Comparing Predictors of Sexual Harassment Proclivity Between Japanese and U.S. Men

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The authors report on data showing evidence of both similarities and differences between Japanese and U.S. men regarding sexual harassment. Data indicate that there is substantial overlap in the traits and beliefs that predict a proclivity for sexual harassment in Japanese and U.S. men. However, Japanese men scored higher overall on sexual harassment proclivity, which was anticipated due to the relatively high degree of male dominance in Japan. Path analysis revealed that rape myth acceptance and a dimension of empathy (called personal distress) mediated this cross-cultural difference. The authors interpret the results as supporting the individual differences model of sexual harassment.

Keywords: sexual harassment, empathy, rape myths, Japan, individual differences

Why do men sexually harass women? This question has received considerable attention from academics in a variety of fields. The resulting empirical research, theoretical advances, and policy recommendations have directly led to many businesses adopting policies and employee conduct guidelines that reduce sexual harassment. Yet the steps taken to reduce harassment are not universally effective; some harassment occurs despite good-faith efforts on the part of employers. Conversely, the absence of strict antiharassment policies does not necessarily make a sexual harasser of every man. In other words, there are genuine individual differences between men, such that some men are more likely to engage in sexual harassment than others are. This has been called the individual differences model of sexual harassment (Tangri & Hayes, 1997).

A great number of variables could potentially predict which men are sexual harassers. One such variable is culture. It is plausible—indeed likely—that men raised in an environment of high male dominance are more likely to sexually harass women as compared with men from a more egalitarian society. Likewise, it is plausible that within the same culture, there are several individual differences (e.g., the extent to which a man endorses rape myths) which might predict who is likely to be a sexual harasser. The purpose of the current investigation is to evaluate the individual differences model of sexual harassment cross-culturally. Specifically, we tested the hypothesis that the individual differences that predict sexual harassment in U.S. men also predict sexual harassment in Japanese men. We also assessed the relationship between culture and sexual harassment with the anticipation that a culture of high male dominance (Japan) would result in greater sexual ha-

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1 Men can also be victims of sexual harassment (Gerrity, 2000), but research has clearly demonstrated that men sexually harass women more than women sexually harass men (Ménard, Hall, Phung, Ghebrial, & Martin, 2003).
rassment than a culture of moderately high male dominance (United States).

It is important to state clearly how we define sexual harassment in the current investigation. According to U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (1993), the rewarding of employees for complying with sexual requests—or the punishment of employees for refusing sexual requests—is called *quid pro quo* sexual harassment. This is in contrast with the less egregious *hostile environment* harassment, which refers to crude, sexual, or offensive behaviors that interfere with an employee’s ability to perform their job. *Quid pro quo* harassment, rather than hostile environment harassment, will be the focus of this study.

**Sexual Harassment in Japan and the United States**

As cross-cultural research has flourished in recent years, the seeming universality of sexual harassment in the workplace has become apparent. Researchers have investigated sexual harassment in at least 34 countries at this writing (see Barak, 1997 for review). A review of 74 studies in 11 European nations found sexual harassment present in all 11 (Timmerman & Bajema, 1999). Although methodological differences between studies limit the interpretability and generalizability across studies, there is ample evidence to conclude that sexual harassment is a worldwide phenomenon. Nevertheless, the extent to which differences in culture affect sexual harassment remains a question, although research has demonstrated that attitudes toward violence against women vary by culture (Nayak, Byrne, Martin & Abraham, 2003). We note that while rates of sexual harassment may vary from culture to culture, research comparing U.S. and Turkish women revealed that sexual harassment has similar negative effects on job outcomes, psychological well-being, and health (Wasti, Bergman, Glomb, & Drasgow, 2000).

It is difficult to ascertain an accurate depiction of the rates of sexual harassment in Japan as compared to the United States, given evidence that rape (and presumably sexual harassment as well) is underreported in Japan relative to the United States (see Yamawaki & Tschanz, 2005, for differences in perceptions of rape between Japan and the United States). While our search of the literature did not reveal the prevalence rates of sexual harassment in Japan, there are reasons to expect that sexual harassment occurs more frequently in Japan than in the United States. We hasten to clarify our position: Any differences between cultures in the prevalence of sexual harassment would be the result of differences in social factors and not due to race or ethnicity.

One reason to expect higher rates of sexual harassment in Japan relative to the United States is a difference in legal history; sexual harassment has been a punishable crime in the United States for longer than it has in Japan. Sexual harassment in the United States was first legally recognized as a violation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act in the 1976 case *Williams v. Saxbe*. In 1986, the Supreme Court case of *Meritor Savings Bank v. Vinson* found that a sexually harassing workplace environment was a violation of civil rights (going beyond outlawing the exchanging of workplace rewards for sexual favors). There has been little substantial change in U.S. harassment law since then.

