

A New Approach To Sexual Harassment

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ABSTRACT

Sexual harassment has been an issue in America for many years now; and, over the years, people have become more and more curious to find out the reasons behind this horrible fact. Firms in the US have suffered a tremendous amount of pressures from the public, which has led them to look for answers and search for solutions to this problem. While much research has contributed to a greater understanding of the impact of gender differences on sexual harassment, answers have yet been found on why this component is the underlying causes of sexual harassment. If gender differences and perceptions are in fact two major components of Sexual harassment, shouldn't we focus more on what has made these components the main causes of Sexual harassment? And perhaps more importantly, on how an individual's culture, gender and age might affect his or her perceptions on what sexual harassment? Adding on existing information, I developed a theory of sexual harassment, power relations and information literature to deepen people's understandings of what might greatly affect perceptions on sexual harassment. I also given detailed information about the notions of culture, gender differences and age; and defined the concepts of sexual harassment and power relations. My paper offers three propositions that forecast the impact of certain cultures, group ages and power, on the different genders; and hence, on the perceptions about sexual

harassment. Finally, my paper highlights and theoretically develops an area of sexual harassment that has not been completely explored yet and should greatly be considered.

A NEW APPROACH TO SEXUAL HARASSMENT

“Each year, approximately 15,000 sexual harassment cases are brought to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) the majority of complaints coming from women. Studies suggest anywhere between 40-70% of women and 10-20% of men have experienced sexual harassment in the workplace” (SHSW).

“In fact, a telephone poll, on 782 workers conducted by Louis Harris and Associates, revealed that compared to 7% of male workers, 31% of female workers claimed to have been harassed at work. 100% of women reported that their harasser was a man, 59% of men reported their harasser was a woman and 41% a man” (SHS, 2009).

As the quotes above imply, much of the problem with sexual harassment in the workplace lies in the fundamental differences in perceptions that men and women have of appropriate words and behavior. And even though comparing the views of males and females is a great contributor that highlights the differences in how people perceive certain behaviors, and what they might consider to be an unlawful act of sexual harassment; some answers cannot be found considering only the obvious. These answers lie somewhere much deeper, and constitute the main roots of this issue of sexual harassment in the workforce. While gender differences

are in fact an underlying component of sexual harassment; culture and age differences are also at its base. Sexual harassment is not just an issue; it is one of the most important concerns in the workplace. Therefore, my paper focuses on the under-researched area of sexual harassment and, more specifically, looking at different countries and their cultures, as well as age and gender, to understand what might contribute to the underlying changes in perceptions towards sexual harassment in the workforce.

Based on collected data from Professor Goldberg, I conducted a previous research about sexual harassment in which I found in the process that, depending on a person's nationality and culture as well as the morals and values that he or she received at home, that person's perceptions and attitudes towards sexual harassment will differ extensively, especially if he or she received some kind of training about sexual harassment or not. The purpose of the study was to measure and get a better understanding of how people perceive sexual harassment differently depending on their age, gender, origin, and if they had been sexually harassed before or not. Furthermore, because sexual harassment is and has been such an important issue in the workplace, my previous study also focused on other important aspects and variable that affect people's perceptions. These were, whether people had access to and the opportunity of participating to trainings; as well as how long they had been living in the United States, and if, that, had an impact on their attitudes and views towards sexual harassment. This previous research inspired me to look for more answers since it gave me the will to want to

understand why culture and age, mostly, contributed so much to the underlying causes of sexual harassment in the workforce.

My purpose behind this research is to, not only deepen the understanding of the differences between cultures, and why certain cultures might be more sensitive or even promote sexual harassment more than others; but also broaden the existing information on the differences in perceptions based on gender, age, and culture. Even though this new approach to the study is critical, my plan is not to undermine the progress made, nor is it to diminish the existing information found. Instead, my goal is to provide a theoretical development of why culture, age, and gender have such a great influence on how sexual harassment is perceived; but also, to extend on what is already known and bring awareness to what might be the possible reasons and potential consequences to US firms. To do this, I challenge the fundamental reality that sexual harassment is, above all, a manifestation of power relations, and direct my focus on gender, age and culture as the three underlying components behind this veracity. My paper contributes to a deeper and wider understanding of how sexual harassment is perceived in the workforce by outlining 3 propositions that help predict how gender, culture and age stimulate power relations, and in turn, people's perceptions towards sexual harassment.

