

**Apologizing on Behalf of Your Group - How Empathy and Group-Based Guilt Relate to
the Intention to Apologize**

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Abstract

81% of women in America experience some form of sexual harassment. To facilitate intergroup reconciliation we ask, what could motivate members of the perpetrator group to apologize to victims? Empathy through perspective taking and group-based guilt, as prosocial emotions, have been linked to facilitate conciliative actions such as apologies in intergroup conflict situations. This study investigates the question, whether empathy with female victims of sexual harassment predicts the intention to apologize in male ingroup members, and if feelings of group-based guilt play a role in this. With this study, we replicated the work by Febriana (2022) in a different intergroup context. In an experimental survey we manipulated male American participants ($N = 312$) to read four personal stories of victims sharing their experience in either an empathic or objective manner. An insignificant effect of the manipulation was found. Without establishing causality, measured empathy was positively linked to the intention to apologize, partially mediated by group-based guilt. So, in this context, when male ingroup members empathized more with the female victims of sexual harassment, they were more likely to show an intention to apologize and reported higher feelings of group-based guilt. This study replicated the positive relations between empathy, group-based guilt, and intention to apologize, previously found in several interpersonal and intergroup studies; it adds to the body of research on intergroup relations.

Keywords: empathy; group-based guilt; intention to apologize; intergroup conflict

Apologizing on Behalf of Your Group - How Empathy and Group-Based Guilt Relate to the Intention to Apologize

Sexual harassment is a major concern for women worldwide. 30% of women report to have been a victim of sexual violence (WHO, 2021). In some areas, such as Mexico, the statistics can range up to 43% (Worldwide Independent Network of Market Research (WIN), 2018). The number of non-reported assault is expected to be even higher.¹ Numbers as high as these illustrate that it is a problem of groups, even though assault typically occurs on the interpersonal level. Despite the occurrence of harassment, apologies from the perpetrator group are a rarity, even though apologies are known to have positive, conciliative effects in situations of crisis and dispute (e.g., Tavuchis, 1991). So why are they not offered as often? What could motivate perpetrator groups to apologize to victim groups? We believe that empathy could play a role here. That is, motivation to apologize might be stimulated by intentionally directing the focus to the feelings of the victims of assault, in other words, make them empathize with the victims of actions conducted by their ingroup.

So why would stimulating empathy have such a positive effect? We believe that focusing on the feelings of the victim outgroup should make people aware of what members of their group have done, which is likely to make them feel guilty. These elicited feelings of guilt based on the actions of ingroup members could then increase the intention to apologize. Previous research by Febriana (2022) found some evidence for this idea, and the goal of the current research is to replicate these findings in a different intergroup context. That is, in the current research we examine the relation between empathy, guilt, and intention to apologize in the context of sexual harassment of women. This leads to the research question for this paper,

¹ We acknowledge that men can be subject of sexual harassment as well. Nonetheless, only 4% of all men report sexual harassment (WIN, 2018), which is substantially less compared to the statistics of women reporting sexual harassment. Thus, in this study we will only focus on sexual misconduct reported by women who were victim of sexual harassment perpetrated by men.

does empathy with female victims of sexual harassment predict the intention to apologize in male ingroup members, and do feelings of group-based guilt play a role in this?

Empathy With Outgroup Victims

Empathy is defined as the capacity to understand and feel what another person is emotionally experiencing (Bellet & Maloney, 1991; de Waal, 2008). In this research we focus on state empathy rather than on empathy as a personality trait, in other words, empathy as a prosocial emotion that can be elicited, and not the neurological capability of a person, as we cannot manipulate that in an experimental study.

Considering empathy in a group context, it has been found that individuals have a tendency to empathize more with ingroup than with outgroup members (Nadler, 2016; Vanman, 2016), as well as to de-humanize outgroup members (Vaes et al., 2012). De-humanizing outgroup members could imply for example rarely considering possible personal feelings, demonstrating that emotions may not be judged as equally important as those from the ingroup. Applying this to the context of sexual harassment, outgroup members could be labeled as seeking attention by complaining, similar to victim blaming (Bongiorno et al., 2019), disregarding any feelings of the victims, while not seeking or assigning blame in the ingroup. A study investigating victim-blaming tendencies found that participants who took the perspective of the male-perpetrator reported greater victim blame, arguably because of heightened empathy levels with the perpetrator (Bongiorno et al., 2019), demonstrating the ingroup-bias of empathy.

On the other hand, when people do empathize with the outgroup, they show tendencies to display more empathetic concern and positive feelings towards them and tend to generalize these positive emotions to the whole outgroup (Batson et al., 2002, 1997). Research by Brown and Cehajic (2008) suggests that this feeling of empathy might be a necessary aspect for reconciliation in conflict situations. One way to reconcile with another group is to start by

apologizing about the behavior of one's own group, which is what we examined in the current study.

Empathy and Apology

How can empathy stimulate apologies? As briefly mentioned previously, an apology has the potential to demonstrate remorse, guilt, and empathy (Tavuchis, 1991). It has thus the ability to facilitate reconsolidation in intergroup conflicts. Expressing empathy through an apology can be regarded as a form of prosocial behavior, as the one offering the apology demonstrates that the feelings are being understood and reciprocated by apologizing. Howell and colleagues (2012) found that empathy predicted apology willingness in their interpersonal study. In two experiments, they presented two samples of students with hypothetical scenarios that described an interpersonal conflict with an imagined friend. The participants were then asked to formulate an apology to said friend for treating them badly, and to complete a questionnaire. Elements of the apology were scored on expression of regret, taking responsibility, reparation, and reform; the questionnaires included measures of apology endorsement, proclivity to apologize (PAM; Howell et al., 2011), and a test of self-conscious affect (TOSCA-3; Tangney et al., 2000). In the second study, measures on Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI; Davis, 1980), and Guilt and Shame Proneness scale (GASP; Cohen et al., 2011) were added. The results from Howell et al. (2012) suggest that when a person is asked to imagine that they did something bad to a friend, they feel obligated to apologize to that friend. In this scenario, high levels of empathy for the friend positively predicted the intention to apologize for personal misbehavior.