In Japan, the first legal pronouncement concerning sexual harassment occurred in 1990 (*Shizuoka Sexual Harassment Case* in Wolff, 1996). The defendant in this case did not enter a defense, which according to Japanese legal custom, resulted in a default judgment in favor of the female plaintiff. It was not until 1999 that a law specifically addressing sexual harassment was passed in Japan (*Law Respecting the Guarantee of Equal Opportunity and Treatment Between Men and Women in Employment*, 1999, in Shimoda, 2002). Thus, the United States has a longer history of addressing sexual harassment problems in the legal system, such that U.S. employers have faced repercussions for sexual harassment violations for several more years.

Evidence of high rates of sexual harassment in Japan also come directly from interviews and surveys with Japanese women. A study of Japanese nurses revealed a high rate of sexual harassment by patients (56%), although there was not a comparison group of nurses so this finding is difficult to interpret (Hibino, Ogino, & Inagaki, 2006). Nonetheless, the high percentage of nurses harassed is particularly alarming when one recalls that sexual misconduct tends to be highly underreported in Japan (Yamawaki & Tschanz, 2005).
Lastly, a multinational survey was conducted on the state of U.S. women professionals abroad. The topic of the research was not sexual harassment, yet the authors’ interviews with women in Japan led to the following observation: “One of the most surprising findings to us occurred in Japan, when we realized the pervasiveness of sexual harassment of foreign (primarily younger) women professionals by Japanese men. Almost every woman we talked to in Japan had a story of harassment” (Napier & Taylor, 2002, p. 847). Taken together, these research findings and the fact that harassment was only recently addressed legally in Japan suggests a relatively high frequency of sexual harassment in Japan.

Differential Societal Male Dominance and Sexual Harassment

Why would there be a higher rate of sexual harassment in Japan relative to the United States? Given that much sexual harassment arguably stems from male dominance and power (Farley, 1978; Mackinnon, 1979), cultures that differ in the degree of male dominance likely also differ in the prevalence of sexual harassment, such that more male dominance is associated with more sexual harassment. While Japan and the United States are clearly both male dominant, we will describe two reasons to believe that Japan is more highly male dominant than the United States. The first is the Confucian interdependence of Japanese society and the second is the greater acceptance of rape myths.

Confucian Interdependence

Confucianism heavily influences Japanese interdependence, which emphasizes a hierarchical society in which male dominance is assumed and practiced (Campbell, 1993; Efron, 1999; Sugihara & Katsurada, 2000). Despite the fact that current Japanese law holds that all citizens are equal, the traditional Confucian view of gender roles and male dominance still has a powerful influence on the lives of Japanese (Sugihara & Katsurada, 2000). Supporting this notion, several researchers found that Japan is more highly male-dominant than Western cultures. While Babior’s (1993) research on domestic violence found similarities in the dynamics between male abusers and female victims, she observed that Japan has a more deeply entrenched patriarchal system than the United States. Likewise, a qualitative study of nurses who volunteer to assist abused Japanese women acknowledged the relatively high degree of male dominance in Japan (Hatashita, Hirao, & Brykczynski, 2006). Kozu (1999) described some manifestations of male dominance in a description of familial obligations: Fathers are considered the heads of the household, while sons’ familial obligations are first to their parents and last to their wives. When women marry, it becomes their duty to obey the members of her husband’s family. Further, new wives will also begin referring to their husbands as shujin, which literally means master. While we acknowledge that the United States is male-dominant, the above suggests greater male dominance in Japan.

In addition to being highly male dominant, Confucianism views group wa, or harmony, as imperative (Efron, 1999). This is in contrast to the United States, which places a greater emphasis on the individual than on interdependence or harmony (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). The emphasis on group harmony discourages upsetting the current, male-dominated system. As a result, noncompliance in the face of traditional gender roles is punished by shame and embarrassment in Japan (Efron, 1999; Fiske, Kitayama, Markus & Nisbett, 1998; Shimoda, 2002). Thus, there are strong disincentives for Japanese women to act against men who sexually harass them. Empirical research does show that people from independent (i.e., Western) cultures react more negatively to sexual harassment than do people from interdependent cultures such as Japan, as measured by reactions to hypothetical scenarios in which one receives unwanted sexual attention (Sigal et al., 2005). Although there are many positive aspects to Confucian interdependence, it affects sexual harassment in two ways: one, it propagates a male hierarchy, and two, it discourages reform of that hierarchy by emphasizing harmony.

