

# How Prominent Cases of Sexual Harassment Influence Public Opinion Across Countries: The Cases of Cosby, Trump, and Weinstein

Pragya Arya 

University of Southern California

Norbert Schwarz 

University of Southern California

---

*In 2017, media coverage of the #MeToo movement brought attention to the pervasive problem of sexual harassment against women, highlighting several prominent American cases including Harvey Weinstein, Bill Cosby, and Donald Trump. In survey experiments with nationally representative samples in the United States (N = 2,843), the Netherlands (N = 3,770), and Germany (N = 2,357), we tested how thinking about the American cases influences public opinion towards the issue across countries. As predicted, being reminded of the Weinstein, Cosby, and Trump cases increased the evaluation that sexual harassment is a serious problem in the United States. We further tested how thinking about the U.S. cases influences participants' evaluations of sexual harassment in European countries: Does it pale by comparison to the prominent U.S. cases, or do the cases increase the assessment that harassment is a problem everywhere? All samples evaluated sexual harassment in the European countries as a more serious issue when the U.S. cases were brought to mind, which is compatible with the assumption that sexual harassment is seen as a global gender issue rather than a country-specific issue. These results provide experimental evidence that attention-grabbing cases can shift evaluations of a policy issue within and across countries.*

---

**KEY WORDS:** sexual harassment, #MeToo, public opinion, assimilation effect, contrast effect, survey experiment

## How Prominent Cases of Sexual Harassment Influence Public Opinion Across Countries: The Cases of Cosby, Trump, and Weinstein

In 2017, the #MeToo movement swept the world and brought widespread attention to the pervasive social problem of sexual violence against women. Coined by activist Tarana Burke, #MeToo spread as a viral hashtag on social media when a tweet by actress Alyssa Milano accused movie producer Harvey Weinstein of sexual assault. Women across industries and generations soon began using the hashtag #MeToo to tweet their own experiences and convey the sheer magnitude of sexual violence (Manikonda et al., 2018). The hashtag was used 12 million times

on the first day alone (Mendes et al., 2018). The movement quickly spread to countries across the globe and sparked many individual #MeToos. Accusations against numerous politicians, business leaders, and celebrities came to light, and many faced public reckoning for their actions (Mendes et al., 2018). Media coverage of the movement was extensive and news coverage about sexual harassment went up by 52% in the first year (Women's Media Center, 2018). According to the Pew Research Center, roughly 65% of U.S. adults reported in 2018 that at least some of the content they saw on social media was about sexual harassment (Anderson & Toor, 2018).

Increased attention to an issue is likely to change public opinion, as has been observed for other real-world events that captured public attention, from political assassinations (Hofstetter, 1969; Sicinski, 1969) and nuclear power accidents (De Boer & Catsburg, 1988) to terrorist attacks (Huddy et al., 2002; Noelle-Neumann, 2002) and the racial injustices that gave rise to #BlackLivesMatter (Boudreau et al., 2022). With few exceptions, this research focused on the influence of an event within the country of its occurrence, not across country borders. Moreover, the data used for cross-country comparisons were rarely directly comparable (for a review, see Boomgaarden & de Vreese, 2007). Addressing this gap, we conducted survey experiments with representative samples in three countries to explore how attention to prominent cases of sexual harassment in the United States influences evaluations of sexual harassment in the United States and abroad.

Not surprisingly, we expect that thinking about the sexual harassment cases involving Cosby, Trump, and Weinstein will increase Americans' and foreigners' assessment that sexual harassment is a serious issue in the United States, the country in which these cases occurred. But how would thinking about these U.S. cases affect people's evaluations of sexual harassment in other countries? Would it increase Americans' judgment that sexual harassment is a problem everywhere, or would they assume that it is less of a problem in other countries than in their own? Similarly, would thinking about the U.S. cases increase foreigners' assessment that sexual harassment is a serious problem in their own country as well? Or would their local problems seem to pale by comparison, leaving the international public with the judgment that things, fortunately, aren't as bad at home as they are in the United States?

To test these possibilities, we conducted a survey experiment in three Western countries (United States, Germany, Netherlands) to assess whether, and how, increased knowledge accessibility pertaining to three prominent cases of sexual harassment in the United States influences evaluations of the seriousness of sexual harassment in the United States and abroad. We first address the social issue of sexual harassment. Subsequently, we develop our conceptual rationale and derive specific predictions, drawing on a mental construal model of assimilation and contrast effects (Schwarz & Bless, 1992a).

### *Sexual Harassment*

A widely used model of sexual harassment (Fitzgerald et al., 1995; Fitzgerald & Cortina, 2018) conceptualizes it as including sexual coercion (quid pro quo harassment), unwanted sexual attention (unwanted, offensive, and unreciprocated verbal and nonverbal behavior), and gender harassment (verbal and nonverbal behaviors that convey hostile and derogatory attitudes). Sexual harassment disproportionately targets women and stems from a desire to maintain power or control over women (Cortina & Areguin, 2021). It is often driven by a perpetrator's desire to protect or enhance his own sex-based social status within the gender hierarchy and reinforce the existing hierarchy that privileges men (Berdahl, 2007).

Many studies have shown that sexual harassment harms women's work lives—experiencing harassment at work is associated with reductions in job satisfaction, work withdrawal, disengagement, and leaving work altogether (Cortina & Areguin, 2021). Increases in sexual harassment are also associated with greater job stress, increased team conflict, more cognitive interference, and disrupted job performance (Cortina & Areguin, 2021; Fitzgerald & Cortina, 2018; Holland & Cortina, 2013). Experiencing sexual harassment can also negatively impact individuals' mental and physical health. Women who have been sexually harassed report lower levels of psychological well-being, detriments in life satisfaction, a decreased sense of safety, and increased symptoms of depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (Cortina & Areguin, 2021).

### *Evaluations of Sexual Harassment*

Research has established consistent gender differences in evaluations of sexual harassment. A meta-analysis found that women perceive a broader range of behaviors as harassing, especially when involving hostile work environments, dating pressure, and derogatory attitudes towards women (Rotundo et al., 2001). Women also consider sexual harassment a more serious social issue, as observed in decades of public opinion research (for a review, see Holman & Kalmoe, 2021). Aside from gender, other demographic predictors of evaluations of sexual harassment include political ideology and education. Conservatives are less concerned about sexual harassment in general (Holman & Kalmoe, 2021) and less likely to condemn ingroup perpetrators (van der Linden & Panagopoulos, 2018).

### *Is Harassment Talked About?*

A meta-analysis of 55 probability samples, covering the pre-#MeToo years of 1976 to 2000 and including data from 86,578 working women, concluded that 58% of women report experiencing sexual harassment at work (Ilies et al., 2003). However, very few women who experience sexual harassment ever file formal complaints or report it (Cortina & Areguin, 2021). For instance, studies have shown that only 15% of women in law enforcement who experience sexual harassment report it, and only 6.4% of women in graduate school who experience harassment file complaints (Fitzgerald et al., 1988; Lonsway et al., 2013). The low levels of reporting are likely due to a multitude of factors including fears of blame, disbelief, or retaliation, ostracism, damage to careers, and cultural myths of denial and justification, and research has established that reporting sexual harassment is frequently met with these outcomes (Fitzgerald & Cortina, 2018; Ilies et al., 2003; Lonsway et al., 2013).