But what if one is asked to apologize on behalf of someone else, on behalf of a member of the group one is a part of? Do findings at interpersonal level, such as Howell's et al. (2012), translate into similar patterns at intergroup level? We are expecting to see a positive connection between empathy with a victim and an intention to apologize on behalf of

one's group, and plan to establish causality by manipulating empathy in male ingroup members in this study. We think it could translate into an intergroup context because feeling empathy might increase feeling guilty as a group member. Being asked to take the perspective of a victim will make people aware of what their own group has done, and this realization that ingroup members are the perpetrators could in turn increase feelings of guilt, based on group membership.

The Mediating Role of Group-Based Guilt

Previous research found that empathy through perspective taking of victims strengthens the feeling of group-based guilt in members of a perpetrator group, for example in the context of historical racial injustice (Zebel et al., 2009). Guilt is triggered when certain behaviors are negatively evaluated by the offender themselves (Tangney, 1995; Tangney & Dearing, 2002; Tangney et al., 2009). Group-based guilt is an emotional response which originates from the acceptance that ingroup members are responsible for certain misconduct that harmed another group (Branscombe et al., 2003). It does not have to result from personal partaking, sole affiliation with the group is enough (Doosje et al., 1998). Feeling empathy towards a victim implies that one is able to take their perspective and experience their emotions. This in turn links to a concern for the victim and respectively feeling guilty that the victim had to experience this misconduct by ingroup members and suffer (e.g., Zebel et al., 2009). We expect that induced empathy predicts feelings of group-based guilt.

Group-based guilt has been found to provoke a desire to repair past wrongdoings from the ingroup (Doosje et al., 1998), for example for capitalizing on Indigenous Australians (McGarty et al., 2005), or historical injustice inflicted by the own group (Zebel et al., 2009), and to have positive effects on prosocial behavior (McGarty et al., 2005). Similar to empathy, feelings of guilt can be expressed through apologies to the offended group (Sandage et al., 2000). Interestingly, in the above discussed interpersonal study by Howell and colleagues

(2012), where empathy with a friend was linked to commitment to apologize, a positive correlation was found for apology willingness and proneness to guilt, as well.

A mediation effect is likely because, as discussed, empathy alike group-based guilt have both been linked to potentially improve intergroup relations. Empathy was directly linked to commitment to apologize, and empathy has been linked to experiencing guilt. Group-based guilt has therefore the potential to mediate the relation between empathy and conciliative actions such as apologies. There is some evidence for this connection in research by Febriana (2022). In her study, Febriana (2022) examined the relation between empathy and the intention to apologize, with group-based guilt as a mediator, in the conflict between non-Papuan Indonesians and Papuan Indonesians. The sample of Indonesian participants in the study were presented with a news article, in which experiences of racial discrimination of four Papuan students in Indonesia are described. It is made clear that Papuan Indonesians experienced racial discrimination committed by non-Papuan Indonesian ingroup members. Empathy with the outgroup of Papuan students was manipulated in two conditions. In the experimental condition, empathy was induced by instructing the Indonesian participants to read the article in an empathic manner, while participants in the control condition were instructed to read the article objectively (this is an adaptation from the manipulation created by Batson et al., 2002). Febriana (2022) hypothesized that, first, induced empathy would predict Indonesians' intention to apologize to Papuans; second, that under empathic conditions, Indonesians would feel group-based guilt for what their group has been doing to Papuans; and finally, that a mediation model would describe the relation between empathy and intention to apologize, with group-based guilt as the mediator.² But in the study the manipulation of induced empathy for non-Papuans in Indonesian ingroup members was

² Febriana (2022) further included meta-stereotyping in her study to test a serial mediation model, which showed insignificant results. Meta-stereotyping is therefore not part of the reasoning in our study and not further mentioned.

ineffective. The manipulation insignificantly affected the dependent measures of empathy, group-based guilt, and intention to apologize. Using measured empathy as the predictor, Febriana (2022) found partial support for her hypotheses. Measured empathy positively related to intention to apologize via group-based guilt. To summarize, it was found that higher levels of empathy with Papuan Indonesians predicted an intention to apologize for past and ingoing misconduct by ingroup members in non-Papuan Indonesians, where the feeling of guilt, based on group membership, mediated the relation (Febriana, 2022).

With our study, we aim to replicate the work from Febriana (2022) by implementing a similar study design with an improved manipulation, hypothesizing and reasoning in a similar manner but in a very different context. On the basis of these previous findings, we continue to hypothesize that guilt has the potential to mediate the relationship between empathy and intention to apologize, in the context of sexual harassment of women by men.

This Study

In the United States, 81% of women reported to have experienced sexual harassment (Stop Street Harassment, GfK, Raliance, San Diego Center on Gender Equity and Health & Kearl, 2018). This high of a number represents clearly that this is not a problem of the individual but that of groups. Specifically with women as the victim group and men as the perpetrator group. Since our sample is based in the US, we used this predicament as the context in this study.³ The question that we examined in the current research is whether empathy with female victims of sexual harassment predicts the intention to apologize in male ingroup members, and if feelings of group-based guilt play a role in this. In the current study male participants read personal stories from several women who have been subject to sexual

³ Note As earlier discussed, this problem is not specific to the US, but is expected to be very salient in the American society, which is preferable for this study.

misconduct by men.⁴ We manipulated whether they read these stories in an empathic manner or not. Subsequently, we hypothesized that when men empathize with female victims of sexual misconduct, they are more likely to apologize for sexual misconduct of other men (H1). Further, when men empathize with female victims of sexual misconduct, they are more likely to feel group-based guilt as a man (H2). Finally, group-based guilt about sexual misconduct of other men is expected to mediate the relationship between empathy and the intention to apologize (H3).

Method

Participants and Design

Three hundred and fifty-four participants took part in this study. The respondents were a convenience sample of paid participants recruited on Prolific, a British data collection and survey distribution platform. Only male participants over 18 years of age, with an American nationality, and hetero sexually oriented were selected within Prolific. Participation in this study is financially compensated; participants received 1.85 £.

