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Social Sciences

## The Bystander Effect: Psychological Consequences for the Victims with focus on the Basic Psychological Needs

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## Summary

The bystander effect, as well as the problematic consequences of sexual harassment, are known phenomena, since decades. The consequences for the bystanders have received a lot of attention, the ones for victims are less explored. This research intends to explore possible consequences on the basic psychological needs for the victims of sexual harassment related to the presence and gender of the bystander. It was hypothesised that not only the number but also the gender of the bystanders influenced the psychological consequences for the victim. The participants were female students in The Netherlands between 18 and 29 years. The design consisted of several questionnaires and one out of four vignettes, with the number and the gender of the bystanders as manipulated variables. There was no significant effect of gender or number of bystanders for the basic psychological needs ( $p > .05$ ), but levels of additionally measured constructs such as bystander blame differed significantly between conditions. The results are discussed and evaluated with literature amongst other constructs related to heroism and Social Identity theory.

*Keywords* Basic Psychological Needs, Bystander effect, Gender, Number of Bystander, Blame,

## Table of Contents

### Introduction

Bystander relevance	5
Sexual Harassment and its Consequences	6
The Basis of human Well-being: Basic Psychological Needs	8
One or many? The effect of the number of bystanders on the Basic Psychological Needs	10
Gender of the bystander as relevant factor	11
Current Research	13
<b>Method</b>	<b>13</b>
Participants & Design	13
Procedure	14
Apparatus and materials	15
Vignette	15
Questionnaires	15
Need Satisfaction following Ostracism	15
Additional Constructs	16
Blame	16
Self- Esteem	17
Locus of Control	17
Empathy	17
<b>Results</b>	<b>18</b>
Manipulation check	18
Empathizing with the situation/vignette	18
Basic Psychological Needs	18
Exploratory analyses	19
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Discussion</b>	<b>20</b>
Strengths	24
Empathy	24
Further Research	24
Concluding Remarks	25
<b>References</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Appendix A</b>	<b>28</b>
Vignette “Alone”	28
Vignette “Women”	28
Vignette “Men”	29
Vignette “Number of People”	30
<b>Appendix B</b>	<b>31</b>

## The Bystander Effect: Influence of Presence & Gender

4

Questionnaire: Locus of Control	31
Basic Psychological Needs	33
Self esteem	34
Empathy in the vignette	37

## The Bystander Effect: Psychological Consequences for the Victims with focus on the Basic Psychological Needs

In 2014 the newspaper TIME published an online article titled “The Debate: How Should College Campuses Handle Sexual Assault?”. As a reaction, the president of Dartmouth College wrote a statement to an ongoing discussion about the handling of sexual assault cases on university and college campuses. He described that to combat the problem, they formed the “Dartmouth Bystander Initiative” (Hanlon, 2014). This initiative is a prevention system which accentuates leadership and bystander intervention to motivate the students and staff to intervene at behaviour like e. g. stalking or harassment. This system shows the important role of bystander inactivity when it comes to preventing sexual behaviour and direct intervention, but perhaps bystander inactivity is also key to understand less immediate consequences of sexual harassment. Therefore, in the current study, we will look at how the presence of bystanders influences the well-being of victims of sexual harassment.

### Bystander relevance

At the core of the Dartmouth Initiative lies the concept of the “Bystander” and his or her behaviour. A lot is known about the behaviour of bystanders (Fischer et al., 2011) but the consequences of their presence for the victims are less explored. The classical bystander effect, which was first described by Darley and Latane (1968), is the phenomenon that a third-party, the bystander, does not intervene to help the victim in a crisis. A typical scenario to illustrate the effect involves at least one perpetrator, one victim and a bystander, who is witnessing the assault (van Bommel, van Prooijen, Elffers, van Lange, 2014). The bystander effect refers to the behaviour of the bystander, thus his inaction in life-threatening as well as in non-life-threatening situations (Fischer et al., 2011), which becomes more likely when other bystanders are around (Darley & Latane, 1968).

Even though the bystander effect refers to bystanders failing to provide help in the presence of others, research has shown that “bystanders' behaviors [...] moderate the effect of

individual and interpersonal risk factors for victimization" (Kärnä et al., 2010, p.261), especially when bystanders are not passive. This means that e.g. defending behaviour of the bystander could stop the attack or at least increase the negative consequences for the perpetrator, leading the perpetrator to stop the attack.

The acting of the bystander is interpreted as supportive or rejecting of the attack by the perpetrator. The bystander's behaviour influences, therefore, the chance of stopping (if the perpetrator feels rejected) or ongoing behaviour (if the perpetrator feels supported) (Salmivalli, Ojanen, Haanpää, & Peets, 2005). It makes sense that when the (in)activity of bystanders influences the feelings of support or rejection for the perpetrator, it can also influence those feelings for the victims. Possible expectations from the victim towards the bystanders can, for example, be formed through stereotypes etc.

## **Sexual Harassment and its Consequences**

In our research, we choose to look at the bystander effect during sexual harassment. However, instead of looking at why bystanders are passive, we will focus at what effect this passivity has on the victim of sexual harassment.

In the past decades, the definition of what counts as sexual assault or harassment has changed and the public awareness of the problem has increased. There is much inconsistency about what counts as definition for sexual harassment. We are going to base our research on the definition "[sexual harassment is] unwanted sex-related behaviour [...] that is appraised by the recipient as offensive, exceeding her resources, or threatening her well-being" (Fitzgerald, Swan, & Magley, 1997, p. 15). Because this definition of sexual harassment is very broad we choose to add the definitions given by Pina, Gannon and Sounders (2009). In this article, legal definitions are given which are lining out several aspects of sexual harassment: violating the dignity of the victim; unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical

conduct of sexual nature; the perpetrator treats the victim less positively on the grounds of the rejection.