### *What Did #MeToo Change?*

The #MeToo movement brought historically unprecedented attention to sexual harassment and substantially increased reporting and coverage of harassment. According to the Women's Media Center, the number of news articles about sexual assault and harassment increased by 52% in the year following the #MeToo movement (Women's Media Center, 2018). The #MeToo hashtag was used about 19 million times on Twitter in the first year, and about 23% of these tweets mentioned famous celebrities or politicians accused of harassment (Anderson & Toor, 2018).

### *Mental Construal and Issue Evaluation*

As any other judgment, evaluations of social issues are context sensitive (Schwarz, 2007). When asked to assess the seriousness of a complex issue, people rely on what comes to mind at that point in time. Some of the information will be chronically accessible, which provides some stability in judgment, whereas other information will only be temporarily accessible, for example, because of recent news coverage or because it has just been addressed in a preceding question (for reviews and examples, see Schuman & Presser, 1981; Schwarz & Strack, 1991). How accessible information influences a judgment depends on whether it is used in constructing a representation of the target of judgment or of the standard against which that target is evaluated (Schwarz & Bless, 1992a). Two determinants of information use are particularly relevant for our investigation of the consequences of extreme cases of sexual harassment in one country on assessments of issue relevance in other countries, namely, the nature of the accessible information and the categorical relationship between that information and the target of judgment. We address both in turn.

#### *What Does the Context Render Accessible?*

News reports (or researchers' questions) about sexual harassment can draw attention to general aspects of the issue, such as the findings we reviewed above. Such information applies to a broad range of instances, and its increased accessibility is likely to increase the judged importance of the issue, consistent with extant research in political and social psychology (for reviews, see Iyengar, 1990; Schwarz & Strack, 1991). The applicability of general-issue information is not limited to particular instances; hence, rendering it accessible is likely to influence issue evaluations across time, industries, and countries.

General-issue information is also rendered accessible by news reports (or researchers' questions) that draw attention to specific cases of sexual harassment. But case reports go beyond general-issue attributes by highlighting the specifics of the incident, including its location in time and space, such as the year, industry, or country of occurrence. Case information can therefore not only be used in evaluating the issue in general, but also in making comparative judgments across time, industries, and countries. Accordingly, predicting the impact of accessible specific instances of sexual harassment poses a more complex task than predicting the impact of general-issue information. We now turn to these complexities, considering the impact of extreme cases in one country on issue evaluations in other countries.

#### *Assimilation Effects: Using Accessible Information in Constructing the Target*

One of the most reliable determinants of information use is the categorical relationship between context and target information. When the context brings information to mind that is subordinate to the target category (e.g., members of a group, examples of a social issue), the information can be included in the representation of the superordinate target category (the group, social issue), resulting in assimilation effects (for a comprehensive review, see Bless & Schwarz, 2010). For example, people evaluate a political party more favorably when a preceding question brings a highly respected member to mind (Bless & Schwarz, 1998) and find politicians in general less trustworthy when a preceding question draws attention to a scandal-ridden exemplar (Schwarz & Bless, 1992b). These assimilation effects reflect the inclusion of the accessible exemplars in the representation formed of their groups. The size of assimilation effects increases with the amount and extremity of the issue-relevant

information that is rendered accessible by the context and included in the representation formed and decreases with the amount and extremity of chronically accessible information (for reviews, see Bless & Schwarz, 2010; Bless et al., 2003).

*Evaluating Sexual Harassment in the United States: Assimilation Effects* The likely influence of individual cases of sexual harassment on evaluations of the severity of the issue in the country in which they occurred follows the same rationale. The individual cases are exemplars of harassment that bear on the seriousness of the target issue in the respective country. Hence, we predict:

*H1:* Thinking of three extreme cases of sexual harassment in the United States, involving prominent American perpetrators (Cosby, Trump, and Weinstein), will increase the assessment that workplace sexual harassment is a serious problem in the United States.

*H1a:* This assimilation effect should be observed for participants in the United States.

*H1b:* This assimilation effect should be observed for participants in Germany and the Netherlands.

*Evaluating Sexual Harassment in Other Countries: Assimilation Effects* One goal of the #Me-Too movement was to establish sexual harassment as a global gender issue—any woman, anywhere in the world, can face sexual harassment. From this perspective, specific cases in any country may merely highlight the global reach of what is, at its heart, a gender issue rather than a national issue. If so,

*H2:* The assimilation effect predicted in Hypothesis 1 should not be limited to evaluations of sexual harassment in the United States but should generalize across countries.

*H2a:* Participants in Germany and the Netherlands should evaluate sexual harassment in Germany and the Netherlands as a more severe issue when preceding questions brought the U.S. exemplars to mind.

*H2b:* Participants in the United States should evaluate sexual harassment in Germany and the Netherlands as a more severe issue when preceding questions brought the U.S. exemplars to mind.

### *Contrast Effects: Using Accessible Information in Constructing a Standard*

Numerous studies have shown that information that produces assimilation effects when it is included in the representation formed of the target can produce contrast effects when it is used to form a representation of a standard against which the target is evaluated (for a

review, see Bless & Schwarz, 2010). For example, rendering a highly respected politician accessible hurts the evaluation of parties of which he is not a member (Bless & Schwarz, 1998). Similarly, thinking of a scandal-ridden politician makes other specific politicians seem “cleaner” and more trustworthy, even while reducing the perceived trustworthiness of politicians in general (Schwarz & Bless, 1992b). This is the case because exemplars are lateral categories that are mutually exclusive—for example, Richard Nixon is not George W. Bush, making Bush seem more trustworthy in comparison to Nixon (for conceptual replications, see Bless et al., 2000; Chopik et al., 2015; Wänke et al., 2001). Throughout, a given piece of information results in assimilation effects when it is used in forming a mental representation of the target, but in contrast effects when it is used in forming a mental representation of the standard.

*Evaluating Sexual Harassment in Other Countries: Contrast Effects* Because countries are distinct lateral categories, the severity of an issue in one country can serve as a comparison standard for evaluating the severity of the issue in another country. From this perspective, the seriousness of sexual harassment in Germany or the Netherlands may pale after thinking about extreme cases in the United States. This should be particularly likely when participants first evaluate the severity of the issue in the United States. This task focuses attention on the country in which the transgressions took place to arrive at a country-specific issue evaluation, which can provide a highly accessible standard of comparison for subsequent issue evaluations pertaining to other countries. If so, we should observe that

*H3:* Participants evaluate sexual harassment in Germany and the Netherlands as a less severe issue after thinking about extreme cases in the United States.

*H3a:* This contrast effect should be observed for participants in the United States.

*H3b:* This contrast effect should be observed for participants in Europe.

*H4:* The contrast effect should be more pronounced when participants first evaluate the severity of the issue in the United States.

*H4a:* The contrast effect should be more pronounced when participants in the United States first evaluate the severity of the issue in the United States.

*H4b:* The contrast effect should be more pronounced when participants in Europe first evaluate the severity of the issue in the United States.