Of the participants, 42 were excluded (based on preregistered criteria, see https://aspredicted.org/Q2B_T3T) from the study, because they either spend less than one minute to read the presented stories ($N = 37$), answered less than 50% of the questions ($N = 4$), or because they failed $\frac{2}{3}$ of the attention checks ($N = 1$). In total, the data of 312 participants was used for the analysis. The mean age of participants was 39.2 with a standard deviation of 12.9.

This study is designed as an experimental study with two conditions where we manipulated empathy with the outgroup. The goal of the study was to test a simple mediation model: group-based guilt is expected to mediate the relationship between empathy and

⁴ We are aware that by exclusively considering cases with ‘men’ and ‘women’ we are portraying a perhaps outdated binary concept of gender. To create a clear intergroup context for the purpose of this study, we only consider men that identify as such.

intention to apologize. An à priori power analysis was run to estimate the sample size using the online tool Monte Carlo Power Analysis for Indirect Effects (Schoemann et al., 2017). To have a power of .80 to detect at least $r = .25$ between all variables (small correlation in social sciences), the highest cut-off sample size indicated that 213 participants were required to analyze one mediator in a simple mediation model. This suggests that the study ($N = 312$) had enough power to find this effect.

Procedure

The survey questionnaire was administered via the online survey portal Qualtrics. First, participants were asked to read information about the research and the procedure. After this they were asked whether they agreed to participate or not. If consent was given, pre-measures of age, sexism, and perceived severity of the problem of sexual harassment were recorded. Ingroup identity is made salient by asking a series of questions⁵, e.g. “I identify as a man”; “I see myself as a man”; “I feel strong ties with other men”.

Following the four pre-measures, empathy was manipulated. Participants were randomly allocated through Qualtrics to either the control (objective/empathy not induced) or the experimental (empathy induced) condition. In the *control condition*, participants were given the instruction to form and keep an objective perspective while reading four stories of women. In the *experimental condition*, participants were instructed to imagine how these women are feeling, how sexual harassment may have affected their lives, and to try to feel the full impact from the women’s perspective.⁶ Four short stories from Mary, Charlotte, Olivia, and Lucy were presented, where each woman shared her personal experience with sexual harassment. These stories were taken from the channel named “#METOO” on YouTube. Names, pictures, and ages were added, as well as headings stating the most striking statement respective to the story (e.g., Mary, 33 - “He said: ‘I know your kind, you’re a little cockteaser,

⁵ Adapted from Doosje et al. (1995).

⁶ Inspired by a manipulation from Batson et al. (2002).

aren't you?") to make the stories more personal and relatable. All participants were exposed to the same stories. See Appendix A for the complete instructions and stories.

After reading the stories, the dependent measures were taken. At the end of the questionnaire, two items were used to check whether the respondents focused on the instructions of the manipulation (i.e., "while reading the stories, to what extent did you concentrate on being objective/the feelings of the women who told their stories?").⁷

Throughout, three attention checks were administered (e.g., "how many fingers do people generally have on one hand?"). The survey ended with thanking and debriefing, of which the latter included contact details of the National Sexual Assault Hotline in case participants desire to share their experiences or thoughts. The Ethical Committee of Psychology (ECP) from the University of Groningen approved the study. For the complete questionnaire see Appendix A.⁸

Dependent Measures

Following the manipulation, three dependent measures were taken.

The variable *empathy* was measured with 10 items on a 7-point Likert scale (1 *not at all* to 7 *very much*) ($M = 5.91$, $SD = 1$, Cronbach's $\alpha = .93$). This measure included questions about empathetic feelings, e.g., "I feel compassion/indifferent about/sorry for these women". And empathetic capacities, e.g., "I am able to take the perspective of these women". We adapted this measure on the basis of eight items from de Vos et al. (2018). We added two new items in this study (i.e., "women's bad experiences with some men disturb me"; "women exaggerate about being harassed"). Two items were negatively phrased and recoded for the analysis.

⁷ Adapted from Vorauer and Sasaki, 2009.

⁸ This study is part of a larger project. Not mentioned variables included in the questionnaire are meta-stereotyping, emotions, and responsibility.

Group-based guilt was measured with 4 items on a 7-point Likert scale (1 *not at all* to 7 *very much*) ($M = 3.65$, $SD = 1.66$, Cronbach's $\alpha = .85$) by asking to what extent the respondent feels guilt based on group identity. For example, "I feel guilty for the bad effect on a woman's life brought about by the bad behavior of some men". One item was negatively phrased and recoded for the analysis. For this study, this measure was based on items adapted from Zebel et al. (2009) and the Collective Guilt Acceptance measure (Ferguson & Branscombe, 2014).

Intention to apologize was measured with 7 items on a 7-point Likert scale (1 *not at all* to 7 *very much*) ($M = 3.81$, $SD = 1.8$, Cronbach's $\alpha = .95$). In this measure, participants were asked to what extent they would be likely to apologize personally and on behalf of their group, e.g. "I, as a man, would like to apologize to women about these kinds of sexual harassment experiences"; "I think that men should collectively apologize to women about sexual harassment"; "if there was a chance to meet a group of women who experienced sexual harassment by men, I would want to apologize on behalf of men". One item was negatively phrased and recoded for the analysis. The items on this measure were adapted on the basis of Howell et al. (2012) (3 items), and self-constructed by Febriana (2022).

Results

Manipulation Check

The manipulation of empathy was checked with an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). On the first manipulation check, participants in the control condition reportedly concentrated more on being objective ($M = 5.97$, $SD = 1.31$), compared to the empathy induced condition ($M = 5.53$, $SD = 1.63$), $F(1,309) = 6.75$, $p = .01$, $\eta p^2 = .02$, which is in line with what we intended. But with respect to the second manipulation check, participants in the empathy induced condition did not focus more on the feelings of the women ($M = 5.94$, $SD = 1.39$), than participants in the control condition ($M = 6.11$, $SD = 1.2$), $F(1,309) = 1.29$, $p = .26$, ηp^2

= .004. This manipulation effect is not significant⁹; and the manipulation failed to be effective. Therefore, we focus on measured empathy for the remaining analysis because this manipulation of empathy did not work. When referring to the empathy scale we imply that it is measured empathy and also not split into conditions.