Substantial research on the different kinds of conducts has been made over the years, and has underlined the difference between welcomed and unwelcomed conduct (ERA, 2010). Research has also been done on the total number of cases of sexual harassment compared to those that were actually filed. And studies have

focused on the difference in percentage of women versus men that are sexually harassed each year, compared and those who actually speak up (SHS, 2009). Finally, an attempt to explore the impact of globalization on sexual harassment in the workplace was issued; but nonetheless, a lot of features that could possibly have triggered the different perceptions on sexual harassment have yet been touched upon. These consist for the most part of assertiveness orientation, future orientation, gender egalitarianism, in-group collectivism, institutional collectivism, performance orientation, and uncertainty avoidance (Peter G. Northouse, pg.344). Furthermore, the age difference issue has barely been mentioned in the various studies made on sexual harassment, and sadly, age has been, without a doubt, one of the major components affecting people's perceptions on sexual harassment.

To enforce the importance of this issue of sexual harassment; a detailed literature review, touching on many of the different underlying questions, has been included in this theoretical analysis. A famous example of sexual harassment is the scandal in the nation's history of Bill Clinton's affair with the White House intern, Monica Lewinsky. This example sets the tone on the issue of power-relations and its impact on sexual harassment; and hence, promotes the need for a detailed and deepened investigation. In 1999, the Senate conducted an impeachment trial of President Clinton, which has its origins in a sexual harassment lawsuit brought in Arkansas by Paula Jones, a former Arkansas state employee. Jones saw this situation as an opportunity to advance her career since it would, without a doubt, catch the attention of the public. According to her story, Clinton had made a number of increasingly aggressive moves and had been very persistent even after Lewinsky

had asked him to stop (Douglas O. Linder, 2005). Sexual harassment is everywhere, and to understand why certain people behave the way they do, it is extremely important to look beyond the obvious, and examine the roots.

To clarify, my research focuses on investigating three underlying components of sexual harassment, and is centered on understanding the probable reasons as to why gender, age and culture affect an individual's perceptions on sexual harassment. In the book *Leadership*, by Peter G. Northouse; the author emphasizes that globalization has created both, a need to understand how cultural differences affect leadership performance, as well as the need for leaders to become competent in cross-cultural awareness and practice (Peter G. Northouse, pg. 335). "Change", as we call it; requires us to be more aware and creative; it insinuates that we look at the bigger picture but also that we understand what lies at the base. Globalization continues to fuel multiculturalism and diversity in the workplace, and few employers can afford to ignore the culturally based experiences that their employees bring to their work lives (Gale Group, 2007). Therefore, the innovative and continuous changes in today's world have caught my attention and have led me to wonder; If gender differences and perceptions are in fact two major components of Sexual harassment, shouldn't we focus more on what has made these components the main causes of Sexual harassment? And perhaps more importantly, on how an individual's culture, gender and age might affect his or her perceptions of sexual harassment?

SEXUAL HARASSMENT, POWER RELATIONS AND INFORMATION LITERATURE

Sexual Harassment. According to the EEOC, sexual harassment is a form of gender discrimination that is in violation of the Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act (SHSW). Although it might not seem as obvious as it actually is, sexual harassment is not only a form of gender discrimination; it is also a form of sex discrimination. The Equal Rights Advocates (ERA) states that the legal definition of sexual harassment is “unwelcome verbal, visual, or physical conduct of a sexual nature that is severe or pervasive and affects working conditions or creates a hostile work environment” (ERA, 2010). Sexual harassment has been an issue around the world for many years now, and in order to understand the different behaviors of people towards this issue, it is important to know the concepts.

