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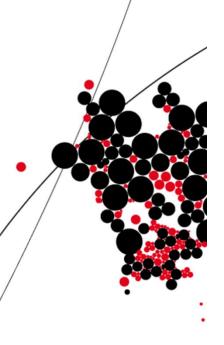
Deindividuation Effects on Group Offending

The effect of salient identity and being in a group on sexual offending

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DEINDIVIDUATION EFFECTS ON GROUP OFFENDING

Abstract

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The Social Identity Model of Deindividuation Effects proposes that behaviour in

group becomes more socially regulated by group norms. Groups that offend

consequentially possess a group norm that condones offending. The present study

tested this theory for group sexual assault. Group identity (group vs. individual) and

salient group identity (masculine vs. feminine identity) were manipulated. It was

hypothesized that overall more offending would occur in the group condition. Only

participants primed with a masculinity norm were expected to show more sexist

behaviour though. To test this, participants read five short stories about a superhero.

They could indicate how they would behave in that situation. Response options were

harmless, sexist or criminal. Neither hypothesis could be confirmed.

Keywords: sexual offending, group offending, SIDE, group identity

Deindividuation Effects on Group Offending: The Effect of Salient Identity and Being in a Group on Sexual Offending

Group behaviour was long considered the least regulated form of human behaviour (Diener, 1980). However, there is evidence that behaviour in groups becomes more regulated, not less so. When in a group, people shift from a personal to a social identity and pay more attention to group norms. These norms then determine the behaviour in a group. Offending happens, when a group has norms that condone offending (Spears & Postmes, 2014).

A particularly understudied type of group offending is group sexual offending, or multiple-perpetrator rape (MPR). While some explanatory models highlight group processes, no comprehensive study has been conducted yet. Feminist theories have long been pointing out the importance of societal, subcultural and group norms (Franklin, 2004). They propose that a shared masculinity norm among perpetrators is an influential factor in MPR.

This study aims at investigating the group processes involved in sexualized offending by groups. By manipulating whether or not participants of this study were part of a group and by manipulating the salient group identity, we expected to gain insights whether participants would be more or less willing to engage in sexual offending.

Deindividuation

Coined by Le Bon in the late 19th century, the term *Deindividuation* describes the loss of individual rationality in a crowd. Heavily influenced by crowd behaviour he witnessed during the violent upheavals of the Paris Commune, Le Bon proposed that crowds rob their members of their individual values, opinions, and beliefs.

Individual rationality is replaced by a group mind over which the individual group member has no control (Widener, 1979).

Though his original ideas were considered controversial, they have been influential on modern day social psychology. They were picked up by Festinger, Pepitone and Newcomb (1952) and developed over the following decades.

Modern Deindividuation theory states: Anonymity in a crowd leads to a loss of self-awareness, which in turn reduces inhibitions and increases the likelihood of antinormative behaviour (Spears & Postmes, 2014). Due to reduced accountability to others and a lack of self-awareness, people get more responsive to environmental cues (Prentice-Dunn & Rogers, 1989). This state is referred to as Deindividuation (Reicher, Postmes & Spears, 1995).

A meta-analysis of studies investigating Deindividuation theory found no clear support for the hypothesis that Deindividuation leads to more anti-normative behaviour. The Deindividuation manipulations of anonymity, group size and reduced self-awareness did not lead to more anti-normative behaviour. Across 60 studies, Deindividuation manipulations had only small effects on anti-normative behaviour (Postmes & Spears, 1993). Furthermore, some studies showed a deindividuated state leading to lowered aggression depending on the context. (Reicher, Spears & Postmes, 1998). This raises the question which situational factors are responsible for determining the behaviour of people in groups.

SIDE Model

Deindividuation theory is based on two assumptions: that a unique personal self is the basis for deliberate, normative action and that being in a group blocks the individual from accessing this personal self (Reicher et al., 1998).

Social Identity Theory, developed in the 1970s and 1980s by Tajfel and Turner (1986) however argues that the self is not only comprised of a personal identity. People also derive part of their self-concept from being a member in different social groups. The self consists of the personal identity and the social identities.

The self is conceptualized on different levels of abstraction depending on the context, ranging from an individual self to a member of the human race (Turner & Reynolds, 2010). When categorizing themselves and others into groups or categories, people perceive differences between people as more pronounced than differences within groups. Behaviour is adjusted to fit with the prototype of the group and to distinguish oneself from the out-group. The in-group therefore serves as a source for norms, values and behaviours that are deemed appropriate for the group (Forsyth, 2009). For example, when their gender identity is salient a group of young men might find it appropriate after a girl. When their identity as family members of girls is made salient, they would, however, consider catcalling unacceptable.

Based on these findings, the Social Identity Model of Deindividuation Effects (SIDE) argues that an individual's behaviour becomes more regulated when they become part of a group, not less so. When in a group context, their identity will shift from a personal to a social identity. This is, however, not a process of Deindividuation, but of Depersonalization. The individual does not lose their sense of self; they merely adopt a different category. Consequently, the criteria for action shift as well: from the personal to the social categorical level (Reicher et al., 1998). By being made anonymous in a group or crowd, individuals more readily switch to their group identity. Numerous studies found a stronger effect of group influence under anonymity than when participants were made identifiable (Postmes, Spears, Sakhel & Groot, 2001; Reicher, 1984). Furthermore, being an anonymous in a group can also

offer strategic advantages. If there is a powerful out-group, for example, being anonymous in a group offers protection. Another study found this effect in the context of computer-mediated communication. Groups were primed with either an efficiency or a prosocial norm. Only anonymous groups displayed this effect, while identifiable groups did not (Postmes et al. 2001).

These studies provide evidence that anonymity does not, as Deindividuation theory would predict, necessarily facilitate anti-normative behaviour. On the contrary it suggests that group members are more prone to adhere to group norms when anonymous and when their group identity has been made salient. In the context of groups displaying anti-normative behaviour or group offending, this would suggest that instead of becoming de-regulated, individuals in a group follow a group norm that allows for transgression. This group norm can go against a societal norm of non-offending.

Specific Type of Group Offending: Sexual Offending

Many different types of offending take place in groups. A topic that has gained recent media attention, not least due to the attacks of over a few hundred women in Cologne on New Year's Eve 2015, is sexual assault (Noack, 2016).

Sexual assault is "any type of forced or coerced sexual contact or behaviour that happens without consent" (Women's Health, 2015). The prevalence of sexual assault varies between countries, partly because the definitions of what behaviours constitute rape or sexual assault differ, as well as victims' readiness to go to the police. Overall, most cases worldwide go unreported, with some studies estimating dark figures of up to 90% ("The UN Secretary-General's", 2014).

