harassment* (1) to *definitely is sexual harassment* (10); (c) locus—"To what extent was the incident caused by something internal to the man?" (e.g., Was it caused by a personality trait of the man as opposed to something in the environment?) *completely external* (1) to *completely internal* (10);

³Pilot testing established the perceived severity of the scenarios.

(d) controllability—"How much control did the man have over conditions that led to this incident?" *no control* (1) to *complete control* (10); (e) stability—"How likely is the man to engage in this type of behavior with this woman in the future?" *very unlikely* (1) to *very likely* (10); (f) sympathy—"How much sympathy do you have for the woman?" *none* (1) to *a great deal* (10); (g) anger—"How angry are you at the man?" *not at all* (1) to *very* (10).

Results

The dependent variables were first entered into a 2×3 (Sex of Subject \times Scenario: mild/moderate/severe) between-measures multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). Significant main effects were obtained for gender, $F(7, 254) = 4.23, p < .001$; and for scenario, $F(14, 508) = 11.86, p < .001$; but not for the gender by scenario interaction, $F(14, 508) = 1.55, p < .10$. After combining mean scores for men and women within each scenario, univariate analyses revealed significant between-scenario differences for all dependent measures (all $ps < .01$). Not surprisingly, perceptions of offensiveness and sexual harassment increased from Scenario 1 to Scenario 3 (Table 1). Sympathy and anger increased also with the severity of social-sexual behavior. A similar pattern emerged for the attribution variables; from Scenario 1 to Scenario 3, the cause of the stimulus male's behavior was seen as more internal (to the male), stable, and controllable.

Within each scenario, univariate analyses revealed reliable mean differences between men and women (Table 1). The greatest number of gender differences occurred in Scenario 1. Women perceived the stimulus male's behavior as more offensive, $F(1, 105) = 6.19, p < .02$, more internal, $F(1, 105) = 4.91, p < .03$, and more stable, $F(1, 105) = 7.23, p < .01$, than did men. Women viewed the man's behavior as more controllable than did male subjects, but this difference did not reach a conventional level of significance, $F(1, 105) = 2.56, p = .11$. In comparison to men, women were angrier with the perpetrator, $F(1, 105) = 6.17, p < .02$, and were more likely than men to view his behavior as sexual harassment, $F(1, 105) = 14.87, p < .001$. In the second scenario, women more than men saw the stimulus male's behavior as offensive, $F(1, 105) = 5.21, p < .03$, and as sexual harassment, $F(1, 105) = 4.82, p < .03$. Women also felt more anger, $F(1, 105) = 13.74, p < .001$, and sympathy, $F(1, 105) = 6.76, p < .02$, than did men. Gender differences were least in Scenario 3. Sympathy was the only measure that was reliably greater for women than for men, $F(1, 105) = 5.55, p < .03$. All other dependent measures failed to reach an acceptable level of significance (all $ps < .05$).

Correlations among the dependent variables were ascertained (Table 2). Perceptions of offensiveness and sexual harassment were most highly related.

Table 1

Mean Ratings and Standard Deviations on Dependent Measures for Men and Women by Scenario

Measures	Scenarios								
	1			2			3		
	Men	Women	Both	Men	Women	Both	Men	Women	Both
Offensive	4.45	5.23*	4.91	6.55	7.98*	7.25	8.95	9.29	9.10
	2.30	2.20	2.30	3.00	2.70	2.92	1.50	1.80	1.65
Harassment	4.02	5.94*	4.98	6.45	7.90*	7.17	9.24	9.51	9.36
	2.51	2.80	2.42	3.14	2.96	3.12	1.40	1.45	1.40
Locus	6.65	7.67*	7.15	7.12	7.32	7.25	7.86	8.37	8.09
	2.61	2.09	2.41	2.40	2.50	2.40	1.40	1.73	1.57
Control	7.36	8.17	7.75	8.85	9.44	9.16	9.17	9.14	9.15
	2.91	2.25	2.63	2.22	1.91	2.10	1.50	1.70	1.60
Stability	5.91	7.13*	6.50	7.56	8.05	7.83	8.07	8.83	8.41
	2.31	2.40	2.42	2.28	2.90	2.60	1.60	1.84	1.74
Anger	3.96	5.25*	4.58	5.15	7.78*	6.52	8.07	9.06	8.51
	2.61	2.74	2.74	3.40	3.02	3.46	2.30	2.16	2.28
Sympathy	5.64	6.33	5.97	6.54	8.32*	7.46	8.17	9.11*	8.59
	3.15	3.17	3.16	3.31	2.86	3.20	1.72	1.80	1.81