Minimization of Rape

Male dominance contributes to the minimization of rape, and researchers have suggested that cultures that trivialize the harm of rape are likely to be permissive of sexual harassment and other offenses against women (L’Amand, Pepi-
There is evidence that rape is minimized in Japan more so than it is in the United States, as evidenced by the fact that national leaders (who both set and reflect cultural norms) have made statements that trivialize rape. Seiichi Ota, member of the Japanese House of Representatives, commented on the five men accused of a brutally raping a women at a prestigious university. Ota said, “Gang rape shows the people who do it are still vigorous. I think that might make them close to normal” (Outrage over Rape Remark, 2003). Recent Prime Minister Shinzo Abe revealed his thoughts regarding the 50,000 to 200,000 women who served as sex slaves for Japanese soldiers in “comfort stations” during WWII. In many cases, the conditions of the stations were ghastly. Abe argued that there was no evidence that these women had been forced into sexual servitude (although he did stop short of agreeing with those of his party who argue that the women were in comfort stations completely voluntarily) (Uncomfortable Truths, 2007). National leaders do not only endorse the minimization of rape, recent research has found support that rape is minimized to a greater extent among Japanese college students than their counterparts in the United States, as measured by reactions to hypothetical scenarios (Yamawaki & Tschanz, 2005). Specifically, Japanese men minimized the seriousness of rape ($\eta^2 = .07$), blamed the victims ($\eta^2 = .15$), and excused the rapists ($\eta^2 = .34$) more than U.S. men.

While Japan and the United States differ in many ways, the dimension most salient to sexual harassment is male dominance. Specifically, the United States can be considered moderately high in male dominance while Japan can be considered highly male dominant, as manifested by Confucian interdependence and the minimization of rape.

Situational Predictors of Sexual Harassment

To date, sexual harassment research has focused primarily on the situational variables (i.e., workplace policies regarding sexual harassment) rather than dispositional variables. Prominent scholars have acknowledged that while individual differences in sexual harassment proclivity do exist, they suggest that organizational conditions are more important (Fitzgerald, Gelend, & Drasgow, 1995). Indeed, there is ample research to conclude that companies in which norms permit sexual harassment will have problems with sexual harassment (Dellinger & Williams, 2002; Ellis, Barak, & Pinto, 1991; Fitzgerald, Drasgow, Hulin, Gelfand, & Magley, 1997; Gutek, 1985; Pryor, LaVite & Stoller, 1993; Pryor, Giedd & Williams, 1995). The heavy emphasis on organizational conditions may be because situational variables, such as an organization’s sexual harassment policy, can be changed more readily than individual differences. In terms of the practical application of research, an understanding of the situational factors is indeed vital.

As Lewin (1951) observed, there is a natural tension between dispositional and situational explanations of behavior. Although the current investigation takes a more dispositional approach than is common, we are not suggesting that an examination of individual differences offers a complete picture of the causes of sexual harassment. We readily acknowledge that situational factors, such as the workplace policy, influence the occurrence of sexual harassment. Thus, while valuable, situational factors are not the focus of the current investigation.

Individual Differences

While some cultural differences likely affect how prone one is to engage in sexual harassment, there are also individual differences salient to sexual harassment. Research has demonstrated that men do vary in how likely they are to sexually harass (Pryor, 1987; Pryor & Stoller, 1994). However, research on the personal characteristics of sexual harassers has been very limited. Much of what is known about the variables that correlate with sexual harassment proclivity comes from scale validation (i.e., Bartling & Eisenmann, 1993; Bingham & Burleson, 1996; Pryor, 1987). Although the aim of these studies was not to describe the individual differences that predict sexual harassment, the findings are nonetheless informative. The traits related to high harassment proclivity are an adversarial view of heterosexual relations (Bartling & Eisenmann, 1993; Bingham & Burleson, 1996; Dekker & Barling, 1998; Ménard, Hall, Phung, Ghebrial, & Martin, 2003; Pryor, 1987), rape myth acceptance (Pryor, 1987), hostile sexism (Dekker &
Barling, 1998), generalized hostility (Ménard et al., 2003), sex role stereotyping (Pryor, 1987; Bartling & Eisenmann, 1993; Bingham & Burleson, 1996), and endorsement of traditional masculine ideology (Wade & Brittan-Powell, 2001). Research also has shown that higher authoritarianism predicts likelihood to sexually harass, and the relationship between authoritarianism and sexual harassment is mediated by both rape myth acceptance and hostile sexism (Begany & Milburn, 2002).

Some personality traits are negatively correlated with sexual harassment proclivity, which include agreeableness (Larrimer-Scherbaum & Popovich, 2001), openness to experience (Larrimer-Scherbaum & Popovich, 2001; Lee, Gizzarone, & Ashton, 2003), and a personality dimension termed honesty/humility (Lee et al., 2003). Lastly, empathy has been repeatedly shown to correspond to low levels of harassment proclivity (Bartling & Eisenman, 1993; Bingham & Burleson, 1996; Dekker & Barling, 1998; Pryor, 1987).