Around 10% of all sexual assaults in Europe are committed by two or more perpetrators. This is referred to as multiple perpetrator rape (MPR). Accounts vary,

since most statistics do not distinguish between the number of attackers (Horvath & Woodhams, 2013). Sexual assaults committed by multiple perpetrators are typically more violent than lone assaults, the victims are more likely to experience post-traumatic stress, seek medical attention or sustain physical injuries (Ullman, 1999).

Explanatory approaches

To our knowledge, the group processes playing a role in MPR have not been studied yet. The following paragraph gives a short overview over the explanatory approaches of (group) sexual assault developed to this day.

Despite occurring frequently, sexual assault is not very well studied. Psychological approaches typically focus on the perpetrator, attempting to identify personality traits perpetrators have in common ("Psychological Approaches", n.d.). Typically, offending is said to be the result of distorted cognitions, deviant sexual arousal, poor emotional and impulse management as well as problems in relating to other people (Palmer, 2012).

The notion of perpetrators of sexual assault being mentally impaired or deviant has been challenged by feminists in the 1970s. They argued that rape was a tool of intimidation against women (Brownmiller, 1975). Rape was seen as an act of violence not of sexual desire ("Theories of sexual assault", 2006). This introduced the concept of norms into the study of sexual assault. Depending on the context, sexual assault could be understood as normative behaviour with the function of putting women back in their place (Franklin, 2004).

MPR is different from lone rape (LR) in several aspects. It is typically committed by strangers, perpetrators and victims are younger and the acts are more violent (Franklin, 2004; Hauffe & Porter, 2009). There is little research that focuses specifically on MPR. One of the earliest theories associated MPR with adolescents

from a low social-economic background with a tendency for aggressive behaviour (Amir, 1971). Other influential factors proposed were group processes, negative attitudes towards women and situational factors (da Silva, Woodhams & Harkins, 2015). Similar to theories on LR, feminist scholars have viewed MPR as a means of men to gain control over women (Brownmiller, 1975). Furthermore, themes of male bonding, control and power have been associated with MPR (Groth & Birnbaum, 1979; Scully & Marolla, 1985).

Enactment theory (Franklin, 2004) has compared MPR and anti-gay violence, drawing on case studies from high schools and holiday camps where severe abuse took place. Enactment theory proposes that in subcultures where rigid masculinity norms are in place, young men engage in ritualized forms of either anti-gay violence or MPR as a means of assuring one another of their masculinity and punishing a more feminine "other". In other words social norms are a central feature of subcultures with high rates of group rapes that condone sexual coercion. Typical examples for such subcultures are fraternities on US-American university campuses or high school football teams (Franklin, 2004).

The most recently developed model is the Multi-Factorial Theory of Multiple Perpetrator Sexual Offending (MPSO), proposed by Harkins and Dixon (2010) (see figure 1). It attempts to integrate previous theories by proposing three main factors (individual, situational and socio-cultural factors) and their interactions (group processes, subcultural context, internalization of socio-cultural factors). When conceptualizing MPR, these factors should be taken into account (da Silva et al., 2015). For the purpose of this study, we will only look closer at the group processes suggested by the model.

Group processes are incorporated in the model as an interactional factor between individual factors and the situational context. Among others, Harkins and Dixon (2010) specifically mention Deindividuation as one of the group processes involved. The anonymity in the group (situational context) causes a deindividuated state, thus inhibiting the individual. However, this does not take into account that another factor in the situational context, legitimized use of aggression, in itself poses a group norm. This makes Deindividuation less likely as a group process in this setting. The authors of MPSO do not provide empirical evidence for their claims regarding group processes. While the model provides a useful framework for studying sexual

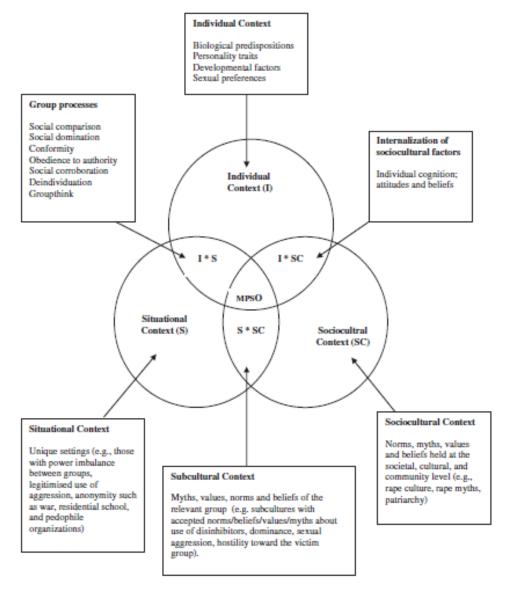


Fig 1 Multi-Factorial Model of Multiple Perpetrator Sexual Offending

offending, there is a lack of evidence overall. Especially for the interactional factor of group processes, too little evidence has been provided so far.

Aim of this study

To our knowledge no study has investigated the group processes that play a role in group sexual offending yet. Feminist theories stress the role of social norms and beliefs that are shared by perpetrators of MPR. In particular, shared masculinity norms and a cultural background that often condones sexually violent behaviour are cited as influential factors.

SIDE proposes a process in which people shift from their personal to their social identity as the cause of offending behaviour in groups. If a condoning group norm exists, people might engage in behaviour that goes against their personal inhibitions.

This study aims to test, whether SIDE can be applied in the context of sexual offending that is whether making masculinity salient can increase the likelihood of participants taking part in sexual offending when participants are in a group. SIDE would predict that when in a group, participants should place more value on the group norm. Therefore a specific type of offending should increase. However, this should only be the case for specific types of offending.

For this study participants read a range of scenarios that depicted them as a person with superpowers (in this case flying). They met different people and could choose different courses of action for each scenario. The possible response options ranged from harmless to offensive, the offensive options being either sexual in nature or not (insult, theft, vandalism, violence). If participants in a group would experience Deindividuation, then all types of offending should take place. However, if there was a group norm in place that would specifically condone sexual violence while

punishing other types of offences, then participants should be more likely to only exhibit a certain type of offending (sexual offending), but not other types.

Hypotheses

It was hypothesized that there would be a main effect of group and a main effect of identity on offending. Participants in the group condition would display higher levels of offending than participants in the individual condition (Hypothesis 1a) and higher levels of offending in the masculine identity condition (Hypothesis 1b). We also expected an interaction effect of identity and group condition (Hypothesis 2a). However, it was expected that only participants who were primed for a masculine identity would demonstrate an increase in their readiness to sexually offend (Hypothesis 2b).