Note. Asterisk (*) indicates that within a scenario, the mean was reliably greater for women than for men at $p < .05$.

Moderate positive associations were observed between offensiveness and perceptions of controllability and stability. A similar pattern was observed for perception of sexual harassment. Affective reactions also were highly related to perceptions of offensiveness and sexual harassment. Anger and sympathy showed strong positive associations with these variables.

To assess the causal relation of attributions to evaluations of and reactions to the scenarios, separate regressions were conducted for each scenario. The criterion variables were perceptions of offensiveness and sexual harassment. Gender, controllability, locus of causality, stability, anger, and sympathy comprised the predictor variables. For Scenario 1, the regression model explained 59% of the variance in perceived offensiveness, $R = .77$, $F(6, 101) = 24.59$,

Table 2

Correlations Among Perceptions of Offensiveness, Harassment, Gender, Causal Locus, Controllability, Stability, Anger, and Sympathy

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Offensive	—	.82	.15	.24	.39	.35	.82	.61
2. Harassment		—	.19	.26	.35	.39	.79	.67
3. Gender			—	.13	.10	.17	.23	.17
4. Locus				—	.23	.08	.26	.21
5. Controllability					—	.18	.35	.37
6. Stability						—	.33	.32
7. Anger							—	.70
8. Sympathy								—

Note. $r_s \geq .15$ are significant at $p < .01$; $r_s \geq .19$ are significant at $p < .001$.

$p < .0001$, and 51% of the variance in perception of sexual harassment, $R = .71$, $F(6, 101) = 17.89$, $p < .0001$. Statistics for each predictor and criterion variable are displayed in Table 3. As shown in Table 3, anger was the sole predictor of perceived offensiveness, whereas anger, sympathy, and gender contributed to perception of sexual harassment.

In Scenario 2, the regression model accounted for 65% of the variance in offensiveness, $R = .80$, $F(6, 75) = 23.36$, $p < .0001$, and 73% of the variance in sexual harassment, $R = .85$, $F(6, 75) = 34.53$, $p < .0001$. Again, only anger predicted offensiveness, while anger and sympathy predicted sexual harassment. In Scenario 3, 61% of the variance in offensiveness was explained by the regression model, $R = .78$, $F(6, 70) = 18.70$, $p < .0001$, while it accounted for 58% of the variance in sexual harassment, $R = .76$, $F(6, 70) = 16.39$, $p < .0001$. As shown in Table 3, control, stability, and anger predicted both offensiveness and sexual harassment. Examination of beta weights shows control and anger as the most important predictors of both criterion variables.

Discussion

Comparing between scenarios, the data revealed that, as explicitness of social-sexual behavior increased, there were increases in perception of

Table 3

Beta Weights and Significance Tests for Variables Predicting Offensiveness and Sexual Harassment

Variable	Scenario								
	1			2			3		
	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Offensiveness									
Gender	0.05	0.85	.397	0.07	0.96	.335	0.01	0.18	.852
Locus	0.00	0.00	.995	0.01	0.11	.907	0.01	0.12	.898
Control	0.01	0.26	.790	0.11	1.50	.137	0.40	4.70	.000
Stability	0.01	0.11	.911	0.01	0.11	.908	0.18	2.21	.030
Anger	0.67	8.62	.000	0.84	7.14	.000	0.55	5.50	.000
Sympathy	0.11	1.49	.137	0.07	0.61	.538	0.15	1.47	.144
Harassment									
Gender	0.20	2.70	.008	0.08	1.26	.210	0.03	0.40	.700
Locus	0.04	0.61	.540	0.01	0.26	.793	0.06	0.76	.447
Control	0.08	1.11	.269	0.10	1.60	.111	0.43	4.85	.000
Stability	0.03	0.52	.603	0.03	0.57	.568	0.18	2.06	.043
Anger	0.51	5.94	.000	0.60	5.88	.000	0.34	3.26	.001
Sympathy	0.20	2.41	.017	0.24	2.38	.020	0.11	1.10	.275