It is important to mention one caveat to an individual differences approach. Peoples’ attitudes, beliefs, traits, and personalities are not formed in a vacuum; culture exerts sweeping influence on the individual (Baumeister, 2005). In other words, an individual differences approach to sexual harassment is not strictly orthogonal to a cross-cultural approach. For instance, rape myth acceptance is a construct propagated by a culture of male dominance, and therefore cannot be removed completely from culture. For that matter, it is difficult to imagine many meaningful traits that are entirely outside the influence of culture. Nonetheless, individuals within the same culture vary substantially on numerous dimensions, including the proclivity for sexual harassment and the traits associated with harassment, as described above.

Indeed, the individual differences known to predict sexual harassment come primarily from research from one population—namely North Americans. While this lends credibility to the individual differences approach, focusing on a single culture limits the generalizability of the findings. The traits and beliefs heretofore associated with sexual harassers may be unique to North Americans. Alternatively, it may be that the same individual differences predict sexual harassment in multiple cultures. To answer this question, one must investigate the relationship of personal characteristics to sexual harassment in another cultural context. Our review of the literature revealed no studies in which trait predictors of harassment were assessed cross-culturally.

**Present Investigation**

The current work tested two hypotheses regarding both individual differences and cultural differences with respect to sexual harassment.

1. Masculine ideology is the internalization of cultural norms regarding the appropriate behavior of men (Brannon, 1976). Given that endorsement of traditional masculine ideology has been shown to be based on the same gender role norms across cultures (Gilmore, 1991), we expect the same attitudes and beliefs to predict high levels of sexual harassment proclivity in both Japanese and U.S. participants. Specifically, traits such as sex role stereotyping, adversarial sexual beliefs, acceptance of interpersonal violence, and rape myth acceptance will correspond to higher sexual harassment proclivity. Empathic concern, perspective taking, and personal distress are expected to be inversely related to harassment proclivity and thus will correspond with a lower likelihood of sexual harassment among both Japanese and U.S. men.

2. We predict that higher levels of male dominance will be associated with greater sexual harassment proclivities (see Farley, 1978 and Mackinnon, 1979, on sexual harassment and male dominance). While both Japan and the United States are male dominant, Japan is more highly male dominant than the United States (as described previously). Therefore, we predict higher sexual harassment proclivity to be expressed by individuals in a highly male-dominant society (Japanese men) relative to those in a moderately high male-dominant society (U.S. men).

**Method**

**Participants**

A total of 102 U.S. and 112 Japanese men participated in this study. The U.S. participants
were recruited from an undergraduate student research pool in the psychology and educational psychology departments at a large public university in the Rocky Mountain region of the United States. Japanese participants were undergraduate students taking introductory college classes at a large public university in Japan. The age range of Japanese participants was from 18 to 25 years ($M = 19.43; SD = 1.13$) and all but three students were unmarried. Ages of U.S. participants ranged from 18 to 24 ($M = 20.35; SD = 2.09$) and all were unmarried. Neither marital status nor age predicted sexual harassment proclivity in this study either directly or in interaction with other variables. Most U.S. men were White (85%), while others were Black (10%) or did not identify race or ethnicity (5%); all Japanese participants were ethnic Japanese. For their participation, all participants received research credit that fulfilled a course requirement.

Translation

A professional Japanese translator translated all of the scenarios and measures used in this study from English into Japanese. A Japanese graduate student fluent in both English and Japanese then reverse-translated the Japanese versions of these materials from Japanese to English. This graduate student was not shown the original English version. A Japanese psychologist evaluated that the translations were accurate and had identical content by examining both the original materials and their reverse-translated counterpart (English version).

Measuring Sexual Harassment

Much of the research on men that sexually harass involves questionnaires that ask men how they would respond to hypothetical situations in which sexual exploitation was a possibility, such as managing a female subordinate who desperately needs a promotion (Bartling & Eisenman, 1993; Bingham & Burleson, 1996; Pryor, 1987). The most widely used of the self-report sexual harassment proclivity measures was used in the current study, which is Pryor’s (1987) Likelihood to Sexually Harass scale (LSH).