Ethical considerations

Given the nature of the subject, a few remarks regarding the ethics of such a study are in order. The "sexual offences" in this study were deliberately confined to non-punishable, but ethically questionable behaviours. While behaviours were chosen that arguably are overstepping boundaries, most of them are widely common and acceptable in society. While there is a risk of diminishing the validity of the findings, these behaviours can serve as an overall indicator for an overall problematic approach to women. By eliciting these rather harmless responses, insights can be gained into the underlying processes that play a role in sexual offending.

Furthermore, in sexual offending both women and men can be both perpetrators and victims. This study focuses on women as victims and men as perpetrators for the sole reason that most previous research has been conducted on these cases. In order to build as closely as possible on previous findings the same type

of offence was chosen. In other cases, different or additional factors might play a role. However, these cannot be taken into consideration in the scope of this study.

Method

Participants

We recruited 145 male participants using a convenience sample method. They were approached via the subject pool of the University of Twente (SONA), Social Media, and mailing a variety of universities and student associations. After removing all participants that had not finished the study, 108 participants ($M_{\rm age} = 27.7$; $SD_{\rm age} = 9.8$) remained.

Design

A 2x2-Design was used with group (individual vs. group context) and identity (masculine vs. feminine) as independent between-subject variables. The responses to the five scenarios (within-subject factor) were collected as the dependent variable.

Materials and Procedure

We distributed the questionnaire online via Qualtrics Survey Software. The cover story was that participants were taking part in a study about the perception of narration.

Manipulation. First they completed an identity manipulation. Identity was manipulated using a scrambled sentence task. Under the guise of testing their reading speed, participants had to unscramble 20 sentences. Out of these sentences 4 were neutral, while 16 contained words priming either a feminine or a masculine identity. Priming words for the feminine condition contained words such as maternal, emotional or skinny, while masculine words contained paternal, analytical or muscular. The words had been taken from Planned Parenthood (Gender & Gender Identity, 2017) and Words to Use (Words for Men, 2017; Words for Women, 2017).

Participants had a time limit of 200 seconds to unscramble as many sentences as possible.

After completing this task participants read a short instruction and started with the main study. We manipulated group (group vs. individual condition). Participants picked a group logo (group condition) or an individual avatar (individual condition) (Superherotar, 2017) as well as a name for their group or individual character (see Appendix A for logos and avatars). During the rest of the main study we referred to participants only using their self-picked group or individual alias. Their logo/avatar was featured on every new page in the questionnaire.

Scenarios. Participants read a story featuring them as a superhero completing a variety of tasks. The story consisted of five different scenarios. Each scenario described a situation in which the participants could either make use of their superpowers or a situation they would not have gotten into safe for their superpowers.. Each scenario had four response options. Each scenario should feature a non-offensive response option, a sexist response option and a criminal or punishable response option. The fourth response option was a filler option from one of the three categories. For some scenarios either a criminal option or a sexist option were not feasible, namely scenarios one and five. Participants indicated on a 7-point-Likert-scale how likely it was they would choose each option. The scenarios were: saving a woman from a burning building, choosing a free time activity with a superhero friend, intervening in a domestic dispute, interrupting a drug deal and preventing a car theft. Response options for the scenarios ranged from criminal to sexist to non-offensive. A complete account of the scenarios and the associated response options can be found in appendix B.

Item Coding. Two coders assessed the response items to see whether the initial assessment had been correct. Items were coded on whether they were sexist, very sexist, criminal or non-offensive. Coders agreed on all but two items, the disparity was solved by discussion. All scenarios had at least one sexist item, except for the last one, and all had at least one criminal item, except for the first one (see Appendix C for the complete coding table). As can be seen in table 1, the responses considered the most sexist in each scenario were: a kiss on the lips, observing girls in the gym, calling the woman doll and watching the drug dealer undress.

Table 1

Items coded as sexist

Scenario	Item
Scenario 1 "Saving the girl from a fire"	Kiss on the lips
Scenario 2 "Hanging out with a friend"	Observing the girls in the gym
Scenario 3 "Domestic Dispute"	Calling the woman doll
Scenario 4: "Drug Deal"	Watching the woman undress

Additional questionnaires. After finishing the main study, participants answered four questionnaires: A manipulation check, the ASI, the MS scale, and the SDO. These questionnaires tested how well the manipulation had worked and controlled for the participants' attitude towards women and their overall belief whether it is legitimate for certain groups in society to be disadvantaged. Participants rated all items on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = "Not at all", 7 = "very much") unless noted otherwise.

First, subjects completed the *manipulation check*. It consisted of seven items. They inquired about how well participants could identify with the protagonist and how they had perceived the story. Three scores were calculated based on the

manipulation check questionnaire, each consisting of two items. One item was dropped since it did not correlate with any of the other items.

The *immersion* score (r = .649, p < .001) measured how engaging the participants perceived the narrative ("I had fun reading the scenarios", "I found the scenarios interesting"). The *identification with group* (r = .684, p < .001) score measured whether participants felt they were part of a group ("during the scenarios I felt like I was part of a group", "I felt a connection to my group"). The *personal identification* score (r = .563, p < .001) measured whether the participants could identify with the protagonist of the stories ("I could identify with the protagonist of the story", "I could empathize with the protagonist"). Furthermore, participants indicated what they had thought the sentences from the scrambled sentence task where about and what their strategy for solving the scenarios had been.

Next, participants completed the short version of the *Ambivalent Sexism Inventory* (ASI) (α = .825) from Glick and Fiske (1996). The scale uses twelve items to measure benevolent sexism (BS) and hostile sexism (HS) resulting in an overall score of ambivalent sexism (AS). Example items include "Many women have a quality of purity few men possess" (BS), "When women lose to men in a fair competition, they typically complain about being discriminated against." (HS). For the purpose of this study the overall ambivalent sexism score was used.

After finishing the ASI, participants completed the *Modern Sexism Scale* (MSS) (α = .874) adapted from Swim, Akin, Hall & Hunter, 1995 in Becker & Wagner, 2009). The scale consists of nine items, three of which contain a specific reference to Germany. These items were changed to refer to the participants' country of residence (e.g., "Discrimination against women is still a problem in Germany" was changed to "Discrimination against women is still a problem in my country of

residence".) However, one item was too specific to be changed ("Us probably getting a female chancellor is a clear sign for women in Germany of not being discriminated against any longer"). It was left out, resulting in a total of eight items measuring modern sexism.

