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Cross-cultural Differences between Korean and American
College Students' Perceptions of Sexual Harassment in
Conversational Appropriateness

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
Of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Humanities

By

Yune-Kyong Chae
B.A., Wright State University, 2002

2007
Wright State University

WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

June 9, 2007

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY SUPERVISION BY Yune-Kyong Chae ENTITLED Cross-cultural Differences between Korean and American College Students' Perceptions of Sexual Harassment in Conversational Appropriateness BE ACCEPTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF Master of Humanities.

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to compare the cross-cultural differences of Korean and American college students' perceptions of their experiences with sexual harassment and how it impacts their thoughts and feelings.

This study extends the sexual harassment literature to include Koreans experiences with this important topic. Therefore, this study addresses four research questions: RQ₁: Are there cultural differences between Korean and American students' perceptions of sexual harassment in conversational appropriateness? RQ₂: Are there gender differences between Korean and American students' perceptions of sexual harassment in conversational appropriateness? RQ₃: Will American students report perceptions of sexually harassing conversations more frequently than Korean students? RQ₄: Based on the interview data, will American students report more awareness and understanding of the definition of sexual harassment than Korean students? The results indicated few cultural differences, contrary to the literature, several gender differences, and several significant differences based on same national or ethnic differences.

Chapter I—Introduction

The purpose of this study is to compare the cross-cultural differences of Korean and American college students' perceptions of their experiences with sexual harassment and how it impacts their thoughts and feelings.

For the past four decades, both males and females have felt the sting of sexual harassment. However, women have been the main victims of sexually harassing behavior, and they have changed society's way of looking at sexual harassment as an immoral and illegal act against women in the workplace. Victims of sexual harassment come from all walks of life with different economic, social, educational, and cultural backgrounds. Consequently, one person might view sexual harassment as an acceptable behavior while others might view it as unacceptable.

Some studies have shown that gender differences bring different views on the topic of sexual harassment,

specifically people with power as well as those without power (Paludi 5). Speaking to the issue of status and gender differences, the question may be asked, "How does culture play a role in individuals' perceptions of sexual harassment? It is obvious that culture differences greatly affect people's views on sexual harassment both in the workplace as well as on college campuses.

In addition, many individuals have misunderstood sexual behavior or have interpreted it based on their ideological position on the topic. Generally, sexual harassment has been viewed as a situation that only happens to young women however, men are affected by this issue too (Glazer 627). According to the *Washington Post*, their survey found that "Men and women are almost equally likely to say they had been sexually harassed on campus, but in different ways" (Kinzie A02).

Furthermore, many people believe that sexual harassment occurs on the offender's part without prior

planning, but it is not by default that it happens. In many cases, sexual harassment occurs between two people who may be familiar with one another. They could be co-workers, neighbors, close relatives, peers, and teachers in a college setting. Studies show that sexual offenders are usually individuals who are well established in a somewhat status. Therefore, sexual harassment does not happen impulsively, but is planned whether it is a conscious or unconscious plan.

Beyond this, many Asian women, Korean women in particular, do not believe in premarital sex (Kim 21). Therefore, when women experience sexual harassment, this devastating situation could permanently damage a woman's mental state and their traditional beliefs. Again, it is cultural and traditional views that affect how people react, defend, and accept sexually harassing behavior.

When women are sexually harassed, they are often blamed for causing the offense. Perhaps some would say

she provoked this treatment and some individuals might ask, "Was she dressed too provocative that exuded sexuality"? However, women have a right to dress the way they want, and they should not be sexually harassed because their appearance. It may be easier for offenders to blame the women than for them to admit their guilt.

Furthermore, Korean men tend to downplay sexual harassment as insignificant and trivial. However, women who are harassed could suffer severe damage to their mental outlook of men. Ironically, some may think sexual harassment could be a productive motivation for men to ask a woman for sex. However, it would not only hamper a worker's job duties, but also could cause the woman to be ashamed.

Because of their cultural upbringing, Korean women have tolerated unnecessary mental and emotional distress as a result of sexually harassing behavior in the workplace and on college campuses (Lee 33). Since the

Korean society is male-dominated in every aspect of life, it would be social suicide for a woman to confront or level charges against her boss or a male co-worker, which is almost unheard of in the Korean culture (Lee 31).

Korean women could only ignore the issue and hope things would smooth themselves out eventually.

With much economic growth and development, globalization and civil rights movement for women, Korea is still a very much male-dominated society. Women are viewed as inferior to men. In addition, Korean women, mothers, and daughters still hold the view that Korean males are from heaven and females are from earth, which informs us that gender differences result in Korean women's obedience and subservience to men. Kim argues that ". . . the majority of women are still main targets of . . . violence . . . , and there is a wide gap between the reality and the laws or institutions that are charged with ensuring women's rights" (18).

Moreover, sexual harassment has occurred between professors and students and between peers (Shim 5). However, the Korean college students tend not to be prepared to handle sexual harassment when they enter college. That is, they are not educated on sexual harassment issues, and they often do not know how to react or defend themselves against it.