Note that the diverging predictions about the impact of extreme cases in the United States on the judged seriousness of the issue in other countries (*H2* vs. *H3*) bear on a key goal of the #MeToo movement, namely the establishment of sexual harassment as a global gender issue that cuts across occupations, age groups, and countries. This conceptualization should undermine the contrast effect predicted by Hypothesis 3 and foster the emergence of assimilation effects across countries, as predicted by Hypotheses 1 and 2. Its support would be particularly persuasive if assimilation effects emerged even under the conditions for which Hypotheses 3 and 4 predict a pronounced contrast effect, namely, when issue severity is evaluated for the United States before it is evaluated for one of the European countries. Such differential effects cannot be derived when news reports (or

researchers' questions) render information accessible that applies to the issue independent of spatial and temporal constraints.

Finally, consistent with the extant literature discussed in earlier sections,

*H5:* We expect a main effect of gender, such that women will evaluate sexual harassment as a more serious issue than men, as has been observed in decades of public opinion data (for a review, see Holman & Kalmoe, 2021).

### *Present Study*

The present study explores how extreme cases of sexual harassment in the U.S. influence the evaluation of sexual harassment across countries: Does the seriousness of sexual harassment in other countries pale by comparison to prominent U.S. cases, or do the cases increase the assessment that harassment is a problem everywhere? To do so, we asked nationally representative samples in the United States, Germany, and the Netherlands how serious of a problem sexual harassment is in the United States and the respective other country (Germany, the Netherlands), with judgment order counter-balanced. We reminded half of the participants of specific cases of sexual harassment in the United States (Bill Cosby, Donald Trump, Harvey Weinstein) through a preceding question. These manipulations result in a 2 (case accessibility: low vs. high) × 2 (judgment order: issue severity judgment for the United States first vs. issue severity judgment for Germany or Netherlands first) × 3 (country of data collection: United States, Germany, Netherlands)– factorial between-participants design. All questionnaires, data sets, and scripts are publicly available at the links provided in the [online supporting information](#) and data accessibility statement.

## **Method**

### *Participants*

Our study includes adult participants from the United States ( $N=2,843$ ), Germany ( $N=3,770$ ), and the Netherlands ( $N=2,357$ ), resulting in an overall  $N=8,970$ . Data were collected from February to June 2019 under the auspices of the Open-Probability-Based Panel Alliance (OPPA), a collaboration of four probability-based representative Internet panels: GESIS in Germany, LISS in the Netherlands, UAS in the United States, and KAMOS in South Korea. Unfortunately, the South Korean implementation of the experiment included section headings and differences in translation that impaired comparability. We therefore limit this report to the Dutch, German, and U.S. samples.

All OPPA panels developed random probabilistic samples by inviting a probability sample of households within the respective country to participate in the panel. Households without computer or Internet access received the necessary equipment from the survey institute. Panel households are invited via email to participate in surveys. The overall sample was 54.1% female and ranged in age from 16 to 101 years ( $M_{\text{age}}=51.98$  years). Participants represented a broad range of political ideologies and education levels. Mean political ideology on a 1 (*extremely liberal*) to 10 (*extremely conservative*) scale was  $M=6.33$  in the United States,  $M=4.72$  in Germany, and  $M=5.13$  in the Netherlands. [Tables S1](#) and [S2](#) in the online supporting information show within-country breakdowns of participant age, gender, political ideology, and education levels. Additional information about panel recruitment, response rate, and panel composition is available at the links provided in the [online supporting information](#).

### Materials

To manipulate the accessibility of prominent cases, we asked all participants the following case question: “In the United States, a number of women have recently accused prominent media personalities and politicians of sexual harassment or sexual assault. Examples include the actor Bill Cosby, the movie producer Harvey Weinstein, and President Donald Trump. Have you heard of any of these cases?” with a (Yes/No) response choice. Participants who answered “Yes” were then asked, “Which case have you heard about?” and offered (Yes/No) response choices for Bill Cosby, Harvey Weinstein, and Donald Trump.

We assessed participants’ evaluations of the seriousness of the sexual harassment issue in a country with the question, “How serious of a problem do you think workplace sexual harassment is in [country]?” Respondents evaluated the problem on a 0 (*not at all serious*) to 7 (*extremely serious*) rating scale. Note that this judgment pertains to the severity of sexual harassment as a social problem within a country, not to the severity of any specific case of sexual harassment.

### Procedure

Within each country, participants were randomly assigned to the conditions of a 2 (accessibility: low vs. high)  $\times$  2 (judgment order: issue severity judgment for U.S. first vs. issue severity judgment for European country first) factorial between-participants design. All participants answered the same questions, but in different orders, as specified by the design. For example, U.S. participants assigned to the high accessibility/U.S.-first condition were first asked whether they had heard of the Cosby, Trump, and Weinstein cases; next evaluated issue severity in the United States; and finally evaluated issue severity in one of the other countries (randomly assigned). Dutch participants assigned to the low accessibility/European-country-first condition were first asked to evaluate issue severity in the Netherlands; they then evaluated issue severity in the United States and were finally asked whether they had heard about the Cosby, Trump, and Weinstein cases.

Demographic information about each participant was available as part of the general panel data, including age, gender, household income, political orientation, and highest level of education received. The full survey questionnaires and data from all countries are open access as described in the [online supporting information](#) and data accessibility statement.

### Analyses

We test our predictions with analyses of variance as detailed in the results section using SPSS Version 27 (IBM Corp., 2020). Because our primary interest is in theory testing, all analyses of the experimental effects are based on the unweighted samples. This is consistent with best-practice recommendations that call for the use of sample weights when estimating population parameters (e.g., “Do Dutch women differ from American women in their evaluations of sexual harassment?”), but not when testing treatment effects in randomized experiments (Franco et al., 2017; Miratrix et al., 2018). Given our large sample sizes, we use a significance level of  $p = .001$  for all analyses.



## Results

### Case Knowledge

In all countries, a large majority of participants had heard of all three cases. Table 1 shows a detailed breakdown. Using the mean number of cases heard of as a knowledge measure, knowledge was highest in the United States ( $M_{U.S.}=2.65$ , 95% CI [2.62, 2.68]), followed by the Netherlands ( $M_{Netherlands}=2.49$ , 95% CI [2.46, 2.53]) and Germany ( $M_{Germany}=2.37$ , 95% CI [2.33, 2.40]),  $F(2, 8883)=81.87$ ,  $p<.001$ . Men reported having heard of marginally more cases than women ( $M_{men}=2.56$  vs.  $M_{women}=2.43$ ,  $t(8883)=6.82$ ,  $p<.001$ ), and this pattern did not differ across sample countries.

### Seriousness of Workplace Sexual Harassment in the United States

We predicted (H1) that thinking about the Cosby, Trump, and Weinstein cases will increase participants' evaluations of the seriousness of sexual harassment in the United States. As shown in Figure 1 and Table 2, this was the case. Across all countries, participants considered sexual harassment a more serious problem in the United States when the case question preceded ( $M=5.02$ , 95% CI [4.97, 5.07]) rather than followed the issue evaluation ( $M=4.57$ , 95% CI [4.52, 4.61]),  $F(1, 8864)=172.113$ ,  $p<.001$ ,  $partial\ eta^2=.019$ , for the main effect. This assimilation effect was reliable in all three national samples (Table 2), supporting Hypothesis 1a and 1b.