Afterwards Social Dominance Orientation (SDO) was assessed using the Social Dominance Orientation scale (short version, $\alpha = .656$). It contains of eight items, for example: "Some groups of people are simply inferior to other groups".

Finally, participants indicated how much distraction they had experienced. They indicated how carefully they had read the study on a 10-point scale (1 = "not careful at all" to 10 = "very carefully") and listed possible sources of distraction (e.g., music in the background). They had a chance to provide feedback, then they were debriefed and thanked.

Results

Manipulation Check

Scrambled Sentence Task. Whether the manipulation had been successful was examined using the open question inquiring about what the participants still remembered about the scrambled sentences. Most participants indicated the questions had been about gender (either male or female) stereotypes, while some were still able to mention a number of topics from the sentences (snowmen, children, father, etc). This indicated that the participants had read the sentences carefully and paid attention to the scrambled sentence task. Other participants saw no connection between the sentences and did not find an overall theme they could describe. However, a few participants mentioned that they found the sentences too difficult or felt they did not have enough time for this task. On average participants were able to correctly

complete 6 sentences. Since the completion rate was so low, participants were not excluded from the analysis if they had filled out a smaller number of sentences.

Questionnaire. The scores for immersion, identification with group and personal identification were calculated. It was expected that participants in the individual condition would show higher identification with the protagonist, while those in the group condition would feel more like part of a group. Immersion was expected to be independent of both conditions. Three separate ANOVAs with group and identity condition as independent factors were performed on immersion, identification with group and personal identification (see table 2 for the results). Only one significant effect could be found. There was a significant interaction effect on immersion of group and identity condition (F(1, 107) = 4.140, p = .044). When in the group condition, participants in the masculine identity condition experienced more immersion than participants in the feminine identity condition ($M_{\text{masculine}} = 5.685$, $M_{\text{feminine}} = 5.020$). In the individual condition, this effect was reversed ($M_{\text{masculine}} = 5.183$, $M_{\text{feminine}} = 5.385$). This was against the predictions.

Table 2
F and p-values for the manipulation check scales

T and p-values for the manipulation check scales					
		<i>F</i> -value	df	<i>p</i> -value	
Immersion					
	Group	.104	1	.748	
	ID	1.187	1	.278	
	Group * ID	4.140	1	.044*	
Identification with					
group					
	Group	1.640	1	.207	
	ID	2.142	1	.146	
	Group * ID	.097	1	.756	
Personal identification					
	Group	2.270	1	.135	
	ID	3.420	1	.067	
	Group * ID	.207	1	.602	

Note. * significant with p < .05

A repeated measure ANOVA was conducted with the single items of the manipulation check as the within-subject variable and group and identity as independent factors. There were no overall significant effects. An ANOVA of the individual items however revealed significant effects on two items. There was a significant main effect of identity condition on the item "I could empathize with the protagonist" (F(1, 107) = 5.566, p = .020). Participants in the masculine identity condition showed more empathy for the protagonist of the story than participants in the feminine identity condition. ($M_{\text{masculine}} = 5.352$, $M_{\text{feminine}} = 4.808$). There was also a significant interaction effect of group and identity condition on the item "I had fun reading the scenarios" (F(1, 107) = 4.065, p = .046). In the individual condition those primed with the feminine identity (M = 5.577) had more fun than those primed with the masculine identity condition (M = 5.267), while in the group condition it was participants in the masculine identity condition (M = 5.852) who reported having more fun than those in the feminine identity condition (M = 5.240).

Furthermore there was a marginally significant effect of identity condition of the item "During the scenarios I felt like I was part of a group" (F(1, 107) = 2.777, p = .05). Those in the masculine identity condition felt stronger like they were part of a group than those in the feminine identity condition $(M_{\text{masculine}} = 3.117, M_{\text{feminine}} = 2.496)$.

These results suggest two things: One, that the manipulation was not very strong. And second, that the two independent variables were not independent. Participants that were primed with a masculine identity found it easier to immerse themselves in the story and had a tendency to feel more like part of a group.

Strategy. Participants' self-reported strategies for making decisions in the scenarios were grouped together to analyse reoccurring themes. They fell in seven

different categories: intuition, moral reasoning, referring to "superhero morals", hedonistic motives, rational reasoning, imagining themselves in the situation, and not further specified. When more than one category was mentioned, we picked the first one the participant had mentioned. Most participants stated that they had tried to imagine what they would have done in a similar situation (self-reference). The second most common reason was intuition (see table 3).

Table 3
Absolute frequencies of strategies participants employed

Strategy	Frequency		
No strategy / Other	19		
Intuition	25		
Self-reference	32		
Moral reasoning	14		
Superhero morals	8		
Hedonistic motives	4		
Logical reasoning	6		

Hypotheses

In order to test the hypotheses the items that were coded as either criminal or sexist were analysed. These items were: kiss on the lips, observe the girls at the gym, "look doll....", watch the girl undress (sexist) and tag the building, "don't blame me", grab the drugs, taking the car for the ride, chase after the thieves (criminal). A more detailed explanation of how items were coded can be found in the method section. A repeated measure ANOVA was conducted with the response items as repeated measures and with group and identity as independent factors.

Hypotheses 1a & 1b: Main effect of group condition and identity condition. Neither the main effect of the group condition (F(9, 96) = 1.231, p = .285) nor the main effect of the identity condition (F(9,96), = .837, p = .584) was significant. The hypotheses could not be confirmed.

Hypotheses 2a & 2b: Interaction effect of group condition and identity condition only on sexist items. The interaction effect (F(9,96) = 1.035, p = .418) did not reach significance.

Single item analysis. A one-way ANOVA on the separate items was conducted. Two items are worth noting. An ANOVA revealed a significant main effect of identity on the item "look doll..." (F(1, 107) = 4.053, p = .047). Participants in the masculine identity condition scored higher on this item ($M_{\text{masculine}} = 3.420$, $M_{\text{feminine}} = 2.684$), indicating a higher willingness to offend. This is in line with the prediction that participants primed with a male identity would show an increase in offending (hypothesis 1b). There was also an interaction effect on the item "taking the car for a ride" (F(1, 107) = 4.834, p = .030). Participants in the masculine identity condition (M = 2.519) were more likely to offend than participants in the feminine identity condition (M = 1.400), but only when in the group condition (hypothesis 2a). In the individual condition, this effect was reversed ($M_{\text{masculine}} = 1.833$, $M_{\text{feminine}} = 2.115$). This, however, contradicted hypothesis 2b, which had predicted this effect only for sexist items.