The widespread use of the LSH is due in part to the fact that the LSH has been repeatedly shown to predict behavior accurately. For example, when men who scored high on the LSH were asked to teach female confederates to golf, they touched a female confederate in a more sexual manner than did men who had low scores (Pryor, 1987). Similarly, men who had high scores on the LSH were more likely than other men to send female confederates pornographic images electronically, despite being asked not to send the pornographic images (Dall’Ara & Maass, 1999). Other researchers examined how men with high LSH scores would act when asked to interview female confederates. When blind-to-condition raters viewed videos of these interviews, they found that higher LSH scores corresponded with greater sexual interest in the female confederates (Driscoll, Kelly, & Henderson, 1998; Murphy, Driscoll, & Kelly, 1999). In sum, the LSH is a behaviorally predictive measure of sexual harassment.

The scenarios to which men are asked to respond in the LSH ask whether they would trade work-related benefits for sexual favors from female underlings. The scale consists of 10 situations like the one below:

Assuming that you fear no reprisals in your job, would you offer Loretta the job in exchange for sexual favors?

After the participants read each scenario, they are asked to indicate how likely they would be to perform a given sexually harassing behavior on a scale from one (not at all likely) to five (very likely). Responses were summed to obtain scores on the LSH. The scale was reliable in both samples, as measured by coefficient alpha; Japan = .94, U.S. = .89.

Mediator Variables

Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (Burt, 1980). The Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (RMAS) is designed to assess individuals’ acceptance of rape myths. Respondents to the RMAS and all
subscales (described below) indicate their agreement with statements on a scale from one (strongly disagree) to seven (strongly agree).

Rape myths are fallacious beliefs which portray rape victims as causing, contributing to, or deserving rape (e.g., “Any healthy woman can successfully resist a rapist if she really wants to”). This has been associated with sexual harassment proclivity in past research, with correlations between rape myth acceptance and willingness to sexually harass ranging from \( r = .24 \) to \( r = .49 \) (Bartling & Eisenmann, 1993; Bingham & Burleson, 1996; Pryor, 1987). The original version of the RMAS has two items about women from differing ethnicities. Due to the high degree of homogeneity expected in the Japanese sample, these items were removed from both English and Japanese versions, leaving a total of 11 items. Coefficient alpha was .69 in the Japanese sample and .79 in the U.S. sample. The RMAS also contains subscales, three of which were used: sex role stereotyping (nine items), adversarial sexual beliefs (nine items), and acceptance of interpersonal violence (six items). We computed averages for each subscale.

The sex role stereotyping subscale (\( \alpha = .65 \) for Japanese sample, \( \alpha = .70 \) for U.S. sample), measures one’s preference for traditional sex roles (e.g., “It is acceptable for a woman to have a career, but marriage and family should come first”). Previous research has demonstrated a relationship with sexual harassment measures, ranging from \( r = .12 \) to \( r = .55 \) (Bartling & Eisenmann, 1993; Bingham & Burleson, 1996; Pryor, 1987). The adversarial sexual beliefs subscale (\( \alpha = .76 \) for Japanese sample, \( \alpha = .79 \) for U.S. sample) measures the degree to which one sees men and women as opponents, or adversaries, in a struggle for power (e.g., “A woman will only respect a man who will lay down the law to her”). This too has been shown to correspond to higher levels of sexual harassment, ranging from \( r = .36 \) to \( r = .73 \) (Bartling & Eisenmann, 1993; Bingham & Burleson, 1996; Pryor, 1987). The acceptance of interpersonal violence subscale (\( \alpha = .13 \) for Japanese sample, \( \alpha = .66 \) for U.S. sample) addresses one’s perception of violence as normal in interpersonal relations (e.g., “Sometimes the only way a man can get a cold woman turned on is to use force”). Bivariate correlations with sexual harassment measures have ranged from \( r = .11 \) to \( r = .54 \) (Bartling & Eisenmann, 1993; Bingham & Burleson, 1996; Pryor, 1987).

The internal consistency for the acceptance of interpersonal violence was extremely low in the Japanese sample, while moderate in the U.S. sample. Apart from this measure, overall the different scales used showed internal consistencies that were similar across the two cultures. Acceptance of interpersonal violence was not included in the analyses due to low reliability.

**Interpersonal Reactivity Index (Davis, 1980, 1983).** The Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) is the most widely used measurement for assessing empathy. The IRI consists of 28 Likert-type items rated on a scale from one (never describes me) to five (always describes me). There are four seven-item subscales to the IRI; empathic concern, perspective taking, personal distress, and fantasy. We computed averages for the scales we used.