In order to prosper and compete in the real world, the workplace in general promotes teamwork. However, one of the downsides to such a positive attribute is that when working in teams, employees become dependant, on each other, on the team and of course on supervisors, for advice and recommendations. Thus, sexual harassment is by far one of the most important concerns in the workplace. Over the years, the major problem regarding sexual harassment has been the fact that most people are afraid to speak up. But the question is: Why are they so afraid? Could gender, age and culture be part of the reason? The large numbers or statistics that have been collected for sexual harassment include but a minority of the amount of people that have been actually harassed. These numbers only take into

consideration those people who actually complained and reported that they had been sexually harassed.

Conduct is not sexual harassment if it is welcomed; therefore, those who do not dare to speak up often find themselves in very uncomfortable situations.

Unfortunately, since work relationships can be quite intimate, and people get too comfortable too fast; all the restrictions that might have been set when first stepping into the workplace have now extended their limits. Situations such as these have made it hardly possible to determine the specific causes of sexual harassment, as well as what triggers people's perceptions towards this issue. But these situations are also the ones that have intrigued me to search for more.

One of the most famous types of sexual harassment or sex discrimination in the workplace is called Quid Pro Quo. Under US laws, "in the classic quid pro quo ("this for that") case, your boss threatens you with the loss of a job benefit, or actually changes your working conditions, because you will not submit to his sexual demands" (USLAW, 2010). As defined above, this behavior can only be committed by someone in a position of power, and it involves demands for sexual favors in exchange for some benefit, whether it is for a promotion, a raise, or even an advice; but it might also express such demands to avoid any kind of detriment (getting fired or not getting the promotion of your dreams). Although the Quid Pro Quo is the most talked about, a hostile environment, is another crucial form of actionable sexual harassment (The Free Dictionary, 2010). A hostile environment is also a result of unwelcomed conduct, but unlike the Quid Pro Quo, it occurs when the

working environment becomes intimidating, hostile, or offensive (The Free Dictionary, 2010). Usually in such situations, the victim becomes so uncomfortable and embarrassed that it affects his or her ability to work efficiently and effectively.

Trying to clarify or define the concept of sexual harassment is even more complex and controversial in multicultural environments where values and beliefs serve as norms that determine when certain behaviors and feelings are appropriate or not. Sexual harassment behaviors can come from other people that are not necessary supervisors; customers as well as co-workers can also be the cause behind such a tragedy. Power, as described in the dictionary, is “the ability or official capacity to exercise control; authority” (The Free Dictionary, 2010). Therefore, there needs no title of power, to feel in power. This issue of power is a main root of sexual harassment behaviors and perceptions; and it is fed by the three underlying components, age, gender and culture.

Power-Relations. Sexual harassment is a manifestation of power relations in which women are at a disadvantage compared to men. Unlike men, women are much more likely to be victims of sexual harassment; this precisely because they more often lack power, they are usually in more vulnerable and insecure positions, they frequently lack self-confidence, or have been socialized to suffer in silence (Petrocelli & Repa, 2003). To understand why women are the ones that endure the vast majority of sexual harassment, it is crucial to look at some of the fundamental causes of this phenomenon.

Eleanor Roosevelt once said, “In government, in business, and in the professions there may be a day when women will be looked upon as persons. We are, however, far from that day as yet” (Peter G. Northouse, 2010). Although times have changed, and this issue of women being underestimated and diminished has progressed; there is still a long way to go before any woman can be considered equal to a man at all levels. A lot of research has been made on the subject of “gender and leadership effectiveness” to study the capacities of women versus men and determine whether or not men are in fact more capable and more effective than women. In a meta-analysis comparing the effectiveness of female and male leaders, men and women were equally effective leaders, overall, but there were gender differences such that women and men were more effective in leadership roles that were congruent with their gender (Eagly, Karau, & Makhijani, 1995). This analysis, amongst others, simply proves that, no matter how underestimated women still are today, they are certainly not less competent than men are. Just like men, women are more effective at certain things than they are at others.