Main Analysis

Three scales were computed for participants' scores on the empathy measure, group-based guilt measure, and the intention to apologize measure, after recoding negatively phrased items. Correlations were found to be positive between the measured empathy and intention to apologize scales ($r = .4, p < .001$), measured empathy and group-based guilt scales ($r = .34, p < .001$), and group-based guilt and intention to apologize scales ($r = .74, p < .001$). This means that men who emphasized more with women were also more likely to intent to apologize (H1), and to feel more group-based guilt (H2). Men who felt more group-based guilt were also more likely to intent to apologize. Means, standard deviations, and correlations of the three scales can be found in Table 1.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations for Study Variables

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3
1. Empathy scale	5.91	1	-		
2. Group-based guilt scale	3.65	1.66	.34*	-	
3. Intention to apologize scale	3.81	1.8	.4*	.74*	-

Note. * $p < .001$.

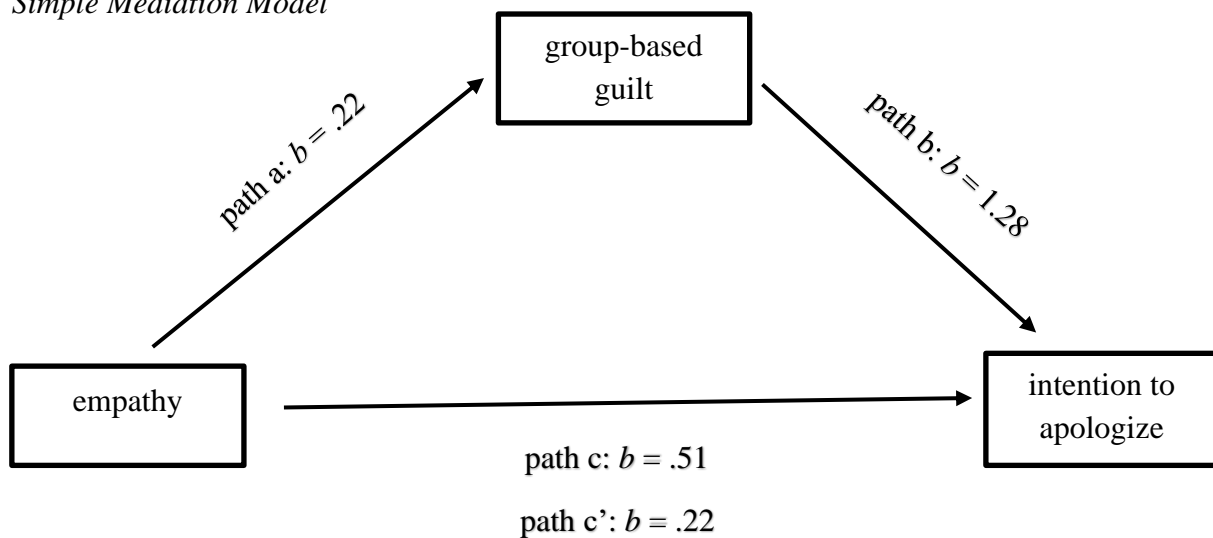
A simple mediation model with measured empathy as the independent variable, intention to apologize as the dependent variable and group-based guilt as the mediator was

⁹ This insignificant manipulation did also not influence the dependent measures.

tested (H3). Process Model 4 (Hayes, 2022) was used. The total effect was significant, $F(1, 310) = 60.57, p < .001$. The direct effect of .22 significant at a 95% $CI [.13, .32]$, and the indirect effect of .29 was also significant at a 95% $CI [.21, .37]$. This means that measured empathy was found to positively relate to the intention to apologize, while controlling for group-based guilt (total effect; path c in the depiction). When guilt is included, the effect of measured empathy on the intention to apologize is lessened (direct effect; path c'), and the indirect effect is significant, which suggests a partial mediation effect of group-based guilt on the relation between measured empathy and the intention to apologize.

Figure 1

Simple Mediation Model



Based on this analysis, we can conclude that the relationship between measured empathy and intention to apologize is significantly but partially mediated by group-based guilt (H3). Measured empathy and group-based guilt together positively relate to the intention to apologize. Group-based guilt positively relates to the intention to apologize. The relation between measured empathy and intention to apologize is reduced when group-based guilt is included. Measured empathy positively relates to group-based guilt (H2). And finally, measured empathy positively relates to the intention to apologize (H1).

Discussion

The aim of this research was to add to the existing literature of intergroup relations, and to replicate the study by Febriana (2022) in a different intergroup context. More specifically, we investigated whether empathy motivates groups to consider apologizing to further improve intergroup relations that are in a conflict situation. We aimed to show the relation between empathy and the intention to apologize while hypothesizing that group-based guilt could mediate this relation. Unfortunately, we did not succeed in manipulating empathy. Hence, we could not look at the hypotheses with the intention to establish causality. We therefore chose to continue the analysis and evaluation with measured empathy as the predictor.

Partial support for the hypothesis was found, causality could not be established because of the failed manipulation. As first hypothesized, a positive relation between empathy and intention to apologize was found. So, the first hypothesis is partially supported without us being able to definitely say that empathy predicts an intention to apologize. Similarly, the second hypothesis, that empathy predicts group-based guilt, could also be partially supported; a positive correlation was found, although again we could not establish causality. Finally, we found evidence in line with hypothesis three that group-based guilt acted as a mediator between empathy and intention to apologize, although only a partial mediation effect was found.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