According to Pryor (1995), the victims of sexual harassment are almost always women, while the perpetrators are mostly men. Also, the exact prevalent rates differ, between 33 and 66 percent of women have at least once experienced some form of sexual harassment, making this a public problem. Based on this information we decided, later, to focus our research on victims with the female gender.

Even though the individual reaction to the experience of sexual harassment differs, many women suffer from psychological consequences. These can be very severe and include lowered self-esteem and an increased risk for depression (Chan, Lam, Chow &Cheung, 2008).

The following paragraphs are addressing the bystander behaviour specifically in the context of sexual harassment. Like the results of the study by Amar, Sutherland and Laughon (2014) showed bystander inactivity was less likely to occur when the individual felt a strong sense of social pressure and felt able to actively act against the harassment (Grigoriou, Hatzigeorgiadis & Theodorakis, 2013). Research shows that besides the number of bystanders (see Banyard, 2011; Burn, 2009), the composition of the group may also be a factor that influences whether people help or not. Grigoriou et al. (2013) for instance, found that especially the gender of the group of bystanders and not always the size may influence bystander interventions.

Indeed, Grigoriou, et al. (2013) showed that the female students were also more likely to act against the sexual harassment than the male students. Also, men feel less social pressure to react to sexism and are less concerned about what others (bystanders) may think of their behaviour.

Furthermore, if the group consists of men they may feel a group norm that stated that reacting to sexual harassment could be seen as “less masculine or gay”, which in consequence could possibly lead to a decrease in status within the peer group (Carlson, 2008).

For our study, this finding would suggest that male bystanders in the company of a male group are less likely to become active and help the victim, because they notice situations less often than women and could lose their high valued group position. Women are therefore more likely to show more supportive bystander behaviour when they are in a female group. Because of these findings, it stands to reason that victims may have different expectations of who will help them in the case of sexual assault, and consequently this may affect how they internalise the (in-)action of the bystanders.

## The Basis of human Well-being: Basic Psychological Needs

One possible consequence of being sexually harassed is that it may thwart the basic human needs, especially when no-one intervenes. The fulfilment of basic needs is thought to be basic to every human’s happiness and well-being.

Although there has been much diversity on this issue of what exactly is a need, Butler (1953) for example proposed different drives such as the driver for visual exploration as a basic need, we decided to focus on autonomy, competence and especially relatedness as defined by Ryan and Deci (2000). This decision was made because they are generally accepted and supported by a wide range of literature (Deci & Ryan, 2014). The need for competency is satisfied by achieving desired goals. The need for autonomy concerns recognising that the own actions are approved by oneself, the needs for relatedness applies to feeling connected to people who are personally relevant to oneself (Reis, Sheldon, Gable, Roscoe, & Ryan, 2000).

Sexual harassment was found to, among other negative effects, have a negative influence on self-esteem (Chan et al., 2008). This is a concept that is highly related to several of these fundamental needs. Therefore, it stands to reason that although we could not find explicit literature on the relation between sexual harassment and the basic psychological needs, it seems clear that due to their serious consequences on mental health, the experience of sexual harassment has a possible negative effect on the fulfilment of the basic psychological needs of the victim.

Another reason why we think that sexual harassment and in particular bystander non-intervention may affect the fundamental needs is that the bystander non-intervention has several overlapping features with ostracism (van Bommel et al., 2016). In the following paragraphs, we like to discuss the ostracism and its relation to our scenario. Ostracism is defined as “ignoring and excluding individuals or groups by individuals or groups” (Williams, 2007, p.427). Ostracism refers to getting excluded by a group in a certain situation; in the bystander scenario, the victim is excluded from getting help. The experience of not getting help despite this bigger “resource” (people who could potentially help) and estimated higher motivation for the individual (e.g. potentially enhancing the status in the group), could lead to feelings of rejection and ultimately victimisation. Victimation, as it is the case with sexual harassment, could, therefore, be compared to getting ostracised.

Previous research has shown that feeling ostracised has a direct effect on the basic psychological needs of a person. Even a short time, for example, six minutes, of exposure to feelings of ostracism has shown to lower the level of the basic psychological needs significantly. Feelings of ostracism are representing a serious threat to the individual, against which it needs to protect, which is indicated by the finding that individuals engage in several coping strategies. Another indicator is that ostracism even looks like actual physical

pain in brain scans (Zadro, Williams and Richardson, 2004; Eisenberger, Lieberman and Williams, 2003).

The experience of not getting help despite the many potential helpers and the lower threshold of the individual helper, due to the fact that they could mobilise support via the group, could lead to feelings of rejection. In our scenario, this group are the present bystanders. This feeling of rejection could lead to fewer feelings of belonging, control, meaningful existence, and a lower level of self-esteem (van Bommel, et al., 2016), especially lowering the level of the “need for relatedness”, because this needs roots in the interaction with others. Also, the fulfilment of the need for autonomy could be affected by the act of sexual harassment since sexual harassment represents a violation of someone’s private space.

Taken together, we are hypothesising that the victims of sexual harassment have in general lower levels of fulfilment of the need for competence, autonomy, and relatedness because our scenario shows striking similarities to ostracism-scenarios.