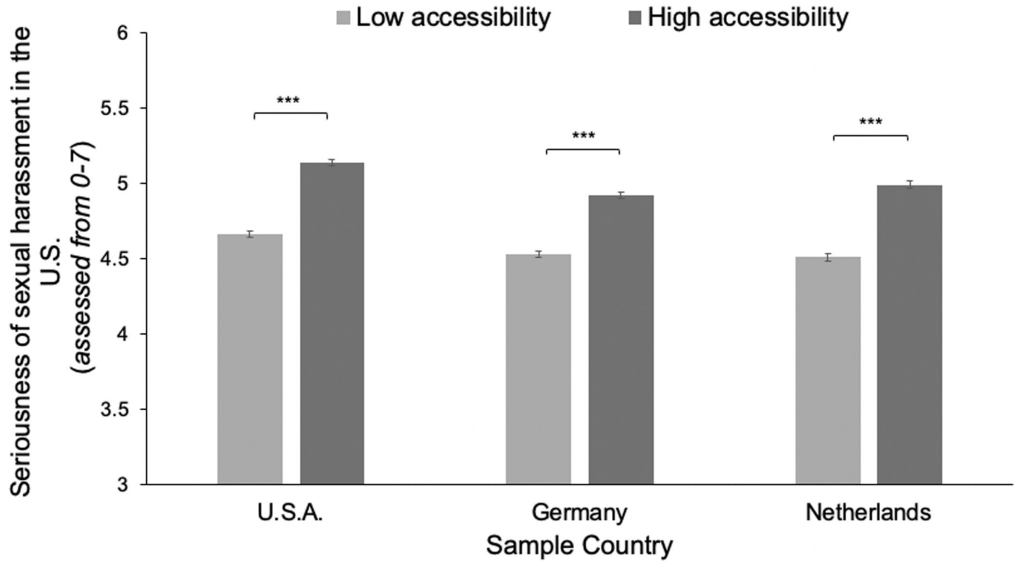
A main effect of sample country,  $F(2, 8864)=11.12$ ,  $p<.001$ ,  $partial\ eta^2=.003$ , indicated that the U.S. participants evaluated harassment in the United States as somewhat more serious ( $M=4.90$ , 95% CI [4.85, 4.96]) than did the German ( $M=4.72$ , 95% CI [4.67, 4.78]) and Dutch ( $M=4.75$ , 95% CI [4.69, 4.81]) participants.

The observed main effect of case accessibility was qualified by a significant interaction between case accessibility and judgment order,  $F(1, 8864)=15.28$ ,  $p<.001$ ,  $partial\ eta^2=.002$ . When the case question preceded issue evaluation, participants evaluated sexual harassment in the United States as a more serious issue when they judged the United States first ( $M=5.10$ , 95% CI [5.03, 5.17]) than when they judged a European country first ( $M=4.94$ , 95% CI [4.87, 5.00]). However, when the case question followed issue evaluation (i.e., under conditions of low case accessibility), participants evaluated sexual harassment in the United States as a more serious issue when they judged a European country first ( $M=4.62$ , 95% CI [4.55, 4.69]), compared to when they judged the United States first ( $M=4.52$ , 95% CI [4.45, 4.58]). Consistent with this interaction, no main effect of judgment order emerged,  $F(1, 8864)=0.925$ ,  $p=.34$ ,  $partial\ eta^2<.001$ .

Unrelated to our theoretical predictions and not involving our accessibility manipulation, we found a significant interaction between judgment order and sample country,  $F(2, 8864)=3.617$ ,  $p=.03$ ,  $partial\ eta^2=.001$ . Participants in the United States and the Netherlands considered

**Table 1.** Number of Exemplar Cases Participants Reported Having Heard of, by Sample Country

Number of Cases Heard	United States	Netherlands	Germany
0	5.9%	6.7%	9.5%
1	2.1%	4.8%	7.5%
2	12.9%	21.0%	20.1%
3	79.0%	67.5%	62.9%



**Figure 1.** Seriousness of sexual harassment in the United States, by experimental condition and sample country. Error bars represent standard errors. Seriousness of sexual harassment was assessed from 0 (*not at all serious*) to 7 (*extremely serious*). The data shown pool over judgment order. \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

**Table 2.** Seriousness of Sexual Harassment in the United States, by Experimental Condition and Sample Country

Sample Country	Judgment Order			
	United States Judged First		European Country Judged First	
	Case Accessibility		Case Accessibility	
	Low	High	Low	High
United States				
<i>M</i>	4.71	5.22	4.62	5.07
<i>SD</i>	1.76	1.70	1.67	1.62
Netherlands				
<i>M</i>	4.42	5.14	4.60	4.84
<i>SD</i>	1.38	1.30	1.38	1.33
Germany				
<i>M</i>	4.42	4.95	4.63	4.90
<i>SD</i>	1.66	1.63	1.66	1.69

*Note:* Seriousness of sexual harassment was assessed using the question “How serious of a problem do you think workplace sexual harassment in the United States?” on a scale from 0 (*not at all serious*) to 7 (*extremely serious*).

sexual harassment in the United States a more serious problem when they evaluated the United States first ( $M_{U.S.} = 4.96$ , 95% CI [4.88, 5.05];  $M_{Netherlands} = 4.78$ , 95% CI [4.69, 4.87]) than when they evaluated a European country first ( $M_{U.S.} = 4.84$ , 95% CI [4.76, 4.93];  $M_{Netherlands} = 4.72$ , 95% CI [4.63, 4.81]), whereas German participants showed the opposite pattern ( $M_{Germany} = 4.68$  [4.61, 4.76] vs. 4.76 [4.69, 4.84]). However, this influence of judgment order did not interact with the effect of case accessibility.

In sum, thinking about prominent cases of sexual harassment increased the impression that workplace sexual harassment is a serious issue in the country of the perpetrators. This assimilation effect was independent of the country of the respondent.

### *Evaluations of Sexual Harassment in Germany and the Netherlands*

To test evaluations of the seriousness of sexual harassment in European countries, we ran 2 (accessibility)  $\times$  2 (judgment order)  $\times$  2 (sample country) ANOVAs separately for Germany and for the Netherlands. Table 3 shows the marginal means for each country and condition.