Based on our findings, we were thus able to replicate a similar model from an interpersonal study in an intergroup context. Namely, in line with Howell and colleagues (2012) we also found a relation between empathy and intention to apologize through feelings of guilt. However, our findings extend their research, as we found that people do not have to be the perpetrator themselves. We found that empathy with female victims of sexual harassment related to an intention to apologize via a feeling of guilt based on the misconduct

of group members, whereas Howell et al. (2012) only investigated this connection in the context of personal misbehavior towards a friend. Further, a part of our model, specifically, the relation between empathy and guilt, was previously investigated in an intergroup context of historical racial injustice by Zebel and colleagues (2009) and in the context of past capitalization on Indigenous Australians by McGarty et al. (2005). With this study, their findings were also replicated in a different context, i.e., sexual harassment of women by men. We did not directly hypothesize a connection between feelings of group-based guilt and a desire to aid conciliation of intergroup relations, but we did find a positive connection. Group-based guilt was positively related to the intention to apologize in this study. Zebel et al. (2009) observed a similar relation between group-based guilt and the prosocial support for reparation for the offended group, therefore we replicated this connection to some extent in a new context. We were also able to replicate the mediation effect of group-based guilt on the relation between empathy and the intention to apologize, as found by Barth and Stürmer (2016). To some extent, but without causality, a respective opposite effect to the study on victim blaming by Bongiorno et al. (2019) was observed; in our study it was found that by taking the victims perspective, high levels of empathy with the victim group were reported, while Bongiorno et al. (2019) reported high levels of victim blaming that was explainable with high levels of empathy with the perpetrator.¹⁰

This study aimed to replicate the research by Febriana (2022). By administering a very similar study design in very different context, we extended her findings to another context. Febriana (2022) found positive relations between measured empathy with Papuan Indonesians and the intention to apologize in non-Papuan Indonesians and was able to link group-based guilt as mediator to this relation. We chose a completely different context of sexual harassment and administered a very similar study as Febriana (2022) to our American sample.

¹⁰ Although, to establish a definite connection between these two observed effects, a future study would be necessary.

With our adapted questionnaire, we were able to replicate the link between empathy and the intention to apologize, with group-based guilt as a partial mediator. That is, we found that higher levels of measured empathy with female victims of sexual harassment corresponded with an intention to apologize in men, and as ingroup members of the perpetrator group, feelings of group-based guilt were heightened, which partially mediated this relation.

These replications and extensions of previous findings suggest that the predicted relations are applicable to multiple varying intergroup conflict contexts and therefore add to the body of research on intergroup relations.

An interesting implication that needs to be studied further concerns the high levels of measured empathy, compared to the relatively low mean levels of group-based guilt and intention to apologize (reported in Table 1). We could speculate that while the emotion of empathy is high, the readiness to take on responsibility by admitting to feel guilty or even commit to an apology as a prosocial action is much lower. This tendency was also reflected in some comments that were left under the study by some participants. Twenty-seven out of 49 comments¹¹ were criticizing the idea that they should apologize because of other men's wrongdoing, noting that most feel that responsibility lies with the individual in this predicament. Some of these comments read: "No one should apologize for the actions of someone else. Feeling empathy yes, but guilt absolutely not."; "Why should a man that has never assaulted a woman apologize for other men?"; "It isn't my responsibility to apologize for my entire gender. To think it is would be rather egotistical on my behalf. I do find the behavior of most of the men in the stories as abhorrent, but it's not my place in general to apologize on behalf of my gender". To address this discrepancy between feeling empathy but not wanting to take action, we would suggest lowering the step from taking the perspective of the victim to committing to apologize on behalf of one's group, by adding smaller or

¹¹ *Note* Only considering comments that were referring to the content of the study, ignoring comments such as "good survey" or "nothing to add".

alternative actions as possible prosocial behaviors. Such behavior alternatives could be, for example, taking responsibility for one's own actions and further applying respectful behavior in one's personal life. This could be expanded into holding friends accountable when committing questionable behavior and educate friends and family on appropriate behaviors. These smaller scaled behaviors should be seriously considered, as we would expect them to have an impact on intergroup relations, with conciliative powers. Overall, educating men to recognize signs of harassment, boundaries, and respectful behavior towards women so they can implement this in their own social environment and speak up to peers, could be beneficial. Future studies would be needed, to establish the speculated conciliative powers of these smaller scaled, alternative behavior options on intergroup relations.

Limitations of This Study and Suggestions for Future Research

The most important limitation in this study was the failed manipulation. Our manipulation was based on an established method introduced by Batson et al. (2002). Participants were instructed to either read the four stories objectively or empathetically. We aimed to replicate the study by Febriana (2022), in which a similar manipulation was shown to be ineffective, in the context of the racial conflict between Papuan and non-Papuan Indonesians. We aimed to replicate this study with an improved manipulation. In our study, we changed the presented text from an article that filled almost two DIN A4 pages, as in Febriana's (2022) study, to four single, short stories that were presented one-by-one, with each story including a picture, name, age, and a headline corresponding to the individual story. We did this with the idea that participants would be able to maintain focus more easily on a shorter text. However, again, these instructions followed by the stories were found to not significantly manipulate participants in how they answered the dependent measures following the manipulation. Perhaps we did not find an effect of the empathy manipulation because the results on the measure of empathy showed a ceiling effect. In both conditions the mean levels

of the empathy measure were high. Perhaps levels of empathy are high because of the initial emotional weight that is associated with the topic of sexual harassment. In that sense, showing no compassion or even apathy would be socially questionable. Future research could adapt the manipulation further, for example use a manipulated text that is presented after the instructions to strengthen the effect. This would have to be done carefully as one would want to see an effect of empathy and not, by accident, an effect of the information that is presented differently. The focus in an objective control condition should be on forming a neutral position, rather than emphasizing objectivity per se. Future studies could also change the context and choose a more neutral topic, that is not biased into one emotional direction already.