### **One or many? The effect of the number of bystanders on the Basic Psychological Needs**

It is clear that ostracism has many negative psychological consequences. Interestingly, research on group size and ostracism shows that ostracism is already experienced as negative. Indeed, research shows that a group size of two people is sufficient to arouse those feelings in a victim (Sandstrom et al., 2016). In addition, this level has shown to negatively affect the basic psychological needs of the victim (Sandstrom et al., 2016).

Besides the finding that ostracism is already negatively experienced in small groups we are going to consider the group size as a potential factor. The literature about the relation between the group’s size of the present bystander and the cognition of the victim does not provide a clear picture. Previous research indicated that there is an indication that the presence

of an audience, in our case one or more bystanders, showed to have a positive effect on heroic behaviour, due to the fact that heroism is mostly felt if there is an audience for it (Eagly & Crowley, 1986). A heroic act in the absence of an audience would not be socially valued in the same way as the same act in front of others. At the same time people are not aware that due to low public self-awareness, in many situations the opposite occurs, namely, people are less likely to intervene in the presence of others (van Bommel et al., 2014). The victim could, therefore, have a higher expectation to get help because it estimates that out of the crowd of people at least one person should be motivated to “exploit” the situation to achieve heroic status by helping the victim. This idea is based on the finding that group size can also motivate helping in the individual (Levine & Crowther, 2008).

Based on these findings we are hypothesising the following for our study:

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### *Hypothesis 1*

*The presence of non-intervening bystanders leads to lower levels of the fulfilment of the basic psychological needs of the victim.*

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After considering the number of bystanders, we are now going to focus on the gender of the bystander in the following paragraphs.

## **Gender of the bystander as relevant factor**

Two possible factors which may influence the consequences of non-intervention during sexual harassment are the gender of the bystander and the gender of the victim itself. Grigoriou, et al. (2013) stated that female students were more likely to act against the sexual harassment than the male students due to amongst others peer pressure (fearing

demasculinization, see Carlson, 2008). This is, however, opposite to people's expectations of which gender may be more likely to help.

Indeed, previous research has shown that a common stereotype about men is that they are more likely to show heroic behaviour. In this case "heroic behaviour" indicates the "ability to stand up" against pressure and take an active role in helping the victim (Eagly & Crowley, 1986). This perception of men being more helping than women leads to greater expectations on them. Missing action by a passive bystander would therefore not fulfill the projected expectations of the victim, possibly increasing the negative consequences in the process.

If the bystander does not act it is more likely, that they will be blamed by the victim. A difference is the kind of blame the two genders receive. In general, men are more blamed for their behaviour at a specific moment (Howard, 1984) than women, a possible result of underlying stereotypes (Davies, Pollard & Archer, 2001). Also in general, women receive more characterological blame (Davies, Rogers & Whitelegg, 2009). Behavioural blame is more related to the situation the person is in, thus external of the individual (e.g. He did not behave very bravely during after the football match.). Characterological blame is attributed to internal characteristics of the individual, therefore being stable throughout different situations (e.g. She is not a very empathic person.). After splitting up the attribution of blame by the gender of the accuser, the male participants attributed more characterological blame to the female victim than to the male victim. The women attributed similar amounts of characterological blame to the victims regardless their gender (Anderson, 1999).

It, therefore, seems that women are more likely to get victim-blamed, from both genders, making the related problems more relevant for the female victims.

Based on the notion that men are more likely to intervene it becomes more confusing for the victim when they actually do not intervene. Therefore, it is more likely that they will

internalise or find reasons for why this inactivity took place, which could influence the fulfilment of the basic psychological needs.

These findings support our decision to focus in this study on the experience of female victims of sexual harassment and lead to the following hypothesis:

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### *Hypothesis 2*

*The gender of the bystander influences the evaluation of consequences on the own basic psychological needs by the victim. More precisely that victims who get assaulted in the presence of male bystanders are experiencing lower levels of the fulfilment of the basic psychological needs than women, who get assaulted in the presence of female bystanders.*

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## **Current Research**

The line of reasoning offered above raises the question if the presence of bystanders and if bystanders of both genders affect the victim's basic psychological needs the in same way.

Taking this into consideration our research addresses the question if the factors "presence of bystanders" or "gender of the bystander" influences the consequences on the basic psychological needs for a victim of sexual harassment. We will test these factors by using several vignettes, in which we asked the participant to emphasise in the victim and in which we manipulate the mentioned factors.

## **Method**

### **Participants & Design**

In total 200 women took part in the experiment, due to the research question the study was limited to female participants. The participants were between 18 and 29 years old, with

an average age of 19,98 and a standard deviation of 1.631. The sample was formed using a convenience sampling approached to get a general overview and to be able to include a diverse group of women in the study. Participants were recruited both personally by the researchers as anonymously via online platforms such as Facebook and the SONA-System of the University of Twente. The questionnaire was open for data collection from December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2016 till February 7<sup>th</sup>, 2017. Also, it should be noticed, that due to deadlines, we only used the data collected till 17<sup>th</sup> of January 2017.

An experimental research design was used. The participants were randomly assigned to one of the following conditions: There were no bystanders present, only four female bystanders, only four male bystanders, or two female and two male bystanders, present during the harassment.