If people consider sexual harassment a global gender issue, calling the U.S. cases to mind should increase evaluations of the seriousness of the issue across national borders, resulting in an overall assimilation effect (as predicted in H2). On the other hand, if people consider sexual harassment a country-specific problem, they may use their representation of the United States as a standard to which they compare the situation in other countries. If so, sexual harassment should seem a less serious issue in Germany and the Netherlands when the U.S. cases were called to mind (as predicted in H3). This may be more likely when the situation

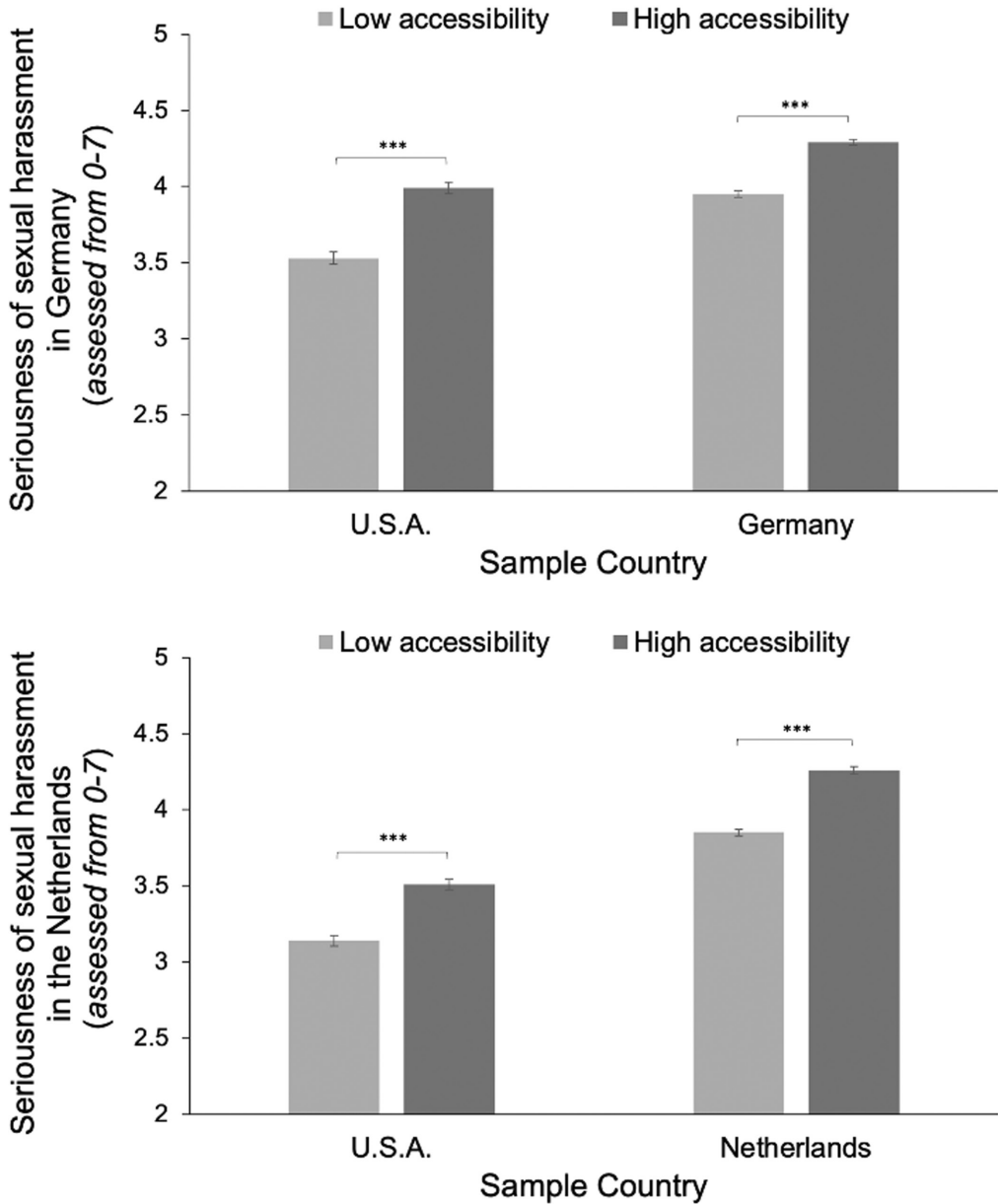
**Table 3.** Seriousness of Sexual Harassment in Germany and the Netherlands, by Experimental Condition and Sample Country

Germany				
Sample Country	Judgment Order			
	United States Judged First		Germany Judged First	
	Case Accessibility		Case Accessibility	
	Low	High	Low	High
United States				
<i>M</i>	3.70	3.98	3.37	3.99
<i>SD</i>	1.74	1.81	1.57	1.78
Germany				
<i>M</i>	3.96	4.21	3.94	4.37
<i>SD</i>	1.69	1.66	1.82	1.75
Netherlands				
Sample Country	Judgment Order			
	United States Judged First		Netherlands Judged First	
	Case Accessibility		Case Accessibility	
	Low	High	Low	High
United States				
<i>M</i>	3.15	3.49	3.12	3.53
<i>SD</i>	1.71	1.91	1.72	1.87
Netherlands				
<i>M</i>	3.84	4.36	3.85	4.17
<i>SD</i>	1.33	1.30	1.43	1.31

*Note:* Seriousness of sexual harassment was assessed using the question “How serious of a problem do you think workplace sexual harassment in [Germany/the Netherlands]?” on a scale from 0 (*not at all serious*) to 7 (*extremely serious*).

in the United States is evaluated explicitly before questions about another country are asked (as predicted in H4).

Our results consistently support the assumption that people think of sexual harassment as a global gender issue. As shown in Table 3 and Figure 2, participants from the United States and Germany believed that sexual harassment is a more serious problem in Germany



**Figure 2.** Seriousness of sexual harassment in Germany and the Netherlands, by experimental condition and sample country. Error bars represent standard errors. Seriousness of sexual harassment was assessed from 0 (*not at all serious*) to 7 (*extremely serious*). The data shown pool over judgment order. \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

when a preceding question increased the accessibility of prominent U.S. cases, as reflected in a main effect of accessibility,  $F(1, 4632) = 38.35, p < .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .008$ . Similarly, participants from the United States and the Netherlands evaluated sexual harassment in the Netherlands as a more serious problem when cases in the United States were highly accessible, as reflected in a main effect of accessibility,  $F(1, 3296) = 47.81, p < .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .014$ .

These assimilation effects provide strong support for Hypothesis 2a and 2b and are incompatible with the contrast effects predicted by Hypotheses 3 and 4, which were derived from the assumption that issue evaluations pertaining to one country may serve as a standard of comparison for issue evaluations pertaining to another country. The obtained assimilation effects indicate that this was not the case. Accordingly, the order in which countries were evaluated also exerted no influence (Netherlands:  $F(1, 3296) = 0.59, p = .44, \text{partial } \eta^2 < .001$ , for the main effect and  $F(1, 3296) = .31, p = .58, \text{partial } \eta^2 < .001$ , for the interaction of order and accessibility; Germany:  $F(1, 4632) = 0.58, p = .45, \text{partial } \eta^2 < .001$ , for the main effect, and  $F(1, 4632) = 4.12, p = .04, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .001$ , for the interaction of order and accessibility).

### Gender Differences

Consistent with decades of public opinion research, we observed a reliable gender difference across all samples and all country evaluations. As predicted (H5), women considered sexual harassment a more serious problem than men (Table 4). More importantly, gender did not moderate the impact of the accessibility manipulation on participants' evaluation of the issue in any of the countries.

### Additional Exploratory Analyses

We explored whether participants' age and political orientation influenced their evaluations of sexual harassment and whether age or political orientation moderated the accessibility effect of our manipulation. Participants' age did not moderate the accessibility effect of the case question in any country (all  $p$ 's  $> .06$ ). It also did not consistently predict evaluations of the seriousness of sexual harassment in the United States ( $p = .50$ ) or Germany ( $p = .72$ ). However, in the Netherlands, older participants considered sexual harassment a slightly more serious problem than younger participants, as reflected in a main effect of age,  $F(1, 3299) = 18.23, p < .001$ .