Neither hypothesis could be confirmed with this analysis. However, it is worth noting that there was a tendency to offend more in the group condition which is in accordance with what was initially proposed. And for two items, participants in the masculine condition were indeed more prone to offensive behaviour. The interaction effect could, however, only be found for a criminal item.

Additional Analysis

In a next step, three more items were analysed to see how milder forms of offensive behaviour were affected by the manipulation. We picked three items¹ that were not punishable. These items were either immoral or mildly sexist or indicated the condoning of criminal behaviour through inaction. From three scenarios one item was chosen (scenario 3 and 5 did not have adequate items). The items were: A kiss on the cheek (scenario 1), leaving the friend (inverted; Scenario 2), leaving the drug dealer (inverted, Scenario 4). The same ANOVA with group and identity as independent factors revealed no significant effects. There was no main effect of identity (F(3,102) = 2.444, p = .088), no main effect of group (F(3,102) = .708, p = .708).550) and no interaction effect (F(3, 102) = 1.600, p = .194) either. Though not significant, the main effect of identity revealed a tendency towards significance, indicating a slight tendency for participants in the masculine identity condition (M =3.965) to prefer these options in comparison to participants in the feminine identity condition (M = 3.756). This is in line with the prediction that participants in the masculine identity condition would be more inclined to offensive behaviour, even though these items indicate only mild forms of offending, or condoning offending..

There were two significant effects on two individual items. There was a significant main effect (F(1, 107) = 4.428, p = .038) of identity on the item leaving the drug dealer (inverted, Scenario 4). Participants in the masculine identity condition were less likely to leave the scene than those in the feminine identity condition ($M_{\text{masculine}} = 4.356$, $M_{\text{feminine}} = 3.510$). Again, this is in line with hypothesis 1.

¹ In a previous analysis, a principal component analysis was conducted on the response items of all scenarios resulting in a three factor solution. However, the internal consistencies of the three scales constructed were insufficient. The three items picked for the additional analysis were based on the second factor of the PCA.

There was also an interaction effect (F(1, 107) = 4.202, p = .043) of group and identity on the item leaving the friend (inverted; Scenario 2). Participants in the masculine identity condition ($M_{\text{masculine}} = 5.148$) were more likely than participants in the individual condition ($M_{\text{feminine}} = 4.760$) to stay with their friend in the group condition. This effect was reversed for the individual condition ($M_{\text{masculine}} = 4.167$, $M_{\text{feminine}} = 5.231$). This is in line with the prediction that participants in the group condition, but only when primed with a masculine identity, would express a higher willingness to condone sexist offending.

Exploratory analysis

In a next step, we looked at the covariates. It is possible that these variables were influential on the participants' response patterns. We did not have predictions about the covariates beforehand.

Correlations. First, we tested for correlations between our covariates. ASI was correlated positively with SDO (r = .317, p = .001) and gender identification (r = .429, p < .001). The higher the participants' ASI scores were, the higher they scored on SDO and the better they identified with a male identity.

To assess whether the covariates had had an influence on the manipulation, correlations of the covariates ASI, SDO and gender identification with the manipulation check scales were calculated. ASI was also correlated with identification with group (r = .206, p = .032). This suggested that participants high on ASI had felt a stronger connection to their group. Apart from that, gender identification was also associated with personal identification or the participants ability to connect to the protagonist (r = .225, p = .019). Participants with a higher level of gender identification could identify better with the superhero protagonist, irrespective of the manipulation.

Age. We tested for correlations with the other covariates. Age was slightly negatively correlated with Gender Identification (r = -.221, p = .021), but not with any other variable. An ANCOVA with scenario response items as the dependent variable and group and identity as independent factors revealed no significant effect of age on the dependent variable.

SDO. Next, we tested for the influence of covariates on the results. The first covariate to be considered was *Social Dominance Orientation*. Overall, SDO was low $(M = 3.120, \text{SDO}_{\text{range}} = 1.13 - 5.13)$. We tested SDO in an ANCOVA with scenario response items as the dependent variable and group and identity as independent factors. SDO had a tendency towards a significant effect (F(4,100) = 2.179, p = .077), but neither the main effects of group or identity, nor their interaction effect was significant. While this points to SDO having an effect on the responses to the scenario items, even if this was taken into account there was no significant effect of group or identity on the outcome variables.

Ambivalent Sexism Score. The score of the *Ambivalent Sexism Inventory* (ASI) was calculated. The mean score was 3.49, ranging from 1.08 to 6.25. Next we tested ASI in an ANCOVA with scenario response items as the dependent variable and group and identity as independent factors. ASI had a significant effect (F(4,100) = 7.083, p < .01), but neither the main effects of group (F(4,100) = .799, p = .529) or identity (F(4,100) = .914, p = .459), nor their interaction effect (F(4,100) = .583, p = .676) were significant. ASI was a significant predictor of the scores on the response items. However, even if taken into account, there was no significant difference between the experimental groups. A regression analysis on the mean score of the sexist items showed a significant effect of ASI on this type of offending

(F(1, 106) = 17.362, p < .001). Participants that scored higher on the ASI also had a higher likelihood of offending.

Gender Identification. We controlled for gender identification in our next analysis. Overall, gender identification had no significant effects. There was also no effect of the participants' identity condition on gender identification. The mean score for participants was slightly above average with 4.685.

Discussion

The present study investigated whether group offending was due to a loss of self-awareness or whether supporting group norms were the cause of group offending, as predicted by the Social Identity Model of Deindividuation Effects. We investigated MPR or sexualised offending as a group offence. Participants were either in a group or in an individual context. Furthermore, we manipulated salient identity (masculine or feminine). Participants then read a number of scenarios depicting them as a superhero. They could choose whether or not to offend in five different situations. The hypothesis that being in a group would encourage offending could not be supported. Participants did not display a higher level of offending in the group condition. Furthermore, the hypothesis that only participants in the masculine identity condition would demonstrate an increase in sexualized offending could also not be confirmed.

However, there were some effects on individual items. Analysis of the single items revealed a trend for participants primed with a masculine identity to be more ready to engage in offending behaviours. Furthermore there was a trend for an interaction effect, supporting the hypothesis that the masculine identity would be most influential in the group condition. This effect was, however, found irrespective of whether the item in question was considered sexist or not.