## Procedure

At the beginning, the participant is informed that they could stop at any time of the research, including a warning that the design of the study could be emotionally difficult for the participant, due to the sexual content. Even prior to the survey was specifically stated that the results will be processed anonymously. Before starting the actual experiment, participants were asked to agree to the previously outlined terms of the experiment. After accepting the terms they are asked to answer the question selection based on the Locus of Control Scale on a 5-point-likert-scale format. Next, the participant is randomly assigned to one of the vignettes, as described above (See Appendix A).

Afterwards, participants received a questionnaire about the level of their basic psychological needs, next about the attribution of guilt, after that a couple of questions about self-awareness, and questions about the ability to emphasise in the vignette. They were specifically informed that there are no right and wrong answers to the questions and that the

researchers were interested in their personal opinions, beliefs, and experience. At the end, the participants were asked about demographic data, such as their age.

## Apparatus and materials

### Vignette

During the study, we used a vignette. The vignette described a storyline in which the first-person narrator intended to study in the library, where she gets increasingly harassed by a stranger. The versions of the vignettes differed regarding the number and/ or gender of the present bystanders. The gender of the bystanders had two levels: male or female, the number of bystanders had three levels: One bystander, four bystanders of the same sex or two bystanders of each sex. It was thus intended that the participants empathised in the assigned vignette. See Appendix A for the vignettes.

### Questionnaires

The whole questionnaire, consisting of different sub-questionnaires which origin is discussed below, is presented in English. This language was chosen, even though we are collecting data in the Netherlands because this way also non-Dutch speaking students could participate.

### *Need Satisfaction following Ostracism*

We based the part which measured the need satisfaction on Jamieson, Harkins and Williams (2010) proposed questions. All the items for this questionnaire were measured on a 5 point-Likert Scale. The part is intended to measure the basic psychological needs after the participant experienced some form of ostracism. The constructs measured are discussed in the following paragraphs.

*Need: to belong, meaningful existence and control*

The Need to belong was measured with 4 statements e.g. “I felt a sense of belonging”.

The questions were averaged in one scale, which showed to have an  $\alpha = .607$ . The need for meaningful existence was measured with 5 questions e.g. “I felt meaningless”. The questions were all averaged into one scale, which showed to have an  $\alpha = .773$ . The need for control was measured with 5 questions, the resulting scale had an  $\alpha = .656$ . An exemplary item is “I felt I had the ability to significantly alter events.” Accordingly, the internal consistency of the need to belong was acceptable, the need for meaningful existence was acceptable and the need for control was also acceptable.

***Additional Constructs***

In addition to our previously mentioned main constructs, it was chosen to measure a few additional constructs, which are possibly related to our research questions. The constructs and their measurements are described in the following paragraphs.

***Blame***

The last questionnaire we included measures blame. Within that questionnaire, it was differentiated between the sub-scales Self-blame, Perpetrator-blame, and bystander-blame. The blame related questions are based on Besharat, Eisler and Dare (2001). The total of 16 questions are given in separate statements. The participant is asked to indicate how much he agrees with the presented statements on a 7-point Likert-scale, between “Strongly disagree” and “Strongly Agree”.

The questionnaire consists of a total three subscales. The first was “Self-blame” (4 questions, e.g., “What happened was entirely my fault.”), with a Cronbach’s Alpha of  $\alpha = .779$ . The second was “Perpetrator-blame” (5 questions, e.g. “The perpetrator was to blame for what happened.”) with a Cronbach’s Alpha of  $\alpha = .825$  and the third was “Bystander-

blame" (7 questions; e.g. "Other people should feel guilty for what happened."), with an  $\alpha = .794$ .

### *Self-Esteem*

To measure the construct self-esteem, we based our questions Rosenberg (1965). The questionnaire was described as measuring global self-worth by measuring both positive and negative feelings about the self. The scale is said to be one-dimensional. We choose only to include statements fit for our scenario, which were closely related to self-esteem. An exemplary statement is "I feel I do not have much to be proud of". On each given statement, the participant was asked to indicate how strongly he agrees or disagrees with each statement. The answers were taken with help of a 7-point Likert Scale. The Cronbach's alpha was .855, indicating a good reliability.

### *Locus of Control*

We made our own measurement based on Rotter's (1966) Locus of Control Scale. To keep the study relatively short we only left the key items in, based on the biserial-item correlation given by Rotter (1966).

This selection resulted in a total of 19 questions, which were included in our questionnaire. From the 19 pairs, there was always one statement indicating an external and one indicating an internal locus of control. For the exact table of scoring, see Appendix B. The computed Cronbach's Alpha for the selected questions was .631, indicating acceptable reliability.

### *Empathy*

The empathy in the vignette was assessed with the help of 5 items on a five-point Likert scale assessed when the score ranged from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The questionnaire had a Cronbach's Alpha of .665 and was averaged into one scale

## Results

### Manipulation check

We used the One-way ANOVA to control if our manipulated variable “Number of present bystanders” was perceived as intended. A One-Way ANOVA on the control question addressing the number of bystanders present across conditions revealed a significant difference between one or more conditions [ $F(3, 200) = 14.709; p < .001$ ]. A post-hoc comparison with special contrast showed that as expected, participants in the alone condition reported 10.75 fewer people present in the library than people in all the three bystander conditions [ $F(3, 200) = 40.378; p < .001$ ], indicating that our manipulation worked.

### Empathising with the situation/vignette

A One-Way ANOVA on the total Empathy Score across conditions revealed no significant difference between one or more conditions [ $F(3, 207) = .285; p = .836$ ]. The empathy was, therefore, the same across the conditions. Descriptive Analysis revealed that Empathy had a mean of 4.273, with a standard deviation of .491. Considering that the maximum score was 5, this indicates that Participants had high empathy in the vignette.