In all sample countries, liberal participants considered sexual harassment a more serious problem than conservative participants as evidenced by main effects of political orientation in the United States ( $F(1, 2247) = 31.15, p < .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .014$ ), Germany ( $F(1, 3448) = 36.20, p < .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .01$ ), and the Netherlands ( $F(1, 1893) = 18.85, p < .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .01$ ).

**Table 4.** Gender Differences in Evaluations of Sexual Harassment in the United States, Germany, and the Netherlands

	United States		Germany		Netherlands	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
<i>M</i>	4.54	5.00	3.80	4.28	3.73	3.93
<i>SD</i>	1.67	1.53	1.78	1.68	1.55	1.53

However, political orientation did not moderate the effect of case accessibility in any sample country (all  $p$ 's > .20).

Taken together, these results show that demographic factors including age, gender, and political orientation may impact how serious of a problem people consider sexual harassment to be. However, thinking about cases of sexual harassment increases the judged severity of the issue independent of demographic differences.

## Discussion

Our survey experiments with representative samples in the United States, Germany, and the Netherlands show that attention-grabbing events in one country can influence the public's evaluations of social issues across national borders. Not surprisingly, reminding participants of sexual harassment cases involving Bill Cosby, Donald Trump, and Harvey Weinstein increased participants' assessment that sexual harassment is a serious problem in the United States, where the transgressions occurred. This assimilation effect on evaluations of issue severity in the United States was observed in all sample countries. It reflects the general principle that highly accessible exemplars (here, specific instances of harassment) are included in the temporary mental representation formed of the superordinate category (here, the social issue of sexual harassment in the United States), which increases judged issue severity when the instances are extreme (Bless & Schwarz, 2010; Schwarz & Bless, 1992a). The size of this effect was more pronounced for U.S. participants than for European participants, which may reflect that the U.S. participants had more vivid and detailed knowledge about the cases.

We further tested how thinking about extreme cases of sexual harassment in the United States influences how residents of other countries evaluate the severity of the issue in their own country. On the one hand, people who think about Cosby, Trump, and Weinstein and conclude that the problem is severe in the United States may subsequently use this assessment as a standard of comparison against which sexual harassment in their own country seems less severe. This outcome would be consistent with the general finding that sequential evaluations of distinct lateral targets (here, distinct countries) foster contrast effects (for a review, see Bless & Schwarz, 2010). Such a country-based comparison should be particularly likely when the evaluation of sexual harassment in the United States precedes the evaluation of sexual harassment in one's own country, thus rendering the mental construal of harassment in the United States and the associated evaluation highly accessible. We did not observe this. Instead, our results are consistent with competing predictions that assume that the public thinks about sexual harassment as a global gender issue. From this perspective, any instance of sexual harassment can be included in the representation formed of the issue, independent of the country in which the specific instance occurred and the country that is being evaluated. This rationale predicts that increased exemplar accessibility will result in assimilation effects across countries. Our results are consistent with this prediction—thinking about Cosby, Trump, and Weinstein increased Dutch and German participants' evaluations of the severity of the issue in their own country. It also increased American participants' evaluation that these European countries have a serious harassment problem. This pervasive assimilation effect is consistent with the assumption that the #MeToo movement was successful in framing sexual harassment as a global gender issue, which can render any case, in any country, relevant to the issue across countries.

We note, however, that this interpretation requires a caveat. As discussed in our conceptual analysis, thinking about a specific case of sexual harassment always renders case-specific information *and* general-issue information accessible, paralleling the differences

between exemplar priming and concept priming (Bless & Schwarz, 2010; Moskowitz & Skurnik, 1999; Sherman et al., 1989). Whereas general-issue information bears on a broad range of issue instantiations, case-specific information can have differential implications for issue instantiations. In the present study, information about extreme U.S. cases of sexual harassment can serve as a standard of comparison for evaluations of sexual harassment in other countries. Given that we did not observe such contrast effects, one may wonder whether the obtained assimilation effects merely reflect an influence of general-issue information that may have been brought to mind by the case questions. Our data do not allow us to evaluate this possibility because our manipulations did not include a mere “concept prime,” that is, a general question about sexual harassment without case information. Given this ambiguity, we *can* conclude that thinking about specific cases of sexual harassment in one country increases evaluations of issue severity across countries, but we *cannot* rule out that this assimilation effect is, at least in part, driven by general-issue information that the cases brought to mind rather than case-specific information.

Finally, women in all three countries considered sexual harassment a more serious problem than men did, consistent with the extant public opinion literature (Holman & Kalmoe, 2021). More important, the effects of our manipulation did not vary by gender—both men and women’s evaluations of sexual harassment increased to a similar extent when a preceding question brought prominent examples of harassment to mind. Similarly, more liberal participants in all countries considered sexual harassment a more serious problem than conservatives did, but the effects of our manipulation did not vary by political orientation.

#### *Limitations and Future Directions*

As noted above, case questions increase the accessibility of case-specific as well as general-issue information, just as exemplar primes increase the accessibility of the exemplar and of the category or concept it exemplifies. Our data do not allow us to separate the relative contribution of these sources of information. Moreover, our manipulations brought three extreme cases to mind, and it remains unknown whether thinking about a single extreme case or less extreme cases would have similar effects. Future research can address these issues by comparing the relative impact of general-issue questions (concept primes) and case questions (exemplar primes) and by varying the number and extremity of the cases used. In addition, future work can test the robustness of the present results by assessing the impact of individual events on evaluations of issue severity across countries in other content domains.

We also note that all countries included in the present study were Western, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic, satisfying the criteria of the WEIRD acronym (Henrich et al., 2010). Whether the same robust assimilation effects would be observed for countries with more salient differences is a promising issue for future research. Our initial plans included a comparison with South Korea, an educated, rich, industrialized, and democratic country that is non-Western, but differences in translation and implementation rendered comparisons with the South Korean sample ambiguous. Future research may fruitfully address the limits of cross-country influences by including a more diverse sample of countries. Moreover, beliefs about sexual harassment and sexual violence differ across cultures (Costin & Schwarz, 1987; Merkin, 2008) and more pronounced differences in these beliefs may moderate the effects observed in the present samples.

Prior research has also found that people are more likely to categorize a behavior as sexual harassment when the harasser is higher in power than the victim (Bursik, 1992; Bursik &

Gefter, 2011; Magley & Shupe, 2005). A distinct power differential is salient in the Cosby, Trump, and Weinstein cases, which presumably made them unambiguous exemplars that were compatible with most participants' concept of sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is also known to impact persons of different races, genders, and sexualities differently and is perceived differently for different victims (Goh et al., 2021; Patil & Purkayastha, 2015). Future research could fruitfully explore if these variables moderate the impact of case information on general-issue evaluations within and across countries.