The empathic concern scale (\( \alpha = .67 \) for Japanese sample, \( \alpha = .79 \) for U.S. sample) assesses one’s capacity to feel concern for others (e.g., “I often have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me”). One study has shown low empathic concern to predict harassment proclivity (\( r = -.54 \); Bartling & Eisenmann, 1993). Perspective taking (\( \alpha = .67 \) for Japanese sample, \( \alpha = .73 \) for U.S. sample) is the ability to take on the point-of-view of another (e.g., “I try to look at everybody’s side of a disagreement before I make a decision”). Low levels of perspective taking has been associated with harassment proclivity, from \( r = -.28 \) to \( r = -.36 \) (Bartling & Eisenmann, 1993; Pryor, 1987). Personal distress (\( \alpha = .68 \) for Japanese sample, \( \alpha = .80 \) for U.S. sample) is the degree to which others’ problems and discomforts are personally troubling (e.g., “When I see someone who badly needs help in an emergency, I go to pieces”). Past research has not demonstrated a relationship between this dimension and harassment proclivity, but a relationship is plausible so it was included in the current study. The fantasy dimension, which measures feelings toward book and movie characters, was not included due to reported low reliability and our experience that it did not translate well.

**Differential societal male dominance.** For computational purposes, those from a culture of high male dominance (Japanese participants) were represented by the number two, while
those from a culture of moderately high male dominance (U.S. participants) were represented by the number one.

Results

Hypothesis 1

We hypothesized that the same attitudes and beliefs would predict sexual harassment proclivities in both Japanese and U.S. men, and this was largely supported. Three mediator variables predicted sexual harassment proclivity scores in both U.S. and Japanese men. Rape myth acceptance correlated with sexual harassment proclivity among Japanese participants \( (r = .29, p < .01) \) and among U.S. participants \( (r = .30, p < .01) \) such that greater endorsement of rape myths corresponded with a higher proclivity to sexually harass. Two dimensions of empathy predicted sexual harassment proclivity in both cultures: Perspective taking predicted sexual harassment proclivity in both Japanese \( (r = -.20, p < .05) \) and U.S. participants \( (r = -.20, p < .05) \), as did personal distress in Japanese men \( (r = -.18, p = .05) \) and U.S. men \( (r = -.19, p = .05) \).

Two mediator variables were significant predictors of sexual harassment proclivity in one, but only marginally significant in the other. Empathic concern was negatively correlated with sexual harassment proclivity among Japanese men \( (r = -.26, p < .01) \) and marginally correlated in U.S. men \( (r = -.17, p < .1) \). Adversarial sexual beliefs fell somewhat short of predicting sexual harassment proclivity in Japanese men \( (r = .16, p < .1) \), while it did reach significance in the U.S. men \( (r = .33, p < .01) \). Only one variable, sex role stereotyping, was a significant predictor in one culture and unrelated in another. It correlated with sexual harassment proclivity in Japanese men \( (r = .19, p < .05) \) but was unrelated in U.S. men \( (r = -.05, ns) \).

Given that the correlations between mediator variables and sexual harassment proclivity varied somewhat by culture, we sought to determine if these differences were meaningful (i.e., significant) by conducting an r-to-Z transformation. Of the six mediator variables that predicted sexual harassment in one or both cultures, none of the correlations differed significantly by culture. Although this is consistent with our hypothesis that predictors of harassment proclivity would be similar cross-culturally, we hesitate to make much of a null finding.

The correlations among mediator variables (e.g., the relationship between rape myth acceptance and adversarial sexual beliefs) also showed little evidence of differing by culture (see Table 1). There was only one exception to this trend, which was that the correlation between rape myth acceptance and perspective taking differed as a function of culture \( (p < .001) \). Although the perspective taking aspect of empathy was negatively correlated with rape myth acceptance in both Japanese men \( (r = -.27, p < .01) \) and U.S. men \( (r = -.63, p < .01) \), the correlation was significantly stronger in U.S. men. In sum, there was substantial similarity in the relationship among mediator variables and the harassment proclivity across cultures.

Hypothesis 2

To test the hypothesis that a highly male-dominant society would produce greater sexual harassment proclivity relative to a moderately high male-dominant society, we conducted a t test using either high (Japan) or moderately high male dominance (United States) as the independent variable on likelihood to sexually harass. This showed a significant effect for relative male dominance on likelihood to sexually harass, \( t = 2.93, p < .01 \), such that harassment proclivity scores were higher among those from highly male-dominant Japan \( (M = 16.82; SD = 8.49) \) relative to moderately high male dominance of the United States \( (M = 13.83; SD = 6.12) \).

Path analysis. To shed additional light on the mechanism that underlies the effect of societal male dominance on sexual harassment, we tested a causal model employing societal male dominance as an exogenous variable and all other variables as endogenous variables. To do this, we performed a path analysis using AMOS (Arbuckle, 1994–1999). This technique is ideally suited for this purpose because it enables one to examine whether a pattern of intercorrelations among variables fits an underlying theory of which variables are causing other variables (Aron & Aron, 1998) and is amenable to both dichotomous and continuous variables. Based on the previous results and theory, we predicted that societal male dominance would produce differences in
each of the mediators, such that higher levels of dominance would produce greater rape myth acceptance, a higher endorsement of adversarial sexual beliefs, and more sex role stereotyping, while also producing less empathic concern, less perspective taking, and less personal distress. Furthermore, we predicted that greater rape myth acceptance, adversarial sexual beliefs, and sex role stereotyping, together with less personal distress, perspective taking, and empathic concern would produce a greater likelihood to sexually harass.