A t-test revealed that the scores on empathy differed significantly from, the scales midpoint (3) [ $t = 37.642, \text{d.f.} = 210; p < .001$ ], indicating that we were successful in creating a vignette that made it possible to identify with.

### Basic Psychological Needs

At first, we tested if there was a significant difference between the three basic psychological needs for each condition, to test the first hypothesis “*The presence of non-intervening bystanders leads to lower levels of the fulfilment of the basic psychological needs of the victim.*” A one-way ANOVA on the Need to Belong across conditions revealed a non-significant difference between one or more conditions [ $F(3, 208) = 1.439; p = .233$ ] A one-way ANOVA on the Need for meaningful existence across conditions revealed a non-

significant difference between one or more conditions [ $F(3, 208) = .746; p= .526$ ] A one-way ANOVA on the Need for control across conditions revealed a non-significant difference between one or more conditions [ $F(3, 208)= .093; p= .964$ ]. Therefore, our first hypothesis could not be verified.

The second hypothesis was that “*The gender of the bystander influences the evaluation of consequences on the own basic psychological needs by the victim. More precisely that victims who get assaulted in the presence of male bystanders are experiencing lower levels of the fulfilment of the basic psychological needs than women, who get assaulted in the presence of female bystanders.*” This was also tested by the before mentioned ANOVA and yielded, as reported no significant results. This means for the second hypothesis that it could also not be verified.<sup>1</sup>

### **Exploratory analyses**

Exploratory Analysis test if there was a difference on self-blame, perpetrator-blame or bystander-blame between the conditions. A one-way ANOVA revealed no significant difference between one or more conditions for self-blame ( $F[3, 207] = .076; p= .973$ ) or perpetrator blame ( $F[3, 207]= .888; p= .448$ ). However, the One-way ANOVA for Bystander-blame across conditions, however, showed a significant difference between one or more conditions ( $F[3, 207]=19.465; p= .000$ ).

Post-hoc analysis on the Bystander-blame across conditions using the LSD test indicated that the mean difference from the Condition without bystanders was significantly different from all other conditions. The biggest mean difference was found between the condition without bystanders and the condition with male bystanders [ $I-J= -1.21024; p= .000$ ]. The second biggest significant difference was found between the condition without bystanders and the condition with mixed gender bystanders [ $I-J= -1.15333; p= .000$ ]. The

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<sup>1</sup> Additionally, we measured the Locus of Control, also the construct is outside of this research.

smallest significant difference was found between the condition without bystanders and the condition with female bystanders [ $I-J=-0.83288$ ;  $p= .000$ ]. Further, there was also a significant mean difference between the conditions with female bystanders and the condition with male bystanders [ $I-J= -.377$ ;  $p= .036$ ].

Explanatory Analysis tested if there was a significant difference between the conditions regarding the reports Self-esteem score. A One-way ANOVA revealed no significant difference between the conditions [ $F(3, 207) = .384$ ;  $p= .765$ ].

## Conclusion

Based on the results the following can be concluded in relation to our hypothesis. The first hypothesis “The presence of non-intervening bystanders leads to lower levels of the fulfilment of the basic psychological needs of the victim.” could not be verified based on our data.

Our second and final hypothesis was “The gender of the bystander influences the evaluation of consequences on the own basic psychological needs by the victim. More precisely that victims who get assaulted in the presence of male bystanders are experiencing lower levels of the fulfilment of the basic psychological needs than women, who get assaulted in the presence of female bystanders.” This assumption could also not be proved, through our data.

## Discussion

This research was aimed to explore the influence the presence of bystanders has on the basic psychological needs of a victim of sexual assault. More precisely the gender and the number of non-helping bystanders were at the core of the interest. The hypotheses were tested

by presenting the participants with questions around different psychological concepts and showing them one out of four vignettes.

Furthermore, this does not support the idea that the bystander effect raises a feeling of social exclusion in the victim (ostracism) as was presented by Williams (2007), which was further discussed in the introduction of this paper. Related to this issue, Van den Broeck, Ferris, Chang, and Rosen (2016) described that the fulfilment of the need to belong correlated with intrinsic motivation. Therefore, it seems possible that the inactivity of the bystanders did not touch the fulfilment of the victims need because it was not based on their presence in the first place. The ostracism effect could, therefore, be related to excluding the individuals from more important groups like e.g. family. This identification could be valued higher than the identification with the students, which was mainly presented in our research. This could explain why our specific scenario did not come up with results: Because if focused on the wrong group.

We found a difference in the resulting levels of bystander-blame between the groups with only male bystanders and the one with only female bystanders. Our finding that the women received lower blame than men could be related to the Becker and Eagly (2004) analysis of the relation between heroism and gender. Based on their analysis there is a stereotype that men are more likely to show heroic behaviour, as for example to protect others against a possible threat. Analogous to this idea, it would be possible that if there are only male bystanders, there are expected to protect the supposedly weak female victim. Because they did not fulfil the expectation and helped the victim, the bystander-blame consequently is higher. In the other case, where female bystanders were presented, it could be argued that the stereotype of women suggest the idea that women do not proactively engage in helping behaviour, in the case of a serious threat. Consequently, the blame in this condition would be lower.