### *Implications for Public Opinion Research*

Our findings highlight the context-sensitive nature of public opinion: A single preceding question was sufficient to shift respondents' evaluations, resulting in reliable differences on a key public opinion measure, namely the perceived severity of a social issue. From the perspective of traditional public opinion theorizing, such question-order effects exemplify measurement error (Cantril, 1944; Schuman & Presser, 1981); from the perspective of social and cognitive psychology, they provide an opportunity to test the causal influence of a variable by varying its accessibility at the time of evaluation (Schwarz, 1987; Schwarz & Strack, 1981; Willard et al., 2016; Wyer, 2008). Both perspectives are correct. Even though our samples were representative of their respective national populations, the evaluations that participants provided after thinking about the Cosby, Trump, and Weinstein cases are not representative of the population, whose attention was not directed to these cases. Only the evaluations of participants who evaluated issue severity before being exposed to the case question allow for an estimate of population parameters. However, the experimental question-order manipulation provides what mere measurement cannot: evidence that individual cases can have a causal influence on issue evaluation within and across countries.

Bringing individual cases of sexual harassment to mind exerted an influence despite the broad media coverage that the cases had already received. In fact, more than 90% of the participants in each country reported that they were familiar with at least one of them. Presumably, the evaluations of some of the participants assigned to our low accessibility conditions were influenced by this media coverage. However, rendering this knowledge more accessible through a preceding question increased its impact. As predicted by social cognition theorizing (Higgins, 1996; Schwarz, 2007; Wyer, 2008), public knowledge exerts little influence when it does not come to mind, highlighting the malleability of public opinion (Schwarz, 2007; Sudman et al., 1996).

In sum, individual exemplars of a social issue can influence general-issue evaluations within and across countries. While extreme examples of social problems in one country may sometimes leave citizens of other countries with the welcome impression that things are better "at home" (a contrast effect), they can also increase issue awareness and perceived issue severity across countries (an assimilation effect). Mental construal models (Bless & Schwarz, 2010) predict that the former is observed when the case information is used in forming a country-specific representation of the issue, which invites between-country comparisons, whereas the latter is observed when the information brought to mind by the case is used in forming a general-issue representation. From this perspective, our results can be interpreted as testimony to the #MeToo movement's success in establishing sexual harassment as a global issue of gender discrimination, which facilitates issue awareness across national borders and allows cases that are clearly localized in one country to raise assessments of issue severity in other countries.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We gratefully acknowledge the generous support of the Open-Probability-Based Panel Alliance (OPPA), which provided the opportunity for data collection in the UAS, LISS, and GESIS panels. We thank Joris Mulder of Center data for the compilation of the harmonized data set used in our analyses, Andrew Gorenz for help with the analyses, and the members of the SEEP lab at the University of Southern California for stimulating discussions. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Pragya Arya or Norbert Schwarz, Department of Psychology, University of Southern California, 3620 McClintock Ave, Los Angeles, CA 90089, USA. E-mail: [pragya.arya@usc.edu](mailto:pragya.arya@usc.edu); [norbert.schwarz@usc.edu](mailto:norbert.schwarz@usc.edu)

## REFERENCES

- Anderson, M., & Toor, S. (2018, October 11). *How social media users have discussed sexual harassment since #MeToo went viral*. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/10/11/how-social-media-users-have-discussed-sexual-harassment-since-metoo-went-viral/>
- Berdahl, J. L. (2007). Harassment based on sex: Protecting social status in the context of gender hierarchy. *The Academy of Management Review*, 32(2), 641–658. <https://doi.org/10.2307/20159319>
- Bless, H., Igou, E. R., Schwarz, N., & Wänke, M. (2000). Reducing context effects by adding context information: The direction and size of context effects in political evaluation. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 26, 1036–1045.
- Bless, H., & Schwarz, N. (1998). Context effects in political evaluation: Assimilation and contrast as a function of categorization processes. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 28, 159–172.
- Bless, H., & Schwarz, N. (2010). Mental construal and the emergence of assimilation and contrast effects: The inclusion/exclusion model. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 65, 319–373.
- Bless, H., Schwarz, N., & Wänke, M. (2003). The size of context effects in social evaluation. In J. P. Forgas, K. D. Williams, & W. von Hippel (Eds.), *Social evaluations: Implicit and explicit processes* (pp. 180–197). Cambridge University Press.
- Boomgaarden, H. G., & de Vreese, C. H. (2007). Dramatic real-world events and public opinion dynamics: Media coverage and its impact on public reactions to an assassination. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 19(3), 354–366.
- Boudreau, C., MacKenzie, S. A., & Simmons, D. J. (2022). Police violence and public opinion after George Floyd: How the Black Lives Matter movement and endorsements affect support for reforms. *Political Research Quarterly*, 75(2), 497–511. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10659129221081007>
- Bursik, K. (1992). Perceptions of sexual harassment in an academic context. *Sex Roles*, 27(7), 401–412.
- Bursik, K., & Gefter, J. (2011). Still stable after all these years: Perceptions of sexual harassment in academic contexts. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 151(3), 331–349. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224541003628081>
- Cantril, H. (1944). *Gauging public opinion*. Princeton University Press.
- Chopik, W. J., O'Brien, E., Konrath, S. H., & Schwarz, N. (2015). MLK Day and racial attitudes: Liking the group more but its members less. *Political Psychology*, 36, 559–567.
- Cortina, L. M., & Areguin, M. A. (2021). Putting people down and pushing them out: Sexual harassment in the workplace. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 8(1), 285–309. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-012420-055606>
- Costin, F., & Schwarz, N. (1987). Beliefs about rape and women's social roles: A four nations study. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 2, 46–56.
- De Boer, C., & Catsburg, I. (1988). A report: The impact of nuclear accidents on attitudes towards nuclear energy. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 52, 254–261.
- Fitzgerald, L. F., & Cortina, L. M. (2018). Sexual harassment in work organizations: A view from the twenty-first century. In C. B. Travis, J. W. White, A. Rutherford, W. S. Williams, S. L. Cook, & K. F. Wyche (Eds.), *APA handbook of the psychology of women: Perspectives on women's private and public lives* (pp. 215–234). American Psychological Association.