The finding that priming a masculine identity would elicit more offending behaviours is in line with previous research. Priming with a masculine identity has been shown to cause speeding. Participants had been primed by listening to either masculine, feminine or neutral words on the car radio while in a driving simulator. Participants were not aware of the priming. (Mast, Sieverding, Esslen, Graber, & Jäncke, 2008). Though not mentioned explicitly in the study, it is possible that participants were not even aware of their speeding up (mean differences in speed were not very high). It is possible that in our study participants paid too much attention to what they were doing and did not answer spontaneously enough. While intuition was among the more frequently mentioned strategies, only 25 out of 108 participants claimed to have answered spontaneously. In a new study, it might be favourable to introduce a time constraint and have participants answer as quickly as possible. This should help prevent participants from over-thinking their answers and consciously correct their initial, intuitive response. Studies on risk-taking, furthermore, have also found gender-differences, indicating greater risk-taking in men (Byrnes, Miller & Schafer, 1999). This tendency had been found in this study, however an adjustment of the scenario items should be considered.

However, in the present study no clear pattern of behaviour emerged. It is possible that the individual items and scenarios in their attempt to cover a broader range of subjects were too different to elicit a clear pattern. A central aspect of SIDE is the context sensitivity of group behaviour (Reicher et al., 1995). In the study, the different contexts could have offered contradictory cues as to the acceptability of behaviour or the group norm in place. Both manipulations were probably not strong enough to elicit a sufficient rate of anti-normative responses. Furthermore, the feminine identity manipulation was not suitable as a neutral condition, since it was not

part of the subjects' self-concept. This identity had been chosen in order to provide the biggest possible contrast to the masculine identity condition. It is possible though that this served to put more attention on the participants' personal identity or even making them more aware of their gender identity. In a future study this should be tested with a truly neutral priming condition.

The items that elicited significant effect are worth noting. The only sexist item that consistently prompted offensive responses was the item "Look doll" from scenario 3 (domestic dispute). It is possible that being one of the less extremer items, participants felt less restrained or expected less punishment in this situation. In a study testing the influence of formal sanctions on participants' readiness of offending, Bachman, Paternoster and Ward (1992) found that participants' anticipation of formal sanctions reduced their self-reported likelihood to commit sexual assault.

Overall, the scenario method however does seem to be a suitable tool to test these kinds of questions in the future. Participants were willing to indicate their willingness to offend in this study. Bachmann et al. (1992) used hypothetical scenarios to assess which factors might constrain participants from committing sexual assault and which contextual characteristics might have a deterrent effect on participants' willingness to offend. They found that none of their participants reported a zero intention to offend. This further suggests that this method is suitable to study offending.

Limitations of this study

In the future, a different topic for the scenarios should be chosen. The superhero context appears to have drawn the attention to some participants' personal identity as well as their personal moral beliefs. Many cited moral beliefs or their personal values when asked how they chose their responses. The terms "superhero" or

"superpower" possibly evoked strong associations with moral behaviour or a very specific set of rules. This goes in line with offending scores overall being rather low. Choosing a different setting that has less moral implications would be a solution, for example a train ride.

Another limitation is that this was an online study. Online studies are often filled out on the sideline or with less attention than a laboratory study. An advantage of doing a second study in a lab would be that it would be a possibility to have participants fill the scenarios out in groups in order to observe their real life group dynamics.

Due to the limited scope of this study, the scenarios had not been pretested. Due to this, the single items did not form consistent and reliable scales. For the future, the re-formulated scenarios should be pretested and adjusted, so that the single items can be condensed into scales.

Furthermore, only men were tested in this study. A comparison to how these manipulations would have affected women or people of a different gender would have been interesting. Since the norms and assumptions in question are also part of our culture and common knowledge, it would be interesting to see how people who have a different gender identity but are familiar with the underlying assumptions would be affected by these manipulations in this particular context.

Conclusion

While the hypotheses of the study could not be confirmed, it is worth noting that results on individual items did partially confirm the assumptions. Norms and values should not be discarded as irrelevant for group behaviour. Furthermore, testing offending behaviour by means of hypothetical scenarios seems like an interesting way

to get further insight into what norms people follow when engaging in morally questionable behaviours.

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Appendix A

Pictures

Individual Avatars











Group Logos











DEINDIVIDUATION EFFECTS ON GROUP OFFENDING

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Appendix B

Scenarios

You wake up as a ray of sunshine breaks through your window and hits you in the

face. Slowly you open your eyes. It is Saturday morning and you would rather be

sleeping. You sigh and roll over to your other side. And just as you begin to drift

away your phone begins to ring.

"Hello?" "There is trouble. A building on Baker Street is burning and everyone else is

busy. Can you make it?" You sigh. Just another day at the office. "Sure", you say.

"On my way." Quickly you hurry into your clothes. Then you jump out of the

window.

The wind hits your face, you let yourself drop for a few feet before you break your

fall and start flying north. The air presses against your skin as you dive through it.

You feel awake, alive. Powerful. Three years ago, there had been an accident at the

local nuclear power plant. The authorities never really released a statement of what

happened there, but ever since that day some people started to develop powers. You

are one of these people. Ever since that day you can fly, faster than any human being

could ever run. Unfortunately, you are neither bulletproof nor immune to injuries, as

you learned quickly during your first landing attempts. But now you have mastered

flying to perfection. Together with a few others, you decided to form a group, an

alliance to use your powers to protect your city. Because everyone knows: With great

power comes great responsibility. But sometimes also... privileges.

Condition 1:

Please pick a name for your group: The [blank]

Condition 2:

Please pick a name for your character: [blank]

You can smell the building from far away, burned wood and organic matter. The

smoke burns in your lungs and eyes. As you get closer, the heat becomes almost

unbearable. You can see a group of firefighters running around; their fire hoses seem

tiny against the roaring fire. Inside the building something crashes. Was that a

scream? For a second you hover over the building, unsure of what to do. You could

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fly down to the firefighters to coordinate with them. Or you could just fly into the building and find out where that scream came from.

You decide to:

- (a) Talk to the firefighters first
- (b) Immediately fly into the burning building

(A)

You land a little harder than expected. "Ouch." A firefighter runs up you. "Thank God, [charactername/group name] is here! We have three children trapped on the third floor and a woman on the sixth. We should be able to get the children out, but there is no way of reaching the woman before the whole building collapses. You have to get her out of there." Without a word you push yourself into the air and fly right into the building.

(B)

As you get closer you are sure you can hear screaming. The smoke is almost blinding and you can hardly hear anything over the cracking of the flames. You are looking for an open or broken window, a balcony, some way to get inside. Nothing. You start going down, circling the building to find an open window. On the sixth floor, you get lucky. An open window.