offensiveness and greater certainty that sexual harassment had occurred. Increments in these perceptions coincided with heightened perceptions of internal locus, stability, and control in the target male's behavior, greater anger at the stimulus male, and more sympathy for the stimulus female. These findings confirmed expected variations in severity of sex-related conduct, role of attributional processes, and labeling of conduct as offensive and harassing.

In comparing genders within scenarios, female subjects perceived more offensiveness and sexual harassment in the less severe scenarios than did men. These differences disappeared in scenarios of greater severity. This supports earlier findings showing women and men in agreement that blatant forms of behavior constitute sexual harassment, but that subtler forms of behavior are

more likely to be seen as harassment by women than by men (Adams et al., 1983; Collins & Blodgett, 1981; Kenig & Ryan, 1986; U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, 1981). Gender differences in labeling coincided with expected changes in the role of causal attributions. Whereas women saw more control, internal locus, and stability in the stimulus male's behavior in the less severe scenarios than did men, these disparities diminished in the explicit scenarios. Additionally, in scenarios of greater severity, female subjects expressed more anger at the stimulus male than did male subjects and tended toward greater sympathy for the victim. In sum, causal attributions and affective reactions varied systematically with changes in perceived offensiveness and sexual harassment.

The causal dimensions functioned mostly as expected. In particular, perceived causal controllability and stability were greater in Scenarios 2 and 3 than in Scenario 1. As severity increased, so, too, did perceptions that greater control was exercised by the stimulus male and that his behavior would likely recur. Because increases in perceived control for negative outcomes imply that perpetrators could have acted otherwise and because causal stability is an affective magnifier (Weiner, 1986), anger and desire to punish perceived wrongdoers are especially strong (Weiner, 1993). A corollary is that victims of actions by wrongdoers inspire sympathy and desire to compensate (Brown, Williams, & Lees-Haley, 1994; Williams, Lees-Haley, & Brown, 1994; Williams, Lees-Haley, & Price, 1995).

In scenarios presented to subjects here, no behavioral actions were available to subjects that could satisfy desires to punish or to compensate. Instead, we examined whether causal ascriptions and affective reactions vary with subjects labeling of social interactions. The data showed that increased perceptions of control, stability, and internal locus coincided with increases in perceptions of offensiveness and sexual harassment in response to oppressive instances of social-sexual behavior. Why this might be so is subject to speculation. Earlier, mention was made of increased accessibility of social constructs (Higgins, Rholes, & Jones, 1977; Srull & Wyer, 1989), such as offensiveness and sexual harassment, activated perhaps by emotional reactions. Affects were portrayed as potential guides to inferences regarding others (Niedenthal & Cantor, 1986). Emotions such as anger or sympathy are expected to be attenuated in social-sexual situations ambiguous with respect to sexual harassment, whereas robust in obviously oppressive situations. As unwanted behavior increases in severity, emotions escalate, perhaps priming or increasing accessibility of available social constructs relevant to interpreting the behavior. Additionally, the potential for increased accessibility of causal dimensions, such as controllability and stability, that prime relevant social constructs cannot be dismissed (Williams, 1993).

Gender differences, too, might be explained by similar speculation. Because women more often than men are targets of unwanted sex-related behavior, perceptions of controllability and affective reactions may be more accessible to women than to men. Chronic accessibility (Higgins, King, & Mavin, 1982) of causal controllability or anger, for example, may differentially influence women's sensitivity to subtle forms of sex-related conduct, thereby making characterizations of such conduct as sexual harassment more probable. As severity of behavior increases, gender differences disappear as these constructs become increasingly accessible to men.