- Fitzgerald, L. F., Gelfand, M. J., & Drasgow, F. (1995). Measuring sexual harassment: Theoretical and psychometric advances. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology, 17*(4), 425–445. [https://doi.org/10.1207/s15324834basp1704\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1207/s15324834basp1704_2)
- Fitzgerald, L. F., Shullman, S. L., Bailey, N., Richards, M., Swecker, J., Gold, Y., Ormerod, M., & Weitzman, L. (1988). The incidence and dimensions of sexual harassment in academia and the workplace. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 32*(2), 152–175. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0001-8791\(88\)90012-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/0001-8791(88)90012-7)
- Franco, A., Malhotra, N., Simonovits, G., & Zigerell, L. J. (2017). Developing standards for post-hoc weighting in population-based survey experiments. *Journal of Experimental Political Science, 4*(2), 161–172.
- Goh, J., Bandt-Law, B., Cheek, N., Sinclair, S., & Kaiser, C. (2021). Narrow prototypes and neglected victims: Understanding perceptions of sexual harassment. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 122*, 873–893. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pspi0000260>
- Henrich, J., Heine, S. J., & Norenzayan, A. (2010). Most people are not WEIRD. *Nature, 466*(7302), 29. <https://doi.org/10.1038/466029a>
- Higgins, E. T. (1996). Knowledge activation: Accessibility, applicability, and salience. In E. T. Higgins & A. Kruglanski (Eds.), *Social psychology: Handbook of basic principles* (pp. 133–168). Guilford Press.
- Hofstetter, C. R. (1969). Political disengagement and the death of Martin Luther King. *The Public Opinion Quarterly, 33*(2), 174–179.
- Holland, K. J., & Cortina, L. M. (2013). When sexism and feminism collide: The sexual harassment of feminist working women. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 37*(2), 192–208. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0361684313482873>
- Holman, M. R., & Kalmoe, N. P. (2021). The polls—trends: Sexual harassment. *Public Opinion Quarterly, 85*(2), 706–718.
- Huddy, L., Khatib, N., & Capelos, T. (2002). Trends: Reactions to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. *The Public Opinion Quarterly, 66*(3), 418–450.
- IBM Corp. (2020). *IBM SPSS Statistics for Macintosh Version 27.0*. IBM Corp. [Computer software].
- Ilies, R., Hauserman, N., Schwochau, S., & Stibal, J. (2003). Reported incidence rates of work-related sexual harassment in the United States: Using meta-analysis to explain reported rate disparities. *Personnel Psychology, 56*(3), 607–631. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6570.2003.tb00752.x>
- Iyengar, S. (1990). The accessibility bias in politics: Television news and public opinion. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research, 2*(1), 1–15.
- Lonsway, K. A., Paynich, R., & Hall, J. N. (2013). Sexual harassment in law enforcement: Incidence, impact, and perception. *Police Quarterly, 16*(2), 177–210. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1098611113475630>
- Magley, V. J., & Shupe, E. I. (2005). Self-labeling sexual harassment. *Sex Roles, 53*(3–4), 173–189. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-005-5677-3>
- Manikonda, L., Beigi, G., Liu, H., & Kambhampati, S. (2018). Twitter for sparking a movement, reddit for sharing the moment: #MeToo through the lens of social media. *ArXiv:1803.08022 [Cs]*. <http://arxiv.org/abs/1803.08022>
- Mendes, K., Ringrose, J., & Keller, J. (2018). #MeToo and the promise and pitfalls of challenging rape culture through digital feminist activism. *European Journal of Women's Studies, 25*(2), 236–246. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1350506818765318>
- Merkin, R. S. (2008). Cross-cultural differences in perceiving sexual harassment: Demographic incidence rates of sexual harassment/sexual aggression in Latin America. *North American Journal of Psychology, 10*(2), 277–290.
- Miratrix, L. W., Sekhon, J. S., Theodoridis, A. G., & Campos, L. F. (2018). Worth weighting? How to think about and use weights in survey experiments. *Political Analysis, 26*(3), 275–291.
- Moskowitz, G. B., & Skurnik, I. W. (1999). Contrast effects as determined by the type of prime: Trait versus exemplar primes initiate processing strategies that differ in how accessible constructs are used. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 76*(6), 911–927.
- Noelle-Neumann, E. (2002). Terror in America: Assessments of the attacks and their impact in Germany. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research, 14*(1), 93–98. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ijpor/14.1.93>
- Patil, V., & Purkayastha, B. (2015). Sexual violence, race and media (in)visibility: Intersectional complexities in a transnational frame. *Societies, 5*(3), 598–617. <https://doi.org/10.3390/soc5030598>
- Rotundo, M., Nguyen, D.-H., & Sackett, P. R. (2001). A meta-analytic review of gender differences in perceptions of sexual harassment. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 86*(5), 914–922. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.86.5.914>
- Schuman, H., & Presser, S. (1981). *Questions and answers in attitude surveys*. Academic Press.

- Schwarz, N. (1987). Geschlechtsrollenorientierung und die Einstellung zu Gewalt gegen Frauen: Informationsaktivierung als Alternative zu ex post facto—Versuchsplänen. [Gender role orientation and attitudes toward violence against women: Priming procedures as an alternative to ex post facto—designs.]. *Psychologische Rundschau*, *38*, 145–154.
- Schwarz, N. (2007). Attitude construction: Evaluation in context. *Social Cognition*, *25*, 638–656.
- Schwarz, N., & Bless, H. (1992a). Constructing reality and its alternatives: Assimilation and contrast effects in social evaluation. In L. L. Martin & A. Tesser (Eds.), *The construction of social evaluation* (pp. 217–245). Erlbaum.
- Schwarz, N., & Bless, H. (1992b). Scandals and the public's trust in politicians: Assimilation and contrast effects. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *18*, 574–579.
- Schwarz, N., & Strack, F. (1981). Manipulating salience: Causal assessment in natural settings. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *7*(4), 554–558.
- Schwarz, N., & Strack, F. (1991). Context effects in attitude surveys: Applying cognitive theory to social research. *European Review of Social Psychology*, *2*, 31–50.
- Sherman, S. J., Judd, C. M., & Park, B. (1989). Social cognition. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *40*(1), 281–326.
- Sicinski, A. (1969). Dallas and Warsaw: The impact of a major national political event on public opinion abroad. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, *33*, 190–196.
- Sudman, S., Bradburn, N., & Schwarz, N. (1996). *Thinking about answers: The application of cognitive processes to survey methodology*. Jossey-Bass.
- van der Linden, S., & Panagopoulos, C. (2018). The O'Reilly factor: An ideological bias in evaluations about sexual harassment. *Personality and Individual Differences*, *139*, 198–201. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2018.11.022>
- Wänke, M., Bless, H., & Igou, E. R. (2001). Next to a star: Paling, shining, or both? Turning inter-exemplar contrast into inter-exemplar assimilation. *Personality and Social Psychology*, *27*, 14–29.
- Willard, A. K., Shariff, A. F., & Norenzayan, A. (2016). Religious priming as a research tool for studying religion: Evidentiary value, current issues, and future directions. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, *12*, 71–75.
- Women's Media Center. (2018, October 5). *Media and #MeToo: How a movement affected press coverage of sexual assault*. <https://womensmediacenter.com/reports/media-and-metoo-how-a-movement-affected-press-coverage-of-sexual-assault>
- Wyer, R. S. (2008). The role of knowledge accessibility in cognition and behavior. In C. P. Haugtvedt, P. M. Herr, & F. R. Kardes (Eds.), *Handbook of consumer psychology* (pp. 45–90). Routledge.

### Supporting Information

Additional supporting information may be found in the online version of this article at the publisher's web site:

Data Accessibility and Open Materials

## **Data Accessibility Statement**

All materials and data are open access as detailed in the OSF repository for this article: [https://osf.io/62nr4/?view\\_only=ba2ae71ff3e14f8c9cfd0c17a7eb1559](https://osf.io/62nr4/?view_only=ba2ae71ff3e14f8c9cfd0c17a7eb1559). The repository includes the English, Dutch, and German versions of our experimental questions along with a link to the open-access data file. Consistent with the open-access policies of the OPPA panel institutes, the harmonized data file used for the present analyses is located at the Dutch CenterData institute, and its use requires user-registration. All OPPA survey panels provide open access to their complete questionnaires, data sets, and panel information at their own archival sites, which allows for additional analyses beyond the variables used in this article. The OSF repository also provides the data identifiers needed to retrieve the full data sets of the UAS panel conducted by the Center for Economic and Social Research at the University of Southern California, Los Angeles, USA, the GESIS panel conducted by GESIS, Mannheim, Germany, and the LISS panel conducted by CenterData, Tilburg, The Netherlands.