Contrary to our findings, related to the Latané and Darleys (1970) formulated “Five Steps of Helping”, Tjaden and Thoennes (2000) found that, contrary to our findings, women's higher danger of getting assaulted should make them more sensible to acts of sexual harassment in their environment. This means that women are expected to notice earlier than men if an emergency, like severe sexual harassment, occurs in their environment. This heightened attention should get them further along in Latane and Darley's *Path to providing help* (1970), increasing the chance to notice the harassment and therefore giving the opportunity to become an active bystander. For the perspective of the victim, this could implicate that the bystander-blame for not getting help is higher against women. Contrary, our research indicated that bystander-blame differed significantly between male and female bystander, whereas female bystanders were less blamed than men.

This finding could also likely be related to the existing stereotypes. Holt and Thompson (2004) described in their analysis different models of the American view of heroic masculinity. All models describe a man who gets active against injustice. Therefore, the expectations of society that men help in a situation of need are deeply rooted and confirmed by several studies, e.g. Carlson (2008). This applies to our victim as part of the society, which needs help because she gets sexually harassed. If we consider that the amount of blame is likely related to the expectations regarding the gender of the bystander, this could be partially explaining the difference in bystander- blame between men and women.

We found no statistical difference between the conditions regarding the level of self-esteem. This finding is in line with the “Social Identity Theory”. According to Turner et al. (1987), there are two ways an individual can fulfil their need for self-esteem. One way is related to the attitude towards the in-group and the other is related to the perception of their personal identity (e.g. based on the own achievements and values). If the victim satisfies this

need via the own identity, it would make sense that this need is not influenced by the behaviour of the bystanders or the perpetrator.

The social identity theory further gives insight in the findings regarding the need to belong. If victims identify themselves with the female gender it makes sense that they identify themselves with the female bystanders and thus with the act of non-helping. The condition without any bystanders does not give the victims the opportunity to identify themselves with a present female. This identification relates to the level of fulfilment of the need to belong and could be, at least partially, explain the difference regarding the blame between the two mentioned conditions and the no-bystander condition.

A further result of our study was that there was no significant difference for self-blame. This could be the case because the amount of self-blame in a threatening situation, like harassment, might not depend on the number of bystanders, as assumed, but on the number of victims, as demonstrated by Salmivalli (2010). Since the number of victims was always only the participant, it seems in line with Salmivalli (2010) that we could not find any differences.

Furthermore, we found no difference in blame on the perpetrator. Instead of the number or gender of the bystanders, research suggests that the “Believe-In-the-Just-World” Theory could be a predictor of blame attribution towards the perpetrator or victim (Strömwall, Alfredsson, & Landström, 2013). Research on this topic by Summers and Feldman (1984) on the other hand showed that in cases of abuse just the most extreme examples of violence against another person, in this case, an informally known person, predicted an internal attribution to the perpetrator. They further hinted to the relationship between victim and bystander as moderating factor of the attribution of blame to perpetrator or victim

## Strengths

Regarding the structure of our research our data showed that the manipulation worked, therefore it can be said that most of the participants understood their condition as they were supposed to be. However, there were also cases in which the individual responded to the questions differently than we expected. Therefore, it seems to be the case that some people shaped the situation in the vignette according to their own pre-existing bias e.g. "Every time I am in the library; the library is very crowded." Imagination or unintentional misunderstanding of the situation by some students is, of course, a possible confounding variable, that could not be controlled for our study.

## Empathy

Participants were according to our findings highly able to emphasise in the vignette. This positive finding supports the value of our previously discussed findings. The verbal feedback supports this, which I received from some participants, describing that they experienced the behaviour of the perpetrator in the vignette as "creepy" and "obtrusive".

## Further Research

Given that our set up did not give the opportunity for the victim to react on the harassment, it would be interesting to analysis in further research if a possibility to react actively changes the effect on the basic psychological needs.

Another point that we already mentioned earlier is the setup of the experiment. During the debriefing, it was clear that even though that it was stated in the vignette if there were zero or four bystanders, some participants envisioned 50. A suggestion to do so would be using a Scenario presented in a virtual Reality Setting, to produce at one hand a nearly realistic situation which on the other hand could offer a stronger manipulation of the stimuli and an even higher empathy.

## **Concluding Remarks**

In summary, it can be said that there is a need for research in the area of bystanders influence on the Basic Psychological Needs. But further, we conclude that given the fact that victims of sexual harassment sometimes suffer the consequences years after the incidents, that addressing the bystanders during such incidence might help. The findings can also be used during prevention programs, to illustrate the problem. Further are these findings not only interesting for academic research but are also relevant to psychiatrists, police officers and helpers who are aiding the victims in coping with their experience.

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## Appendix A

### Vignette “Alone”

It is Thursday night and you're in the library, waiting for your friend to show up. You had made an appointment to study together for the test, which is coming up in a few days. While you enter the library, you saw that your friend is not on your usual spot, so you decided to already start studying until she gets there.

You see that your usual spot is free, moreover there is no one else in the library.

After a while, you get the feeling that someone is staring at you. You look up and see that there is a guy at the desk in front of you. You don't know him personally, but you saw him a few times in the past days.

You smile at him politely and then refocus on your book.

He says “Hey Sweetheart, I am sorry to bother you, but do I know you from somewhere?”

You answer “I don't think so.” And get back to your book.

He replies “Oh but you definitely should know me, I mean we have seen each other a couple of times, so I am counting that as time we dated, too, alright Baby?!”

You smile awkwardly and reply “I don't think so and I am really sorry, but I think I really need to study for my test.”