Often, as in many cultures, professors have great influence on students whether this influence is positive or negative (Yi 46). Most Asian students have great respect for their teachers and become very confused if they perceive they are sexually harassed by their professors. Some students may misunderstand sexual harassment as extra caring, kindness, or special interests from the teacher (Shim 3). There also might be mutual interests between both parties, for example, better grades or promoting self-esteem for students, or

sexual favors for professors. However, some students may change their educational program to avoid uncomfortable or possibly confrontational situations resulting from sexual harassment between their professors and themselves (Yi 43-45). Because of the cultural taboos and traditional conditioning, students are more likely to ignore the situation. Many people did not realize what sexual harassment was before the one assistant filed a lawsuit against one of her professors at Seoul National University (Shim 1). However, it is the duty of the college to educate students not to ignore such a situation. It does not solve the problem, but it gives more power and control to male professors in particular.

In Korea,, when sexually harassing behavior is ignored, it gives males power and control over females. "Sexual harassment as well as physical and verbal abuse are one of the causes of unstable unemployment. However, the employer would ignore the appeals by the victims

and . . . impose unfair measures on them" (Lee 34).

In conclusion, many Korean colleges have established counseling and reporting centers for dealing with sexual harassment on their campuses, but more needs to be done to help victims with the psychological distress resulting from sexually harassing behavior. Many colleges in Korea need to work continuously to try to promote healthy working environments and raise the awareness of individuals as to what constitutes sexual harassment.

The next chapter is a review of the literature on sexual harassment in both Korean and American societies.

Chapter II—Review of the Literature

The purpose of this study was to compare the cross-cultural differences of Korean and American college students' perceptions of their experiences with sexual harassment and how it impacts their thoughts and feelings. The social problem of sexual harassing behavior has affected both men and women in both countries throughout time. However, it seems that Americans look more closely at this issue than Koreans. Therefore, this social topic has encouraged the American and Korean societies to establish organizations to help victims and other affected individuals. The purpose of these organizations is to discuss the issue of sexual harassment more openly and to demand equality in the workplace social lives as well as help college students understand this phenomenon.

Over the years, individuals have believed that the issue of sexual harassment should not be discussed in public. This belief has certainly proved true in Korea. For example, in Korea, sexual harassment can only be discussed behind closed doors because it is considered a cultural taboo to discuss it publicly. Despite this problem, the social and political systems in Korea have slowly changed with respect to sexual harassment of women, although it is still not discussed openly. On the other hand, in the United States, sexual harassment is discussed extensively and there is a wealth of sexual harassment literature to which individuals can refer.

Since extant literature reveals little to no information comparing Korean and American college students' perceptions of sexual harassment, the purpose of this study is to extend the literature on sexual harassment by looking at cultural differences. The literature reveals that few culture scholars have focused

their attention on Asian students', particularly, Korean students' perceptions of sexual harassment. For example, as a native-born Korean, the researcher's experiences demonstrate that when sexual harassment occurs in Korea, women and men are less likely to report it to the media or government organizations, unlike Americans. Moreover, there is a plethora of American literature on sexual harassment, developed and written by the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) as well as research done by American university scholars. However, there is a dearth of Korean literature on sexual harassment because it is considered a cultural taboo. This review of the literature comprises information from psychology, sociology, and communication scholars and some online information from Korean sources. The reason for this because there is limited information by Asian scholars who focus their attention on this issue. Furthermore, few journal articles compare the perceptions

of sexual harassment of Asian college students (i.e., Koreans) with American college students.

"It is widely argued that problems in understanding and addressing sexual harassment stem from the lack of a clear, concise, universally accepted definition of sexual harassment" (Roscoe, Strouse and Goodwin 516). As a sociology professor, Sandy Welsh's study provides us with a definition of sexual harassment, the prevalence of sexual harassment in organizations and academic settings, and how sexual harassment is measured in research. The question may be asked, "How do scholars and government agencies define sexual harassment and how limiting are these definitions? The next section provides definitions of sexual harassment from both a Korean and American perspective.

Definitions of Sexual Harassment: The U.S. vs. KoreaU.S. Definitions of Sexual Harassment

The U.S. EEOC defines sexual harassment as, "Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when this conduct explicitly or implicitly affects an individual's employment, [and] unreasonably interferes with an individual's work performance or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment" (86). This definition is still in use today (DeSouza and Solberg 623). Moreover, Brase and Miller contend that in a hostile environment, sexual harassment is more difficult to define and interpret. From a legal standpoint,

Sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination composed of two forms of behavior: quid pro quo harassment and hostile environment harassment. Quid pro quo harassment

involves sexual threats or bribery . . . used as the basis for employment decisions. [On the other hand], hostile environment harassment captures those behaviors such as sexual jokes, comments, and touching, that interfere with an individual's ability to do her/his job or that create an "intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment. (Welsh 169)

Similar to EEOC's and Welsh's definitions, other academic scholars claim that sexual harassment is "unwelcome and/or inappropriate for the workplace, and it includes, verbal harassment (e.g., derogatory comments and inappropriate jokes,) visual harassment (e. g., derogatory or embarrassing posters, cartoons, drawings, etc.), unwanted physical harassment, and requests for sexual favors for purposes of advancement, raise, or job retention" (Baum 37). Charles Clark explains that some people can misunderstand courtship as sexual harassment.