To conduct our analysis, we entered societal male dominance (coded 1 for “moderate” and 2 for “high”) as a predictor of empathic concern, perspective taking, personal distress, sex role stereotyping, adversarial sexual beliefs, and rape myth acceptance. We then entered these mediator variables as predictors of the likelihood to sexually harass. We did not explore paths between the mediators, but we did estimate the correlation between their disturbance terms to account for the intercorrelations between these variables. This path model was thus fully saturated and the results of the analysis are presented in Figure 1.

As can be seen in Figure 1, societal male dominance significantly affected five of the six mediating variables. The results showed that as the sample became relatively more male dominant (Japanese as opposed to U.S. American) empathic concern and perspective taking decreased, while, unexpectedly, sex role stereotyping also decreased. Conversely, as the sample became less male dominant (i.e., U.S. American) rape myth acceptance and personal distress decreased. Societal male dominance, as defined by nationality, had no direct impact on the likelihood to sexually harass. The nature of the relationship between male dominance and the likelihood to sexually harass was thus a mediated one, with personal distress (a dimension of empathy) and rape myth acceptance being the significant mediators. As can be seen in Figure 1, lower levels of personal distress and greater acceptance of rape myths produced a greater likelihood to sexually harass. Because the model was fully saturated, the model was a perfect fit to the data and did not require an examination of goodness-of-fit indices.

Discussion

Cross-Cultural Similarities

Our approach to the problem of sexual harassment was informed by an individual differences approach to sexual harassment, which
holds that some men are more likely to be perpetrators of sexual harassment than are others (Tangri & Hayes, 1997). This gave rise to our first hypothesis, which was that many of the same traits, beliefs, and attitudes would be predictive of sexual harassment in both American and Japanese men. Results of this study were consistent with this hypothesis, as there was considerable overlap in the traits that predicted sexual harassment proclivity in both Japan and the United States.

We find it noteworthy that men prone to sexual harassment in both Japan and the United States tend to endorse rape myths. That is, believing that the rape victims could fight off rapists—“if they really wanted to”—correlated strongly with a proclivity for harassment in both cultures. Likewise, men from both cultures with a proclivity for harassment show depressed levels of empathy—as measured both by the personal distress and perspective taking aspects of empathy. Lower levels of the empathic concern dimension of empathy and greater endorsement of sex role stereotyping also predicted harassment proclivity in Japanese men, although this did not reach statistical significance in U.S. men. Because both Japan and the United States are male dominant, it is not surprising that there was considerable overlap in the traits that predicted sexual harassment proclivity in both countries. It thus appears that the likelihood or proclivity of engaging in sexual harassment is not simply a function of a single personality dimension, but is instead a product of multiple factors that contribute to the overall proclivity.

We suggest two implications for the cross-cultural overlap in predictors of harassment. The first is that it lends additional credibility to an individual differences approach by demonstrating that men vary in their proclivity for sexual harassment in ways that are not specific to one culture or geographic region (see also Pryor, 1997; Tangri & Hayes, 1997). In other words, some men are simply more likely to perpetrate sexual harassment than others are, and this is true for both Americans and Japanese. Distinguishing those most likely to sexually harass from those least likely to sexually harass could be of considerable practical importance for the prevention of sexual harassment. For example, responsible corporations might maximize the effectiveness of antiharassment training by providing additional training and
education for those predisposed to sexual harassment.

The notion that training and education can help alleviate the incidence and prevalence of sexual harassment is not new or without its proponents (e.g., Gruber, 1997). The fact that harassers appear to be very similar across these two cultures suggests that ameliorative efforts in one culture may find success in the other. Gruber asserts that sexual harassment is a social problem that has “no cultural boarders” (p. 292), suggesting that cross-cultural cooperation could be very helpful. Educational interventions have been developed and published by several researchers in the United States (Beauvais, 1986; Kaufman & Wylie, 1983; Licata & Popovich, 1987; Paludi, 1990), and they appear to have achieved their goals. If such efforts could be duplicated in Japan, the incidence and prevalence of sexual harassment might decrease.

The second implication of the cross-cultural overlap in the traits that predict harassment regards the nature of the sexual harasser. That men prone to sexual harassment share many of the same characteristics suggests the possibility that traits such as rape myth acceptance and low levels of empathy may commonly accompany sexual harassment. If future research bears this out, it may be more accurate to view sexual harassers as having a constellation of maladaptive characteristics rather than having a single, unidimensional trait.