He grins and answers “Oh but you're fucking sexy, you don't really think anyone is going to care about your grades, right? And if you really want to learn something, why don't you come back to my place and I will teach you a thing or two?” After you ignore him for a while, he stands up and leaves.

You look over your shoulder, to be sure he is leaving you alone, and try to go back to studying. Out of nowhere, you feel his hands rubbing over your shoulders.

You shrug and accidentally push your pencil case from the desk so that all your pencils are scattered over the floor.

As you stand up and kneel to collect your pencils, the guy sneers at you and says “Yeah, that's a good position for you. I can work with that, babe.”

When you look around, you see that there is no one there to help you.

### Vignette “Women”

Please read the following vignette (story) and try to put yourself in the situation.

It is Thursday night and you're in the library, waiting for your friend to show up. You had made an appointment to study together for the test, which is coming up in a few days. While you enter the library, you saw that your friend is not on your usual spot, so you decided to already start studying until she gets there.

You see that your usual spot is free, but there is a group of four girls sitting in the corner a few tables away.

After a while, you get the feeling that someone is staring at you. You look up and see that there is a guy at the desk in front of you. You don't know him personally, but you saw him a few times in the past days.

You smile at him politely and then refocus on your book.

He says “Hey Sweetheart, I am sorry to bother you, but do I know you from somewhere?” You answer “I don’t think so.” And get back to your book.

He replies “Oh but you definitely should know me, I mean we have seen each other a couple of times, so I am counting that as time we dated, too, alright Baby?!”

You smile awkwardly and reply “I don’t think so and I am really sorry, but I think I really need to study for my test.”

He grins and answers “Oh but you’re fucking sexy, you don’t really think anyone is going to care about your grades, right? And if you really want to learn something, why don’t you come back to my place and I will teach you a thing or two?” After you ignore him for a while, he stands up and leaves.

You look over your shoulder, to be sure he is leaving you alone, and try to go back to studying. Out of nowhere, you feel his hands rubbing over your shoulders.

You shrug and accidentally push your pencil case from the desk so that all your pencils are scattered over the floor.

As you stand up and kneel to collect your pencils, the guy sneers at you and says “Yeah, that’s a good position for you. I can work with that, babe.”

When you look around, you see that the group of four girls are watching what is happening to you, but don’t do anything to help you.

### **Vignette “Men”**

Please read the following vignette (story) and try to put yourself in the situation.

It is Thursday night and you’re in the library, waiting for your friend to show up. You had made an appointment to study together for the test, which is coming up in a few days. While you enter the library, you saw that your friend is not on your usual spot, so you decided to already start studying until she gets there.

You see that your usual spot is free, but there is a group of four guys sitting in the corner a few tables away.

After a while, you get the feeling that someone is staring at you. You look up and see that there is a guy at the desk in front of you. You don’t know him personally, but you saw him a few times in the past days.

You smile at him politely and then refocus on your book.

He says “Hey Sweetheart, I am sorry to bother you, but do I know you from somewhere?”

You answer “I don’t think so.” And get back to your book.

He replies “Oh but you definitely should know me, I mean we have seen each other a couple of times, so I am counting that as time we dated, too, alright Baby?!”

You smile awkwardly and reply “I don’t think so and I am really sorry, but I think I really need to study for my test.”

He grins and answers “Oh but you’re fucking sexy, you don’t really think anyone is going to care about your grades, right? And if you really want to learn something, why don’t you come back to my place and I will teach you a thing or two?” After you ignore him for a while, he stands up and leaves.

You look over your shoulder, to be sure he is leaving you alone, and try to go back to studying. Out of nowhere, you feel his hands rubbing over your shoulders.

You shrug and accidentally push your pencil case from the desk so that all your pencils are scattered over the floor.

As you stand up and kneel to collect your pencils, the guy sneers at you and says “Yeah, that’s a good position for you. I can work with that, babe.”

When you look around, you see that the group of four guys are watching what is happening to you, but don’t do anything to help you.

### Vignette “Number of People”

Please read the following vignette (story) and try to put yourself in the situation.

It is Thursday night and you’re in the library, waiting for your friend to show up. You had made an appointment to study together for the test, which is coming up in a few days. While you enter the library, you saw that your friend is not on your usual spot, so you decided to already start studying until she gets there.

You see that your usual spot is free, but there is a group of two guys and two girls sitting in the corner a few tables away.

After a while, you get the feeling that someone is staring at you. You look up and see that there is a guy at the desk in front of you. You don’t know him personally, but you saw him a few times in the past days.

You smile at him politely and then refocus on your book.

He says “Hey Sweetheart, I am sorry to bother you, but do I know you from somewhere?”

You answer “I don’t think so.” And get back to your book.

He replies “Oh but you definitely should know me, I mean we have seen each other a couple of times, so I am counting that as time we dated, too, alright Baby?!”

You smile awkwardly and reply “I don’t think so and I am really sorry, but I think I really need to study for my test.”

He grins and answers “Oh but you’re fucking sexy, you don’t really think anyone is going to care about your grades, right? And if you really want to learn something, why don’t you come back to my place and I will teach you a thing or two?” After you ignore him for a while, he stands up and leaves.

You look over your shoulder, to be sure he is leaving you alone, and try to go back to studying. Out of nowhere, you feel his hands rubbing over your shoulders.

You shrug and accidentally push your pencil case from the desk so that all your pencils are scattered over the floor.