Three types of explanations to the leadership labyrinth are given about the underrepresentation of women in high-level positions of leadership, and highlight the differences between men and women for each of these explanations. Human capital differences constitute one of the major explanations to the labyrinth. Women have less human capital investment in education, training, and work experience than men do (Eagly & Carli, 2004, 2007). The reason why, most often than not, women are not able to “reach the top” and exploit their opportunities is certainly not because they are not capable or determined; instead, it's due to the fact that men

are the ones that have the means to get there. Women are obtaining undergraduate degrees at a far higher rate than men, earning 57.5% of the bachelor's degrees in the United States (National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES], 2008). Sadly, although women earn 47.5% of all law degrees and make up 45.1% of associates, they make up only 18.3% of partners (American Bar Association, 2008). Because of their lower levels of human capital investments, women are deprived or excluded when certain opportunities present themselves, and men end up taking advantage of these situations to reach the top and stay on top. Furthermore, women and men value things differently. As much as most women would give up everything for their family and kids, most men tend to use the fact that they have kids as an opportunity to increase their working hours. Therefore, because women are usually more family-oriented than men are, and because they give great importance to what they value most, they, more often than men, face an added burden on climbing the leadership ladder.

Gender differences are part of another important set of explanations about the leadership gap that exists around women. It revolves around the notion that women are women; they are just different from men no matter how we look at it. Five different components or arguments exist; and these explain why women might be viewed differently based on gender differences. One argument focuses on style and effectiveness of women as leaders and it stresses the idea that women are underrepresented in higher-level positions of leadership because of their differences in leadership skills and effectiveness. Although studies have shown this to be different, because of this idea that women will always be different to men, the

argument remains persistent. Another argument is that women are less committed and motivated than men are in terms of leadership. However, research indicates that women show the same level of identification with and commitment to paid employment roles as men do, and both women and men view their roles as workers to be secondary to their roles as parents and partners (Bielby & Bielby, 1988; Thoits, 1992). Although women do give more value to their family and kids than men do, in the sense that women will more easily give up their job to take care of their kids instead of paying another person to take on her own tasks and responsibilities as a mom; but their roles and responsibilities as parents always come first, for both men and women. A third barrier to women's advancement caused by gender differences is that unlike men, women are less likely to promote themselves for leadership positions (Bowles & McGinn, 2005). This is not because women don't want to take on the responsibilities of a leader, but just that women don't feel like they need to have a formal title to actually apply themselves as leaders and take on the role of a leader. A study revealed that although women were in fact less likely than men were to come forward as group leaders, they were more likely to serve as social facilitators than men were (Eagly & Karau, 1991). Any person that takes on the role of a social facilitator or organizer is a leader. And based on what the study above depicted, women usually serve as facilitators more than men do. Women like to take action, they like to find solutions; unfortunately, women tend to face social costs for their ambitions. Therefore, they take on these leadership roles informally because their personal satisfaction is more important to them than it is to appeal to others. They do what they do because it makes them feel accomplished and happy and not