**Male dominance.** The substantial overlap in the individual differences that predict sexual harassment in both Japanese and U.S. men suggests a common origin or cause. We suggest that male dominance is the most plausible origin for harassment, a view that is consistent with past research (Gilmore, 1991), as well as sociocultural models of harassment, which propose that men bring their gender status and sex-stereotypical responses with them when they enter organizations (e.g., Sokoloff, 1980). The characteristics that predict harassment in both cultures also seem to reflect male dominance as the primary origin of sexual harassment. For instance, one would expect that those who occupy positions of power and authority (in this case, men in a nonegalitarian society) would have less empathy for people (women) in subordinate groups. Likewise, the fact that rape myth acceptance also predicts harassment in both cultures points to male dominance as the source of sexual harassment as well. Harmful misunderstandings about rape stem from a disregard for women, who are the victims of rape. As such, a belief in rape myths is inconsistent with an egalitarian view of gender.

**Differential Societal Male Dominance**

Our second hypothesis was that high levels of societal male dominance would be associated with greater proclivity for sexual harassment relative to moderately high levels of male dominance. We characterized Japan as highly male dominant relative to the United States for two reasons: One reason stemmed from the fact that Confucian interdependence supports a formalized hierarchy in which male dominance is assumed and practiced (Campbell, 1993; Efron, 1999; Sugihara & Katsurada, 2000), while challenges to the male-dominated hierarchy are discouraged (Efron, 1999; Fiske et al., 1998; Shimoda, 2002). A second manifestation of high male dominance in Japan is that the harm of rape is minimized in Japan more than in the United States (Yamawaki & Tschanz, 2005). Results were consistent with expectations, as higher male dominance was associated with greater harassment proclivity.

**How societal male dominance affects harassment.** We sought to identify the mechanisms that underlie the effect of societal male dominance on sexual harassment using path analysis. We anticipated that the difference between a nation high in male dominance and a nation moderately high in male dominance in harassment proclivity would be mediated by individual differences in specific beliefs and traits derived from past sexual harassment research and theorizing. This hypothesis was supported; the significant difference between Japan and the United States was eliminated when the mediator variables were taken into account. In particular, the personal distress dimensions of empathy and rape myth acceptance mediated the relationship between societal male dominance and sexual harassment proclivity.

Results of the path analysis allow for a better understanding of how societal male dominance brings about sexual harassment. High societal male dominance increases the acceptance of rape myths, and the acceptance of rape myths results in greater harassment proclivity. A proposed relationship between rape myths and
harm toward women has long been proposed in the literature (e.g., Burt, 1980; L’Amand et al., 1981), yet results of the path analysis suggest that high societal male dominance is a cause of greater rape myth acceptance—and the acceptance of rape myths results in more sexual harassment. Likewise, high societal male dominance also increases sexual harassment by decreasing the personal distress aspect of empathy. That is, high male dominance decreases the degree to which the sufferings of others are personally distressing, which in turn makes sexual harassment more likely. These data provide still another example of the negative consequences of the lack of gender equality.

We hope that the current work will encourage likeminded scholars to uncover more about the characteristics that predict sexual harassment both within and across cultures. As more is known, harassment prevention efforts may begin by addressing some of the traits and beliefs associated with sexual harassment, for instance by debunking rape myths or encouraging empathy training.

Limitations

One important limitation of the current investigation is that only two cultures were investigated. Data from multiple cultures would allow for a more precise understanding of the relationships between culture, individual differences, and sexual harassment proclivity. A second limitation was our focus on self-report, as behavioral measures are generally preferred (Baumeister & Vohs, 2006). Third, it is plausible that the salient difference between U.S. and Japanese men something other than differential societal male dominance. Thus, our interpretation of male dominance as responsible for the difference between is an inference on our part, however, it is an inference based both on theory and the empirical research of others.

Conclusions

The current investigation was consistent with the individual differences model of sexual harassment. While sexual harassment proclivity varied substantially among the men of each culture, Japanese and U.S. men who scored high in harassment proclivity proved to be surprisingly similar. In both U.S. and Japanese populations, sexual harassment does not exist in a vacuum: It is accompanied by many of the same maladaptive traits and beliefs.

Overall, Japanese men were higher in harassment proclivity, which we expected based on the relatively high male dominance in Japan. Mediational analysis indicated that male dominance causes harassment by increasing acceptance of rape myths and decreasing the extent to which one is bothered by the suffering of others. Understanding the cultural and individual difference variables that contribute to sexual harassment are important elements in bringing about a reduction of the sexual harassment of women.

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