There are also some limitations with respect to the choice to focus only on male perpetrators and female victims. First of all, this study failed to be gender inclusive and considered a rather outdated definition of gender by only considering cis men and cis women. Further, we did not focus on the fact that men can be victim to harassment as well. We also did not take into account or ask if participants were harassers themselves. This would be interesting to consider in future research. Moreover, to consider men as one single group in this context may be problematic, as this generalizes the problem to the whole population of men and implies that the whole group is the perpetrator group. Perhaps there are age differences in how men perceive sexual harassment. For future research, an option would be to look at different age categories or generations, to examine whether upbringing in different times with varying social and educational norms would affect intergroup relations with women.¹²

A final limitation is that it is not entirely clear if we succeeded in creating a study that is completely on an intergroup level. Barth and Stürmer (2016) suggest that even a subtle

¹² *Note* The problem of generalizing men into one group also applies to generalizing women into the victim group.

difference in the wording of the instruction, measurement items, and information regarding the victim group can have an effect on which emotional process is triggered. According to their research, when perspective taking is set up on an interpersonal level, higher levels of empathy were triggered, whereas when anonymous information (e.g., statistics) about a group are presented, which therefore sets perspective taking up on an intergroup level, collective guilt was increased. In our study we directed the focus of the reader to the personal experiences of women, further reinforcing this by adding names and pictures. Directing the participant directly to the personal story of a victim was phrased as the “identifiable victim effect” by Barth and Stürmer (2016). This effect was found to suggest that identifiable victims received more help than unidentifiable victims, such as victims that were introduced as part of a statistic (Barth & Stürmer, 2016). Since we did introduce women as individual victims, with names, pictures, and personal stories, to the participants one could argue that we triggered an interpersonal perspective taking process, not an intergroup level process. So, future research on intergroup relations should carefully assess which information are presented to the participant (i.e., only group-based information, no specific details on the individual), so that future results can be interpreted in a true intergroup context.

Conclusion

This study examined whether empathy with female victims of sexual harassment predict the intention to apologize in male ingroup members, and whether feelings of group-based guilt play a role in this. We can conclude that the extent to which men empathize with female victims of sexual harassment is positively linked to feelings of group-based guilt in male ingroup members, and to their intention to apologize on behalf of men. Group-based guilt was found to partially mediate the relation between the feeling of empathy and an intention to take prosocial action by apologizing. Although we can't make any conclusions about causality, these findings could be of interest to researchers interested in intergroup

reconciliation processes. This study adds to the body of research in the field of applied social psychology interested in prosocial emotions and prosocial actions, specifically in the context of intergroup conflict.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire

Sexual Harassment towards women

Information about the research

“Men’s views of sexual harassment towards women”

PSB3-BT_2122-1a-14

Why am I receiving this information? You are being invited to participate in this research because we are interested in how you, as a man, respond to sexual harassment of women. The start date of the research is 16 September 2021, and the end date of the research will be 7 February 2022.

Do I have to participate in this research? Participation in the research is voluntary. However, your consent is needed. Therefore, please read this information carefully. If you decide not to participate, you do not need to explain why, and there will be no negative consequences for you. You have this right at all times, including after you have consented to participate in the research. If there are any questions, do not hesitate to ask.

What do we ask of you during the research? First, we will ask you for your consent to participate. When you agree to participate, you will first answer some demographic questions. After that, you will be asked questions regarding your gender identity and your perception of the relations between men and women. Next, a few short stories will be presented to you, where women report their experiences, and you will be asked to share your reactions. After completing the questionnaire, you will receive more information about this research. The questionnaire will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. You will receive compensation for your participation.

What are the consequences of participation? With our research, we hope to gain more understanding of how men respond to sexual harassment of women. Thus, with your

participation, you will contribute to this research. Your participation will also support students with their Bachelor's thesis. We believe there are little to no risks associated with participating in this study. However, it is possible that you may find some questions difficult to answer or would prefer not to answer them. Please remember that you may always withdraw from the study, which does not have any negative consequences for you.

How will we treat your data? Your data will be used to write a Bachelor's thesis and a scientific paper. Your data is confidential. While no personal data is collected, some information may act as identifiers when combined (i.e., gender, age-range). Only the researchers of this study will have access to it. The data consists of your responses to the questions which will be collected using an online questionnaire. We collect this data for scientific purposes. If the data is published as part of a scientific paper, we will anonymize information that could be used to identify individual participants. When the study is finished, the data will be stored on a safe University of Groningen server. We will process your Prolific id to be able to pay you for participation. We will remove the Prolific id from the data as soon as all participants have been compensated at the end of the study.

What else do you need to know? You may always ask questions about the research: now, during the research, and after the end of the research. You can do so by sending an email to sexistmisbehaviorstudy@gmail.com. Do you have questions/concerns about your rights as a research participant or about the conduct of the research? You may also contact the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Behavioural and Social Sciences of the University of Groningen: ec-bss@rug.nl. Do you have questions or concerns regarding the handling of your personal data? You may also contact the University of Groningen Data Protection Officer: privacy@rug.nl. As a research participant, you have the right to receive a copy of this *research information*. Click the arrow below to proceed.

Informed consent & consent for participating

“Men’s views of sexual harassment towards women”

In this research we want to study how men perceive sexual harassment towards women. We will first ask for your consent to participate in this research. If you agree to participate in our study, you will automatically be redirected to the questionnaire. The questionnaire will take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

This research is carried out by a group of four bachelor students at the University of Groningen in The Netherlands under the supervision of their professor and meets the ethical guidelines of the University of Groningen. We believe there are little to no risks associated with participating in this study. By agreeing to participate in this study you understand the following:

I have the right to receive a copy of this informed consent form by taking a screenshot of this page or asking the researcher for a copy (send an email to sexistmisconductstudy@gmail.com). My participation is voluntary, and I can withdraw from this study at any moment without having to give a reason and without any negative consequences. I am allowed to refuse to answer or skip any questions that I do not wish to answer. I do not have to provide any reason for this, and this does not have any negative consequences. My responses are confidential and will not be shared with anyone besides the research team. All my responses will be securely stored and are only accessible to the researchers. After completing the questionnaire, I will receive more information on the purpose of this research.

Do you agree to participate in this study? If you don’t want to participate, click no and you will leave the questionnaire.

- Yes, I want to participate
- No

Introduction Thank you for participating in this research about sexual harassment against

women.

We kindly ask you to read the instructions and questions carefully. In this study you can continue by pressing the red button in the bottom right corner, but you cannot return to the previous question. You can now begin.

Intro Demographics Please answer the general demographic questions below. These questions will not be used to identify you as an individual, but they will help the researcher to describe the sample of participants.

Age

Please indicate your age below.

Group Identification

The following questions concern your identity as a man. To what extent do you agree with each statement (1 = not at all; 7 = very much)?