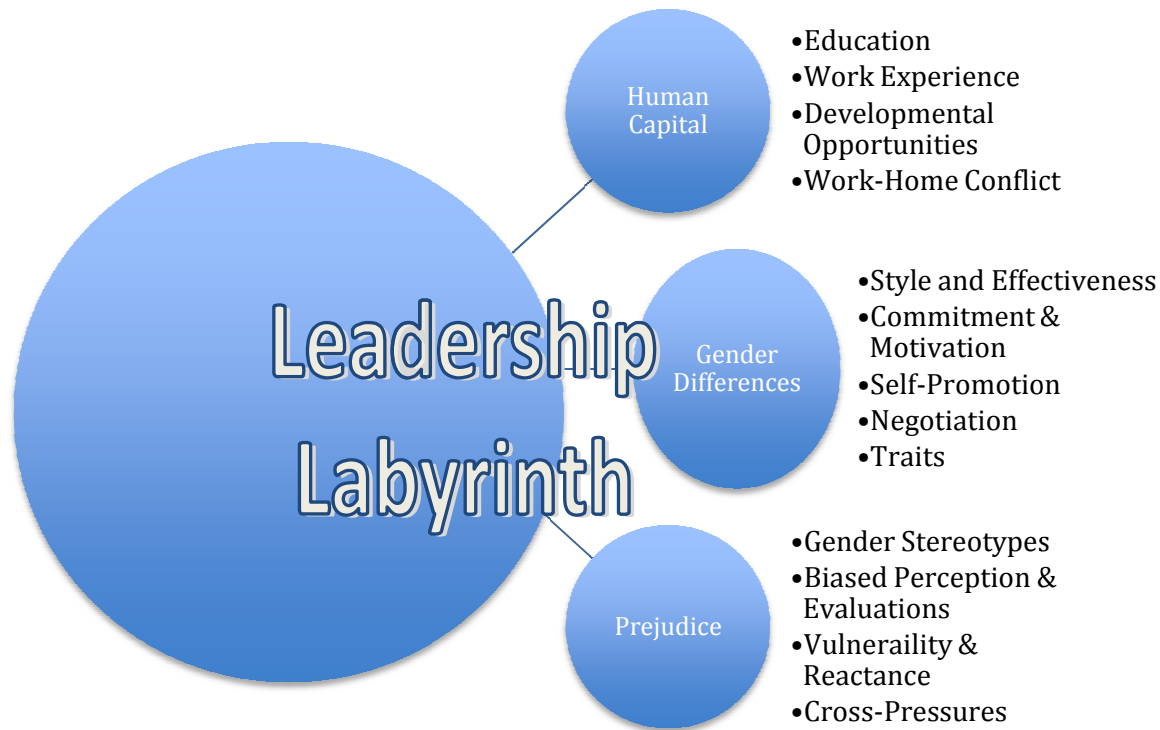
to meet people's expectations. This is where women and men differ, and it certainly doesn't imply that men are better than women whether as leaders or as anything else. The last two claims are that women are less likely to negotiate than men are, and that men more likely than women have the traits necessary for effective leadership (Peter G. Northouse, 2010). Fortunately, science research has proven this claim wrong, and has shown small sex differences in traits related to effective leadership, such as integrity, assertiveness, gregariousness, and risk taking; but these differences favor women as much as they do men (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Feingold, 1994; Franke, Crown, & Spake, 1997).

Finally, prejudice is the third major explanation for the leadership gap in the leadership labyrinth. This set of arguments revolves around gender biases generating from stereotyped expectations that women take care and men take charge (Peter G. Northouse, 2010). Stereotypes have been an issue for many years now. Misperceptions about people and things have gone from one generation to the next, and still today stereotyping has a huge affect on how people see and interpret things. Stereotypes are cognitive shortcuts that influence the way people process information regarding groups and group members (Peter G. Northouse, 2010). Because of stereotypes, people tend to judge others based on their surroundings. In most cases, people assume another's characteristics and capabilities before they even share a conversation. They see one member of a group like they see all the other members of that group, without even considering that each member has a personality of his own and that they all vary in terms of the characteristics that they each have. This issue of stereotypes is crucial to how women are perceived

compared to men. Gender stereotypes both describe stereotypic beliefs about the attributes of women and men, and prescribe how men and women ought to be (Peter G. Northouse, 2010). These prejudices and gender biases affect how people are perceived and evaluated; and in terms of women and their leadership roles, they create cross-pressures about whom they should be as leaders compared to who they should be as women.

These three explanations are but minor details compared to the amount of answers that have resulted from the many studies about men versus women. However, once again, these facts accentuate on this idea of power relations as they underline the basic reasons why women are underrepresented compared to men. Because of these perceptions and assumptions on gender differences, women very often feel diminished and lessened when compared to men. And that, unfortunately, leads to an uneven distribution of power between men and women.