Scenario 1: The fire

Condition = *group/anonymous*

Immediately you start coughing. Carefully you move along the corridor, closer to the source of the screams. It's a woman, her voice is high pitched and shrill. "Help", she calls. "Help me." It seems to take ages until you find her apartment. Flames have collected at the top of the staircase leading down, she is trapped. As she spots you, she says: "Thank God you are here. You are a part of the [blank]. I was hoping you would come!" "Don't worry, I will get you out of here." You pick her up like a doll and head for the window. Just as you jump into the air, you hear something collapse behind you. "Thank you", she whispers, her blonde hair blowing in the wind as you gently make your descent. Gallantly you set her to her feet. "My hero!"

Condition = individual

Immediately you start coughing. Carefully you move along the corridor, closer to the source of the screams. It's a woman, her voice is high pitched and shrill. "Help", she calls. "Help me." It seems to take ages until you find her apartment. Flames have collected at the top of the staircase leasing down, she is trapped. As she spots you, she says: "Thank God you are here. You are [blank]. I was hoping you would come! "Don't worry, I will get you out of here." You pick her up like a doll and head for the window. Just as you jump into the air you hear something collapse behind you. "Thank you", she whispers, her blonde hair blowing in the wind as you gently make your descent. Gallantly you set her to her feet. "My hero!"

You blush, almost embarrassed. How likely is it that you react in one of the ways listed below?

You lean forward and kiss her lightly on the cheek.

You lean forward and kiss her lightly on the lips.

You lean forward and kiss her dramatically on her hand.

You smile and say nothing.

Then you push off the ground and fly away.

Scenario 2: Meeting with a friend

Condition = *group/anonymous*

You are mid-air as your phone rings again. You reach into your pocket and almost collide with a rather confused looking pigeon as you try to glance at the display. It's another member of the [blank]. In an attempt to spare the local wildlife, you land on top of a nearby building and pick up. "Yes?" "Hi, fellow [blank]-man! I am bored, we should totally do things." You have stopped questioning the lack of social skills of your fellow [blank]. And quite honestly, you do deserve a bit of free time. "Yeah sure, I'll sent you the coordinates." Only seconds later, he appears next to you. He greets you with a fist bump. His shoulders are wide; his stature resembles a bull. Still, he was lucky enough to stand next to a microwave when the accident happened. Now he can teleport. "What do you want to do?" He shrugs. "There is always the possibility of beer." "It's midday." "So what? But if you don't want to... The new gym two blocks away has an enormous window front and yoga class should be starting right about now. I hear the ladies are..." He whistles. "Or, a buddy told me about an abandoned

factory a few blocks over. We could get some spray paint and have some fun." You hesitate.

Condition = individual

You are mid-air as your phone rings again. You reach into your pocket and almost collide with a rather confused looking pigeon as you try to glance at the display. It's Dan, or the Vanishing Man as he calls himself. In an attempt to spare the local wildlife, you land on top of a nearby building and pick up. "Yes?" "Hi, [blank]! I am bored, we should totally do things." You have stopped questioning the lack of social skills of this guy. And quite honestly, you do deserve a bit of free time. "Yeah sure, I'll sent you the coordinates." Only seconds later, he appears next to you. He greets you with a fist bump "Morning, [blank]. His shoulders are wide; his stature resembles a bull. Still, he was lucky enough to stand next to a microwave when the accident happened. Now he can teleport. "What do you want to do?" He shrugs. "There is always the possibility of beer." "It's midday." "So what? But if you don't want to... The new gym two blocks away has an enormous window front and yoga class should be starting right about now. I hear the ladies are..." He whistles. "Or, a buddy told me about an abandoned factory a few blocks over. We could get some spray paint and have some fun." You hesitate.

What would you like to do with your friend? Please indicate how likely it is that you pick one of the suggested activities.

Go to the nearest pub or bar for a beer.

Go to the gym and observe the girls working out.

Go to the old factory and tag the building.

Leave your friend and fly home.

Scenario 3: the abusive boyfriend

Condition = *group/anonymous*

You are on your way home. Dusk settles and you need to slow down. You are not very keen on crashing into a wall. Big apartment complexes are usually the easiest to avoid, with hundreds of illuminated windows blinking into the night. As you pass one, you can hear people fighting, probably a couple. Their voices resonate from the walls.

They get louder, angrier as you get closer. You can see them know. A man and a woman. Suddenly he pushes her, hard against the railing. She screams.

You don't hesitate. You speed up, as fast as you can, land on the balcony bruising your knee slightly and push him back. "Get off her!" The woman behind her screams again. "Calm down, it's one of the [blank]." The woman has moved from behind you towards the guy, whom you assume to be her husband. She grabs his hand. "Are you okay?" "Yes, of course." She does not look the part. "I am fine. Why do you even get involved in other people's business?!" Her voice that was shaking at the beginning gets more and more angry. "Just leave us alone. Always you [blank]. Leave him alone." By now you are just annoyed. "You were screaming." "We were fighting. Nothing to get involved in. Now get lost."

You have had enough. You push off the ground. However, you hover one more moment over the balcony.

Condition = individual

You are on your way home. Dusk settles and you need to slow down. You are not very keen on crashing into a wall. Big apartment complexes are usually the easiest to avoid, with hundreds of illuminated windows blinking into the night. As you pass one, you can hear people fighting, probably a couple. Their voices resonate from the walls. They get louder, angrier as you get closer. You can see them know. A man and a woman. Suddenly he pushes her, hard against the railing. She screams.

You don't hesitate. You speed up, as fast as you can, land on the balcony bruising your knee slightly and push him back. "Get off her!" The woman behind her screams again. "Calm down, it's [blank]." The woman has moved from behind you towards the guy, whom you assume to be her husband. She grabs his hand. "Are you okay?" "Yes, of course." She does not look the part. "I am fine. Why do you even get involved in other people's business?!" Her voice that was shaking at the beginning gets more and more angry. "Just leave us alone. Always you, [blank]. Leave him alone." By now you are just annoyed. "You were screaming." "We were fighting. Nothing to get involved in. Now get lost."

You have had enough. You push off the ground. However, you hover one more moment over the balcony.

Please indicate which of the following sentences you would most likely say:

Look, doll. I don't know what your deal is, but next time stop pissing the people off who are just trying to help you.

Are you sure that you don't need help? I can get you out of this situation if you feel unsafe.

You are being stupid and ungrateful. Someone thinks that you are in danger and tries to help you and you react like a dumb kid. Really classy.

But don't blame me if things get ugly. You had that coming now.