1. I identify with being a man
2. I see myself as a man
3. I am glad to be a man
4. I feel strong ties with other men

Sexism1

The following statements are about the relationship between men and women. To what extent do you agree with the following statements (1 = not at all; 7 = very much)?

1. Many women have a quality of purity that few men possess
2. Women should be cherished and protected by men
3. Women seek to gain power by getting control over men
4. Every man ought to have a woman whom he adores
5. Men are incomplete without women

6. Women exaggerate problems they have at work

Sexism2

The following statements are about the relationship between men and women. To what extent to you agree with the following statements (1 = not at all; 7 = very much)?

1. Once a woman gets a man to commit to her, she usually tries to put him on a tight leash
2. When women lose to men in a fair competition, they typically complain about being discriminated against
3. Many women get a kick out of teasing men by seeming sexually available and then refusing male advances
4. Women, when compared to men, tend to have a superior moral sensibility
5. Men should be willing to sacrifice their own well-being in order to provide financially for the women in their lives
6. Feminists are making unreasonable demands of men

Severity

To what extent do you think sexual harassment towards women is a problem in our society? (1 = not at all; 7 = very much)?

Instructions (high empathy)

How do they feel?

We will now present you some stories where women share their experiences. These stories are taken from Youtube. In these stories Mary, Charlotte, Olivia and Lucy describe their experiences with sexual harassment. Please read the stories carefully since upcoming questions will be based on them.

While reading the stories, try to imagine how these women might feel and how their experiences have affected their life. Try to feel the full impact of what these women have been

through.

You can now start reading.

Story 1

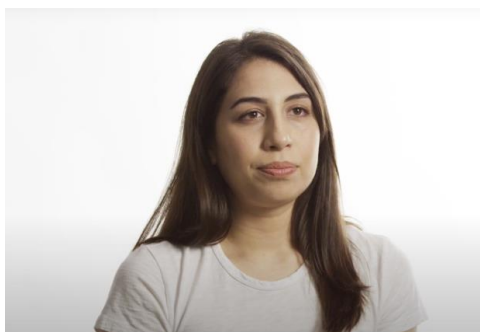
Mary, 33 - “He said: ‘I know your kind, you’re a little cockteaser aren’t you?’”



“We danced with some younger men we didn’t know, as one does, and one came back to the table and sat down. We were chatting, probably flirting a little bit, but all of a sudden he started groping me under the table. Horrified, I shoved his hand away. I don’t know exactly how I responded, but I was sure it was something really placating because this is how I had learned to handle these kinds of situations. After that, an angry expression came over his face and he leaned in and hissed at me “I know your kind, you’re a little cock-teaser aren’t you”.

Story 2

Charlotte, 26 - “I was telling him to stop, but he was just laughing and thought it was funny and kept doing it.”



“He started inching towards me and cornering me up against the bar. At first, I was nervously laughing because I didn’t know what else to do and he was just coming towards me. But then he started putting his hand up my dress and sliding it up my body even further and getting into

my underwear. That was the moment I said: “No stop, seriously stop!”. His response was just laughter, thought it was funny and kept doing it. I just never told anybody about it.”

Story 4

Olivia, 45 - “At work the barman used to grab my ass during work with no reason.”



“I used to be a busser in a restaurant, and we had a bunch of other workers in the kitchen. They always walk by and just grab your ass. I don’t know why but it was like ‘oh well’ and you just kept on working. It was just something you didn’t really pay attention to. I didn’t think it was okay. It was very awkward, but you just work and you need the money and the money was good.”

Story 5

Lucy, 67 - “I could pass through life without being harassed everywhere I went.”



“I went to the bathroom and when I came back I started wending my way through a lot of small tables very closely jam-packed together. I got 2/3 of the way through the restaurant when I realized not a single man there had glanced at me. At first there was a shock that I was no longer worthy of a glance and then I had a huge wash of relief coming over me, that I could pass through life without being harassed everywhere I went. The only thing that slowed

this barrage down was getting older and heavier. My story is not the tragedy here, the tragedy is that my story is completely unremarkable. It is average. It is a story of every woman every day. All women have experienced some form of sexual harassment in their lives. Don't tell me that is okay."

Instructions (low empathy)

Form an objective impression

We will now present you some stories where women share their experiences. These stories are taken from YouTube. In these stories Mary, Charlotte, Olivia and Lucy describe their experiences with sexual harassment. Please read the stories carefully since upcoming questions will be based on them.

While reading the stories, try to keep an objective perspective towards what is described.

You can now start reading.

Story 1

Mary, 33 - "He said: 'I know your kind, you're a little cockteaser aren't you?'"



"We danced with some younger men we didn't know, as one does, and one came back to the table and sat down. We were chatting, probably flirting a little bit, but all of a sudden he started groping me under the table. Horrified, I shoved his hand away. I don't know exactly how I responded, but I was sure it was something really placating because this is how I had learned to handle these kinds of situations. After that, an angry expression came over his face and he leaned in and hissed at me "I know your kind, you're a little cock-teaser aren't you".

Story 2

Charlotte, 26 - “I was telling him to stop, but he was just laughing and thought it was funny and kept doing it.”



"He started inching towards me and cornering me up against the bar. At first, I was nervously laughing because I didn't know what else to do and he was just coming towards me. But then he started putting his hand up my dress and sliding it up my body even further and getting into my underwear. That was the moment I said: "No stop, seriously stop!". His response was just laughter, thought it was funny and kept doing it. I just never told anybody about it."

Story 4

Olivia, 45 - “At work the barman used to grab my ass during work with no reason.”



"I used to be a busser in a restaurant, and we had a bunch of other workers in the kitchen. They always walk by and just grab your ass. I don't know why but it was like 'oh well' and you just kept on working. It was just something you didn't really pay attention to. I didn't think it was okay. It was very awkward, but you just work and you need the money and the money was good."

Story 5

Lucy, 67 - "I could pass through life without being harassed everywhere I went."