Analysis of causal relations between the attribution and criterion variables tells a somewhat different story than that told by the analysis of mean differences described above. Regression analysis revealed affect as the most important predictor of perceived offensiveness and sexual harassment in the least severe scenario. Anger predicted offensiveness, whereas anger, sympathy, and gender predicted the labeling of behavior as sexual harassment. In the second scenario, anger again was the sole predictor of offensiveness, whereas anger and sympathy were the only reliable predictors of sexual harassment. It was not until the third scenario that the role of causal dimensions was observed; controllability and stability reliably predicted offensiveness and sexual harassment, whereas locus did not. Additionally, anger, but not sympathy, was reliable predictor of both criterion variables.

This pattern of data supports speculation that affects served as guides to labeling of behavior as offensive and harassing, at least in less severe scenarios. However, why causal dimensions were not reliable predictors of criterion variables across all three scenarios while affects were is difficult to explain. If causal analysis gives rise to emotion, as in the cognition-affect-action model of behavior (e.g., Schmidt & Weiner, 1988), then the influence of causal controllability should have been observed in the first two scenarios. Perhaps in sex-related incidents of lesser severity, it may not be as important for persons to consider why the target male behaved as he did. This makes intuitive sense, given earlier findings from attribution research that surprising outcomes, or outcomes that are especially negative, facilitate causal search (Wong & Weiner, 1981). As the severity (negativity) of sex-related conduct increases, the search for causes of unwanted behavior intensifies.

Alternatives to the causal sequence described above are certainly possible. For example, a cognition-affect-action model of behavior predicts that perceptions of offensiveness and harassment are determinants of causal ascriptions. Causal interpretations (e.g., controllability) are linked to affect (anger and sympathy) which, in turn, give rise to behavioral action (e.g., filing a formal grievance with employer). However, as mentioned before, no behavioral responses were available to subjects in the present study. Future attributional

investigations of sexual harassment should explore relations between unwanted social-sexual behavior, perceptions of offensiveness and harassment, causal ascriptions, affect, and behavioral consequences such as frequency of reporting a perpetrator to authorities, filing lawsuits, and so on. Further, such investigations should use as subjects people who have experienced unwanted behavior in the workplace or in academia. Simulation or paper-and-pencil studies for initial exploration ultimately are of limited value in advancing knowledge and should give way to investigations in real-life settings.

Future investigations might also use more than one-item scales to measure subject responses. Use of one-item scales of unknown reliability and validity may explain in part why locus of causality was not a significant predictor of offensiveness or harassment in the present study. For example, several items tapping locus (and other variables) could be subjected to reliability analysis. A composite variable or index of locus could then be created. Future simulation studies also might vary the ambiguity of scenarios with respect to causality, thereby shedding light on relations between the ambiguity of social-sexual interactions and activation of causal dimensions.

Clarity regarding the role of offensiveness versus harassment is needed. Because concern has been expressed regarding the underutilization of grievance procedures by women in work and academic settings, investigation of factors contributing to likelihood of reporting is given high priority (Riger, 1991). Offensiveness was revealed by previous sexual harassment research as an important predictor of reporting unwanted social-sexual behavior to authorities (Brooks & Perot, 1991). It appears that for unwanted behavior to be reported, it must first be interpreted as offensive and as constituting sexual harassment. Therefore, future attribution research might investigate through path analysis or structural equation modeling, causal relations between a host of variables contributing to likelihood of reporting, including causal attributions, affect, and perceptions of offensiveness and harassment.

In sum, findings from the present study implicate causal attributions and affect as contributors to perceptions regarding unwanted social-sexual behaviors. In particular, causal controllability, stability, and affective reactions predict perceptions of offensiveness and sexual harassment for unwanted behavior while affective reactions predict unwanted behavior, of lesser severity. As an initial exploration of relations between Weiner's (1986) attribution theory and perceptions regarding sexual harassment, the data indicate this as a fruitful area of study.

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