Figure 1: The Leadership Labyrinth



Age has also an impact on power relations. Age is a major issue in American workplace, towards both young and older workers. This issue of “age” generates from the many assumptions and stereotypes that exist about people’s capabilities and characteristics depending on their age. Furthermore, in the case of age bias, there is a tendency to make assumptions about others based on the people in our own lives that are in the same age range as them. Older people in the workplace base their perceptions of the youngsters they work with on their own experiences with their children, grand children, or simply with the young people they know, and that are from the same age range as those they work with. The same thing happens regarding older people in the workplace. Younger people draw on what they know and have experienced with their own parents and grand parents to make assumptions about the older people they work with. Even though there are in fact

similarities or even shared experiences between people of a same age bracket, what triggers the negative impact are the assumptions made and the stereotypes that are acted upon (Peter G. Northouse, 2010). Depending on the workplace and the environment there, these age biases affect age groups differently. Usually, as they grow up, youngsters learn about the appropriate ways to address adults and those older than them; they are told to always respect their elders and to look up to them, as they are “the example”. These old habits tend to put older people at an advantage regarding power. This can create environments where younger people are intimidated and afraid to share their opinions. However, the opposite can also occur; in today’s society, young people enter the workforce with creative and innovative ideas to be implemented in the workplace. Therefore, where “kids” or youngsters are seen as the future for tomorrow, they are often at an advantage compared to older people who are about to leave the workplace. Age discriminations and biases, but also age in general, are all threats and factors of this issue of power relations.

Culture has been the focus of many studies across a variety of disciplines (Peter G. Northouse, 2010). The Merriam-Webster dictionary describes culture as “the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group; but also as the characteristic features of everyday existence shared by people in a place or time” (Merriam-Webster, 2010). Diversity is becoming more and more important around the world and, thus, it has become a new focus for firms in the US. However, in order for US firms to successfully implement diversity, it is important that they understand that “diversity” is a synonym of distinctiveness,

dissimilarity and multiformity (Thesaurus, 2010). Therefore, people that come from other countries, come from different cultures; and consequently, are accustomed to different ways of living, different values, and different norms. Hence, it is extremely crucial for firms that seek to grow and be successful, to be familiar with the culture differences that exist within the firm's environment.

The GLOBE research program, which was initiated by Robert House in 1991, has dedicated, over the years, part of its studies and investigations towards culture and leadership. The fundamental purpose of the project has been to increase their understanding of cross-cultural interactions and the impact of culture on leadership effectiveness. To proceed with their study, the researchers of GLOBE put together their own classification of cultural dimensions, which consisted of 9 different categories; and divided the data that they had studied from the 62 countries into regional clusters (Peter G. Northouse, 2010). See Clusters Divisions' and Cultural Clusters & Dimensions Tables below

Table 1: Cultural Clusters and Dimensions

Cultural Dimension	High-Score Clusters	Low-Score Clusters
Assertiveness Orientation	Eastern Europe Germanic Europe	Nordic Europe
Future Orientation	Germanic Europe Nordic Europe	Eastern Europe Latin America Middle East
Gender egalitarianism	Eastern Europe Nordic Europe	Middle East
Humane Orientation	Southern Asia Sub-Saharan Africa	Germanic Europe Latin Europe
In-group collectivism	Confucian Asia Eastern Europe Latin America Middle East Southern Asia	Anglo Germanic Europe Nordic Europe
Institutional collectivism	Nordic Europe Confucian Asia	Germanic Europe Latin America Latin Europe
Performance Orientation	Anglo Confucian Asia Germanic Europe	Eastern Europe Latin America
Power Distance	No clusters	Nordic Europe
Uncertainty avoidance	Germanic Europe Nordic Europe	Eastern Europe Latin America Middle East