As you stand up and kneel to collect your pencils, the guy sneers at you and says “Yeah, that’s a good position for you. I can work with that, babe.”

When you look around, you see that the group of two guys and two girls are watching what is happening to you, but don’t do anything to help you.

## Appendix B

### Questionnaire: Locus of Control

Before you start reading a vignette (short story) we want to ask you some questions. For each of the following pairs of statements, click on the one that you agree with most.

Q13

Pair of Statements 1

- a. Many of the unhappy things in people's lives are partially due to bad luck.
- b. People's misfortunes result from the mistakes they make.

Q14

Pair of Statements 2

- a. In the long run, people get the respect they deserve in this world
- b. Unfortunately, an individual's worth often passes unrecognized no matter how hard he tries

Q15

Pair of Statements 3

- a. Without the right breaks, one cannot be an effective leader.
- b. Capable people who fail to become leaders have not taken advantage of their opportunities.

Q16

Pair of Statements 4

- a. No matter how hard you try some people just don't like you.
- b. People who can't get others to like them don't understand how to get along with others.

Q17

Pair of Statements 5

- a. In the case of the well-prepared student, there is rarely if ever such a thing as an unfair test.
- b. Many times exam questions tend to be so unrelated to course work that studying is really useless.

Q18

Pair of Statements 6

- a. Becoming a success is a matter of hard work, luck has little or nothing to do with it.
- b. Getting a good job depends mainly on being in the right place at the right time.

Q19

Pair of Statements 7

- a. The average citizen can have an influence in government decisions.
- b. This world is run by the few people in power, and there is not much "the little guy" can do about it.

Q20

Pair of Statements 8

- a. When I make plans, I am almost certain that I can make them work.
- b. It is not always wise to plan too far ahead because many things turn out to- be a matter of good or bad fortune anyhow.

Q21

Pair of Statements 9

- a. In my case getting what I want has little or nothing to do with luck.
- b. Many times we might just as well decide what to do by flipping a coin.

Q23

Pair of Statements 10

- a. Who gets to be the boss often depends on who was lucky enough to be in the right place first.
- b. Getting people to do the right thing depends upon ability. Luck has little or nothing to do with it.

Q24

Pair of Statements 11

- a. As far as world affairs are concerned, most of us are the victims of forces we can neither understand nor control.
- b. By taking an active part in political and social affairs the people can control world events.

Q25

Pair of Statements 12

- a. Most people don't realize the extent to which their lives are controlled by accidental happenings.
- b. There really is no such thing as "luck."

Q26

Pair of Statements 13

- a. It is hard to know whether or not a person really likes you.
- b. How many friends you have depends upon how nice a person you are.

Q27

Pair of Statements 14

- a. With enough effort, we can wipe out political corruption.
- b. It is difficult for people to have much control over the things politicians do in office.

Q28

Pair of Statements 15

- a. Sometimes I can't understand how teachers arrive at the grades they give.
- b. There is a direct connection between how hard I study and the grades I get.

Q29

Pair of Statements 16

- a. Many times I feel that I have little influence over the things that happen to me.



b. It is impossible for me to believe that chance or luck plays an important role in my life.

**Q30**

Pair of Statements 17



a. People are lonely because they don't try to be friendly.



b. There's not much use in trying too hard to please people, if they like you, they like you.

**Q31**

Pair of Statements 18



a. Most of the time I can't understand why politicians behave the way they do.



b. In the long run, the people are responsible for the bad government on a national as well as on a local level.

## Basic Psychological Needs

Indicate for each of the following statements how much you agree or disagree. Please remember to try to put yourself in the perspective of the woman from the vignette.

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I felt disconnected	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I felt rejected	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I felt like an outsider	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I felt a sense of belonging	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I felt invisible	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I felt meaningless	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I felt non-existent	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I felt important	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I felt useful	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I felt powerful	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I felt I had control over the course of the situation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I felt I had the ability to significantly alter events	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I felt others were concerned about my situation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I felt the others were in control of my fate	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I felt vulnerable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Self esteem

## Block Options

Q32

Indicate for each of the following statements how much you agree or disagree. Please remember to try to put yourself in the perspective of the woman from the vignette.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
responsible for what happened.							
What happened was partially the fault of other people.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Other people are partially to blame for what happened.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Other people should feel guilty for what happened.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Other people were responsible for what happened.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
If someone would have helped I would have felt better.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Others could have eased the situation.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
No one stopped him so the perpetrator's behavior is probably acceptable.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The type of behavior by the perpetrator is normal, or else someone would have said something.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
If I were truly in this situation I would get other people involved.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Page Break

Q33

Please indicate for each statement how much you agree or disagree with it. Please remember to try to put yourself in the woman's perspective in the vignette.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
What happened was entirely the perpetrator's fault.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### Empathy in the vignette

Block Options

Q35

Please indicate for each statement how much you agree or disagree with it.

	Totally disagree	Disagree	Do not agree/ Nor disagree	Agree	Totally agree
I can empathize with the described situation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I was able to visualize the scene pretty well.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My answers reflect what I would feel in reality.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This situation reflects a situation from reality I have experienced myself.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It was impossible for me to put myself in the situation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My answers are consistent with my real feelings.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Page Break

Q39

The following questions are the final questions

Q38

How many people were there in the library (besides you and the perpetrator). Please type your answer in numbers.

Q40

If there were other people in the library (besides you and the perpetrator) what was their gender?

- Male

- Female
- Mixed
- There were no other people in the library

Q35

What is your age? (in numbers)