"I went to the bathroom and when I came back I started wending my way through a lot of small tables very closely jam-packed together. I got 2/3 of the way through the restaurant when I realized not a single man there had glanced at me. At first there was a shock that I was no longer worthy of a glance and then I had a huge wash of relief coming over me, that I could pass through life without being harassed everywhere I went. The only thing that slowed this barrage down was getting older and heavier. My story is not the tragedy here, the tragedy is that my story is completely unremarkable. It is average. It is a story of every woman every day. All women have experienced some form of sexual harassment in their lives. Don't tell me that is okay."

Empathy1

Now we would like to ask you some questions about the article you have just read. Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements (1=not at all;7=very much).

1. Women's bad experiences with some men disturb me
2. I find it easy in this case to take the perspective of the women portrayed in the stories
3. I can easily place myself in the shoes of women portrayed in the stories
4. I completely understand the reaction of the women portrayed in the stories
5. I feel indifferent about these women's experiences

Empathy2

Now we would like to ask you some questions about the article you have just read. Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements (1=not at all;7=very much).

1. I empathize with the women portrayed in the stories
2. I am able to take the perspective of the women interviewed in the stories
3. I feel compassion for these women portrayed in the stories
4. This question is to check whether you are still actively present. How much is 9-4
(select the correct answer: 9-4=...)? (
5. I feel sorry for the women portrayed in the stories who experienced sexual harassment
6. These women exaggerate about being harassed

Group-Based Guilt

Based on the stories you have just read; please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements (1=not at all;7=very much).

1. I feel guilty about these kinds of negative things some men have been doing to women
2. I believe that I should repair the damage caused to women by some men
3. I easily feel guilty for the bad effect on a woman's life brought about by the bad behavior of some men
4. I feel blameless when I am confronted with these kinds of negative things some men have done to women

Intention to Apologize

Now we would like to ask you some questions about the article you have just read. Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements (1=not at all; 7=very much).

1. I, as a man, would like to apologize to women about these kinds of sexual harassment experiences
2. I think that men should collectively apologize to women about sexual harassment
3. I would feel better if I were to apologize to women about sexual harassment

4. I think apologizing to women is unnecessary
5. I would support a collective apology on behalf of men to women with these kinds of sexual harassment experiences
6. Please choose answer two here (this is an attention check)
7. It would be important to apologize to women about sexual harassment
8. If there was a chance to meet a group of women who experienced sexual harassment by men, I would want to apologize on behalf of men

Meta-Stereotyping1

Based on the stories you just read, you may have some expectations about how women would think about men. Please indicate how you think about each of these expectations in the following statements (1=not at all; 7=very much).

In general, I think that women believe that men are...

1. Power-hungry
2. Compassionate
3. Not concerned about others
4. Honest
5. Ambitious
6. Timid
7. Dependent

Meta-Stereotyping2

Based on the stories you just read, you may have some expectations about how women would think about men. Please indicate how you think about each of these expectations in the following statements (1=not at all; 7=very much).

In general, I think that women believe that men are...

1. Aggressive

2. Selfish
3. Assertive
4. Confident
5. Submissive
6. Sincere
7. Warm

Stereotyping1

You may also have some expectations about women. Please indicate how you think about each of these expectations in the following statements (1=not at all; 7=very much).

In general, I think that women are ...

1. Power-hungry
2. Compassionate
3. Not concerned about others
4. Honest
5. Ambitious
6. Timid
7. Dependent

Stereotyping2

You may also have some expectations about women. Please indicate how you think about each of these expectations in the following statements (1=not at all; 7=very much).

In general, I think that women are ...

1. Aggressive
2. Selfish
3. Assertive
4. Confident

5. Submissive
6. Sincere
7. Warm

Emotions

We would now like to know more about how you feel about what you read in the stories of the women.

Please answer for each feeling to what extent you agree with it (1=not at all;7= very much).

When I think about these kind of things some men have been doing to women,

I feel ...

1. anger
2. nothing
3. optimistic
4. sadness
5. afraid
6. happy
7. outrage
8. depressed
9. anxious

Responsibility

Based on the stories you have just read; please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements (1=not at all; 7=very much).

1. Men in general are responsible for how other men treat women
2. I think that men should carry responsibility for the behavior of other men towards women
3. When thinking about how some men treat women, I feel responsible

4. How many fingers do people generally have on one hand? Choose the correct answer in the scale (this is an attention check)
5. As a man, I feel responsible for preventing sexual misconduct towards women
6. I am ready to take on responsibility for the misbehavior of some men towards women

Empathy Manipulation Check

Now we would like to ask you some questions about the stories you have just read. Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements (1=not at all; 7=very much).

1. While reading the article, to what extent did you focus on being objective?
2. While reading the article, to what extent did you focus on the feelings of the women who told their stories?

Comments

Do you have any comments about the study? You can write them down below.

Debriefing

Thank you for your participation in this study!

Please read the following information about this study very carefully. This is important to properly save your responses.

What was the aim of our study?

We are especially interested in how empathy with woman who experienced sexual harassment might be related to how men think and feel about this.

The sexual harassment experiences as portrayed in the short stories refer to real experiences

of real women. These women were interviewed in the course of the #MeToo movement. The stories were based on three videos that were publicly shared on YouTube. The women on the screenshots do not in all cases match with the women who told the stories in the videos. Name and age of each woman were invented to add credibility. For the sake of better readability, parts of the spoken word have been simplified.

Please note that the examples that are given did occur in reality and are not one-off cases.

Sexual harassment, sexist comments, inappropriate touching, sexual assault and other sexual offences do happen regularly around the globe.

We hope by studying this issue that we can find ways to improve the situation.

If this study resulted in any negative feelings and thoughts about your own experiences and you would like to talk about it, you can call the free and confidential National Sexual Assault Hotline on 800-656-HOPE or reach out via chat on www.rainn.org. We are aware that not only women suffer from sexual harassment. For male victims of sexual assault an online chat with an advocate is available via www.lin6.org.

Finally

We would like to thank you again for your participation. It is very meaningful for us and possibly helps to add new findings in the research field of intergroup relations.

Also, we ask you kindly not to share the actual purpose of the study with others who might also participate. This could affect the results.

If you are interested in the results of this research, feel free to send an email to sexistmisconductstudy@gmail.com.

Please click on the arrow below to complete and submit the questionnaire.