For the purpose of this theory development, I chose to focus on 7 of the 9 cultural dimensions, and on 5 of the 10 clusters. Countries that scored high levels of assertiveness orientation, are those that are most concerned with how much a culture or society encourages people to be forceful, aggressive, and tough, as

opposed to encouraging them to be timid, submissive, and tender in social relationships (Peter G. Northouse, 2010). From the 5 clusters that I chose to study, Eastern Europe is the only one that scored a high level in this dimension. The cluster that ended up with a low level of assertiveness orientation is the Nordic Europe cluster. The future orientation dimension focuses on the idea that people in a culture are more determined to prepare for the future than to enjoy the present and being spontaneous (Peter G. Northouse, 2010). The cluster with a high score in that category is Nordic Europe; and those who scored low levels in future orientation were Eastern Europe, Latin America and Middle East. The dimension of gender egalitarianism measure the degree to which an organization or society minimizes gender role differences and promotes gender equality. Nordic Europe and Eastern Europe are the two clusters that scored high levels of gender egalitarianism, and therefore are the two clusters that are most concerned with how much societies choose to focus less on members' biological sex to determine the roles that members play in their homes, organizations, and communities (Peter G. Northouse, 2010). The one cluster that scored a low score in that dimension was the Middle East. The fourth crucial dimension to this study is the In-group collectivism. Countries that fit into this category have either low or high scores in their devotion and ability to express pride, loyalty, and cohesiveness in their organizations or families (Peter G. Northouse, 2010). Eastern Europe, Latin America, and Middle East were the three studied clusters that scored high-levels of in-group collectivism; whereas, the Anglo and Nordic Europe are part of the low-score clusters. Institutional Collectivism, Performance Orientation, and Uncertainty avoidance are

the last 3 clusters that I focused on to provide a theoretical conceptualization of the possible impacts of cultural differences on sexual harassment. Under institutional collectivism, the different clusters are measured on the degree to which an organization or society encourages institutional or societal collective action (Peter G. Northouse, 2010). Nordic Europe was the only studied cluster with a high score in that dimension, and Latin America with a low score. The clusters with high or low scores in the performance orientation dimension, where measured on whether or not people in a culture are rewarded for setting and meeting challenging goals; this dimension distinguish which organization or society encourages and rewards group members for improved performance and excellence, and which ones do not (Peter G. Northouse, 2010). The Anglo cluster scored a high level in performance orientation, whereas Eastern Europe and Latin America did not. Finally, the uncertainty avoidance cultural dimension refers to the extent to which a society, organization, or group relies on established social norms, rituals, and procedures to avoid uncertainty. The Nordic Europe cluster scored a high level in uncertainty avoidance; therefore, the countries that are part of this cluster focus on using rules, structures, and laws to make things more predictable and less uncertain (Peter G. Northouse, 2010). Eastern Europe, Latin America and Middle East clusters, on the other hand, scored low levels in the uncertainty avoidance dimension.

Table 2: Clusters Divisions' Table

Nordic Europe	Eastern Europe	Middle East	Anglo	Latin America
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Denmark •Finland •Sweden 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Greece •Hungary •Albania •Slovenia •Poland •Russia •Georgia •Kazakhstan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Turkey •Kuwait •Egypt •Morocco •Qatar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Canada •USA •Australia •Ireland •England •South Africa •New Zealand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Ecuador •El Salvador •Colombia •Bolivia •Brazil •Cuatemala •Argentina •Costa Rica •Venezuela •Mexico

From this literature review and analysis, I suggest that culture and the values and norms in which people are brought up, as well as their age and gender, do in fact have an impact on sexual harassment and how it is perceived. Whether employees in a workplace perceive a certain conduct to be sexually harassing is greatly influenced by their respective cultural backgrounds (The Free Library, 2010). Their age and gender, also, matter significantly, since they are all notions impacted by power.

A THEORY OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND POWER RELATIONS

Based on the literature review and the theoretical foundations discussed above, I have built a theory of sexual harassment and power relations with propositions that describe the conditions under which culture, age and gender influence perceptions on sexual harassment due to the impact of power relations.