Scenario 4: The drug dealer

Condition = *group/anonymous*

You continue your way home, now walking. You pass by a small park on top of a traffic island. In truth, calling it a park is a bit optimistic. It is a conglomerate of moderately big trees with clusters of grass in between. There are no street lights. When you were normal, you used to avoid it after dark. Too many dealers, junkies, hookers. Now you don't care anymore. You turn into the dirt path. There are voices in the dark. "How much?", says one voice. A hushed whisper. Then: "okay." You quicken your pace. At the corner a young woman is selling something to a slightly run-down looking teenager. "Hey", you shout at them. Another teenager shouts: "Oh my God, it's one of [blank]!". The woman freezes. Then she runs. You follow, but you do not dare to fly for fear of crashing into a tree. As you reach the road, you see her entering a building on the opposite side of the road. You take off into the air and find her room. She has placed a suspicious little sachet with white powder on her desk. She is pretty. Long dark hair and full lips. You hover in front of her window and wonder what to do. She gets a big towel from a wardrobe and starts unbuttoning her blouse.

Condition = individual

You continue your way home, now walking. You pass by a small park on top of a traffic island. In truth, calling it a park is a bit optimistic. It is a conglomerate of moderately big trees with clusters of grass in between. There are no street lights. When you were normal, you used to avoid it after dark. Too many dealers, junkies, hookers. Now you don't care anymore. You turn into the dirt path. There are voices in the dark. "How much?", says one voice. A hushed whisper. Then: "okay." You quicken your pace. At the corner a young woman is selling something to a slightly run-down looking teenager. "Hey", you shout at them. Another teenager shouts: "Oh

my God, it's [blank]!". The woman freezes. Then she runs. You follow, but you do not dare to fly for fear of crashing into a tree. As you reach the road, you see her entering a building on the opposite side of the road. You take off into the air and find her room. She has placed a suspicious little sachet with white powder on her desk. She is pretty. Long dark hair and full lips. You hover in front of her window and wonder what to do. She gets a big towel from a wardrobe and starts unbuttoning her blouse.

How likely is it that you react in one of the ways listed below?

You hide until she leaves the room and grab the drugs for yourself.

You stay where you are and watch her undress.

You report her to the police.

You fly away.

Scenario 5: Car theft

Condition = *group/anonymous*

What a day! Longingly you think about the pizza waiting for you in the freezer at home. Only two more blocks. You increase your pace. Since you developed the ability to fly, you really hate walking. Just as you turn the corner, you hear a noise. "Damn it", you think to yourself. Deep down you feel that your quiet and peaceful evening is about to be jeopardized. Cursing you head towards the noise. Voices, hushed and strained, metal rattling. "Hurry up!", someone whispers.

Finally you are close enough. Two men are hunched over a very expensive car. "The sucker even left the key on the backseat. In a Porsche!" One of them laughs. "If I just can get this bloody door open."

You step out of the shadows and clear your throat. They turn around. "Oh look", the other one says, not particularly distraught. One of them [blank]. You sigh. "Guys, I really don't want any trouble. Get out of here and no one gets hurt." They laugh and turn back to the car door. You hear a faint cracking sound and it is wide open. Secretly you are impressed. "Final warning." They do not listen. You push yourself into the air. Then you dive towards them, tackling the bigger one out of the way and heaving the smaller one. Quickly you lift him into the air. The guy starts fidgeting and screaming, obviously too afraid to muster any real resistance. When you are a few feet above ground, you drop him. He stumbles, falls scraping his knees. He gets up and

runs, his friend falling in behind him. You sigh. Then you notice that the car door is still open.

Condition = individual

What a day! After all that has happened today, you just want to get home. Fast. Longingly you think about the pizza waiting for you in the freezer and the chilled beer in the fridge. You are only two blocks away from your flat, five minutes max. You increase your pace. Since you developed the ability to fly, you really hate walking. Just as you turn the corner, you hear a noise. "Damn it", you think to yourself. maybe it was just a cat. But deep down you feel that your quiet and peaceful evening is about to be jeopardized. Cursing under your breath you head towards the noise. Voices, hushed and strained, metal rattling. "Hurry up!", someone whispers.

Finally you are close enough. Two men are hunched over what looks like a very expensive car. "The sucker even left the key on the backseat. In a Porsche!" One of them laughs. "If I just can get this bloody door open."

You step out of the shadows and clear your throat. Then again. Finally they hear you and turn around. "Oh look", the other one says, not particularly distraught. It's [blank]. You sigh. "Guys, I really don't want any trouble. Get out of here and no one gets hurt." They just laugh and turn back to the car door. You hear a faint cracking sound and it is wide open. Secretly you are impressed. "Final warning." They do not listen. You push yourself into the air. Then you dive towards them, tackling the bigger one out of the way and heaving the smaller one. Quickly you lift him into the air. The guy starts fidgeting and screaming, obviously too afraid to muster any real resistance. When you are a few feet above ground, you drop him. He stumbles, falls scraping his knees. He gets up and runs, his friend falling in behind him. You sigh. Then you notice that the car door is still open.

How likely is it that you...

- ...reward yourself by getting in the car and taking it for a ride. You can always put it back later.
- ... close the door, take the keys and try to return them to the owner.
- ...chase after the thiefs. You were just starting to have fun with them.
- ...call the police and give them a description of the two men.

Appendix C

Item Coding

+/++ is sexist; X is criminal; 0 is neutral Scenario 1	
You lean forward and kiss her lightly on the cheek	+
You lean forward and kiss her lightly on the lips	++
You lean forward and kiss her dramatically on her hand	+
You smile and say nothing.	0
Scenario 2 Go to the nearest pub or bar for a beer.	0
Go to the gym and observe the girls working out.	++
Go to the old factory and tag the building.	X
Leave your friend and fly home.	0
Scenario 3 Are you sure that you don't need help? I can get you out of this situation if you feel unsafe.	0
Look, doll. I don't know what your deal is, but next time stop pissing the people off who are just trying to help you.	+-1
You are being stupid and ungrateful. Someone thinks that you are in danger and tries to help you and you react like a dumb kid. Really classy.	+
But don't blame me if things get ugly. You had that coming now.	X
Scenario 4 You wait until she leaves the rooms and grab the drugs for yourself.	X
You stay where you are and watch her undress.	+-1
You report her to the police.	0
You fly away.	0
Scenario 5reward yourself by getting in the car and taking it for a ride. You can always put it back laterclose the door, take the keys and try to return them to the owner.	X 0
chase after the thiefs. You were just starting to have fun with them	X
call the police and give them a description of the two men.	0