



UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI  
FACULTY OF SCIENCE



# Facilitated group discussion method for preventing sexual harassment

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# How do we define sexual harassment?

- There are many clear cut cases, but also a substantial grey area
- Who decides where to draw the line?
- Is the definition identical for different people?
  - Age?
  - Gender?
  - Position?
  - Personality?
  - ...
- Cultural/multicultural environment affects the definition



# Social dimension of work /studies is important

- Promotes well-being at work and in general
- Avoid hypocrisy - many people have relationships and marry current/former colleagues/fellow students
- Networks are gendered
  - often hampers career prospect of women
- #metoo -> (also) sincere concerns 'should I go to lunch with my colleagues of opposite gender or can something I say or do be taken as harassment'



# Group discussion method for preventing sexual harassment

Do you think it is sexual harassment if a colleague says

- you are beautiful/handsome/good looking
- she/he can massage your shoulders

Which factors affect whether you think this is harassment or not?

- participants divided into groups of ~4 people
- groups post comments to collaborative virtual whiteboard

<https://edu.flinga.fi/s/EPZA8ZZ>

A person suggests massaging your back

A person calls you beautiful/handsome



# Group discussion method for preventing sexual harassment

Do you think it is sexual harassment if a colleague says

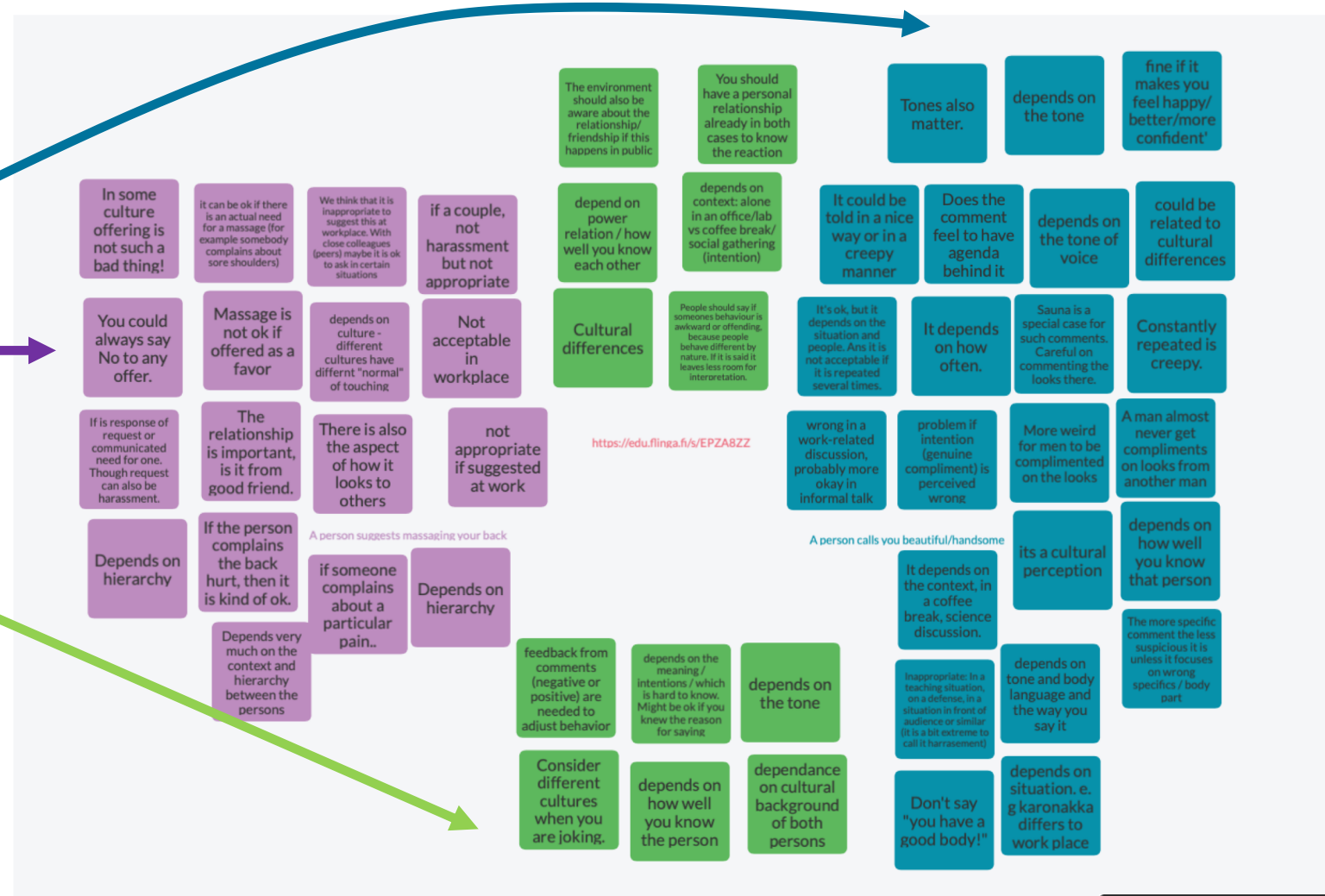
- you are beautiful/handsome/good looking
- she/he can massage your shoulders

Which factors affect whether you think this is harassment or not?

(green answers apply to both cases)

Example from: Finnish Academy Center of Excellence in Atmospheric science annual seminar, Kuopio 28.11.2018

<https://edu.flinga.fi/s/EPZA8ZZ>



Facilitated group discussion method for prevention sexual harassment/Vehkamäki



# Discuss borders of harassment without any connection to specific/recent cases

**Make the discussion part of a scientific seminar or recreation day, not a separate event**

Conclusions from the discussions:

- Black and white generalization cannot be made without hampering the social side of workplace culture too much
- Power structures and many other factors affect whether a certain behaviour is considered harassment
- The key is to create an atmosphere where each individual can draw the line by saying, for example, 'no' or 'that makes me feel uncomfortable', and drawing the line is respected
  - applies also to other situations such as distribution of work in teams
- Participant feedback 'I expected this to be awkward and make men feel guilty, but the discussion was positive and constructive'





**It's not consent  
if you make me  
afraid to say No.**



*Sexual Harassment Quotes*  
*[www.geckoandfly.com](http://www.geckoandfly.com)*