Proposition 1: *This issue of power relations mostly likely has a bigger impact on people from the Middle East than it does on Europeans, Latin Americans and Anglos.*

The research done by GLOBE on cultural dimensions and the different clusters of countries has brought evidence and legal arguments to this proposition. Together, both Eastern Europe and Nordic Europe amounted to the countries that treat men and women most equally. The Anglo cluster, on the other hand, had the characteristics of being competitive and results oriented. Although these focuses do not promote gender equality as they most likely contribute to the gap in power distribution, they do not bash it either. The Anglo's high score in performance orientation gives women the opportunity to stand up and gain some power as these are rewarded on the basis of their improved performance and excellence as employees in the workplace. People part of the Latin America cluster tend to be greatly devoted and loyal to their families and similar groups but not so much to others; this, unfortunately, can play two roles, it can either emphasize on this idea that women need to take care of their house and family while men take care of the income; or it can also mean that because both men and women are loyal and devoted to those around them, that the workplace environment becomes a second home to them, hence, a second family where men and women do not compete on the basis power and importance but instead on their commitment to the firm. Finally, the countries that made up the Middle East cluster showed devotion and loyalty to their own people; people in these countries tend to treat others of different genders in distinctly different ways (Peter G. Northouse, 2010). Therefore men and women

from the Middle East are not equal, women have less status than men and fewer are in positions of authority. Power in these countries is horribly distributed and women greatly diminished.

Proposition 2: *In firms where diversity is a priority, women from the Middle East and Latin America are most likely the ones to suffer the most from sexual harassment.*

Because women from these countries, most often than not, have less power than men do, which greatly affects their perceptions. When women from these countries are faced with conducts that they feel are unwelcomed and inappropriate, it might be harder for them to speak up and do something about it since they know, as well as men do, that they are considered as less. Women from these countries might not even realize that certain behaviors are inappropriate or sexually harassing because they grow up knowing that the man is the one in charge. Therefore, when working in an environment that is not theirs; and in this case when working in a US workplace, their intimidation and lack of self-confidence might lead them assume that these behaviors are normal; especially if they see themselves as being lucky to have found a position in a firm outside of their home and would hate to lose these great opportunities.

Proposition 3: *Depending on the importance given in the workplace, certain age groups are most likely at a disadvantage in terms of power compared to others.*

Therefore, when firms value certain age groups as more than others; whether because they are young and bring new and innovative ideas to the firm or

are older and have grown with the firm, the greater importance given to one and not the other creates a disadvantage in power. In turn, these people's perceptions, of what are acceptable or not acceptable behaviors, are significantly affected. "Each generation views the world from a unique perspective. Being 20 in the year 2003 is a very different experience from being 50 in that same year, and vice versa; being 20 in the year 2003 is very different from being 20 in the year 1973". Although this concept might seem obvious and simple, it is most often then not forgotten or avoided. "Part of our difficulty in relating to one another across generations is that we do not keep this unique worldview in mind. We have a tendency to view the world through our lenses without regard to the changes and challenges facing each and every one of us (Peter G. Northouse, 2010). Age has an important impact on how we perceive certain things, and it is significantly influenced by power.

FUTURE RESEARCH AND CONCLUSION

A great amount of research has contributed to a better understanding of sexual harassment and what might affect people's perceptions about it. However, the existing literature has, and still today lacks a theoretical framework that deepens people's understanding on the impact of power on gender, age and culture; and hence, its influence on how sexual harassment is perceived. My paper proposes

that depending on an individual's culture, sex and age, as well as its power in the workplace; his or her perceptions of what is acceptable or not, as well as the ability to act upon it, might differ enormously.

Investigators and other researchers can take advantage of my three propositions above and test them as means of developing a new study and deepening the information already available on sexual harassment, its causes and impacts in the workplace. For starters, surveys can be given out to a diversified group of working people, from different countries and places, age groups and gender, questioning them on certain behaviors and what they perceive as being acceptable or not acceptable. These surveys can then be analyzed and used as a first step into this new study. Researchers can then proceed with this study and investigate further on this idea of power distribution and how that influences people's behaviors. Finally, as a suggestion to firms that promote diversity, whether or not more study is done, it is crucial for the success of any firm to know and understand the environment within it. A healthy environment is the foundation to a healthy business.

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