That is, Clark contends that, "The fact that the workplace is often a milieu for meeting people of the opposite sex means some people may confuse harassing behavior with courtship. What is seen as flirtation or innocent joking by one person may be viewed as harassment by another" (540).

Although many academic scholars and government agencies have defined sexual harassment, the definition is not a clear cut one and may vary from scholar to government agency. However, the definition depends on how it is perceived and judged by individuals (Clark 542). Even though the definitions of sexual harassment is not over stated, it constitutes as sexual harassment if individuals feel uncomfortable in any way it might hinder their work performance due to the distressing environment (EEOC 87).

The question may be asked, "Who is to blame, the victim or the perpetrator?" Kimberly Smirles argues that,

"People's judgments are often not based solely on the objective details of the situation. Two people can witness the same incident, yet [they can] have completely different interpretations of what occurred" (345).

Smirles also added that, "In most cases of sexual harassment, the perpetrator is male and the victim is female" (347). Whether sexual harassing behavior is conscious or unconscious, "based on this fact, men [tend to] minimize sexual harassment to separate themselves from [the] responsibility of such acts. Women, on the other hand, maximize the problem, because it is an important issue for them as a group" (Smirles 346).

However, one could perceive an act as a friendly gesture and the other could perceive the same act as sexual harassment. For example, what if a man tells a co-worker real-estate agent she is "hot," describing that she sells well and is a hard worker who gets her job done, can this be construed as sexual harassment? Again, it depends on

many people's mindsets and whether they are aware of the entire situation. What happened here was that the male co-worker used an axiom to describe the performance of his female colleague.

We can also ask ourselves, "Is it considered to be improper behavior if one co-worker asks another co-worker if everything is well at home when he or she seems to be having a difficult time at work? Where do we draw the line? Are people too sensitive to this subject? These questions can be answered only by those individuals affected by sexual harassment and those who must legally adjudicate the problem.

"The legal definition of sexual harassment is evolving, as is the theoretical and empirical conceptualization of the topic. Most empirical studies focus on the sexual harassment of female subordinates by their male superiors" (see Fitzgerald et al. 153; Gutek 20, as cited in Desouza and Solberg 625).

Korean Definition of Sexual Harassment

With world globalization and rapid socioeconomic changes, more Korean women are joining the labor force. As a consequence, the level of sexual harassment is increasing significantly. With the first evolutionary court case in 1991, the Korean government established new national guidelines for dealing with sexual harassment in workplace. According to the new International Labour Organization (ILO) of Korea, ILO has defined sexual harassment, as "behavior such as kissing or hugging, touching, telling dirty jokes, [making] obscene telephone calls, demanding sexual favors, display of nude pictures and posters, exposure of body parts or sending smutty letters, including via fax or computer networks" (*International Labor Organization 2*). Even though this appears to be the only all encompassing definition of sexual harassment declared by the Korean government, it tends to capture the essence of what sexual harassment is

according to EEOC's and other academic scholars' definitions, as limiting as this definition may be.

Traditionally, Korean women have kept silent about their sexual harassment experiences in both the workplace and educational institutions. Sexual harassment is not much discussed nor is there much information written on the topic because, as mentioned earlier, it is a cultural taboo and much of the sexual harassment cases that occurred did not come to public attention until 1991.

Cultural differences on Sexual Harassment

Koreans and Americans have significant culturally perceived differences of sexual harassment. Since Title VII Civil Rights Act of 1964, more American women have been fighting and campaigning against sexual harassment in the workplace, and the U.S. government has established laws and regulations to protect women in the workplace. "Following the passage of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the legal stage of gender-based

discrimination appeared to have attained relative equilibrium and stability" (Raghupathi 304). Sexual harassment is more openly discussed in America, whereas in Korea, it was almost publicly discussed of until recently.

Oppressed by a male-dominated society, Korean women have been the victims of many years of sexually harassing behavior and have kept silent about this abuse in both domestic and workplace spheres. Even though America and Korea are patriarchal societies, for example, conventional wisdom informs us that America has opened many doors of opportunities for women to participate in occupations that were once male dominated (e.g., doctors, lawyers, judges, dentist, academe, etc.) and males are working in occupations that were once female dominated (e.g., airline stewards, male nurses, etc.). Nugent contends that, "Korea has been a patriarchal society since the beginning of its history. The role of women has

been a part of this system and was traditionally very limited and specific" (1). Similar to other Asian cultures, Koreans place great importance on keeping their family names honorable. That is, "Preserving the family line and keeping it honorable were of primary importance" (Nugent 1); however, it is inevitable to a greater extent to keep silent about sexual harassment in order to avoid bringing shame to the victims and the victims' family names.

Furthermore, Korean women have kept silent about their sexual harassment experience because of the cultural taboo of discussing or complaining about it. For example, the victims of sexual harassment tolerate it and keep silent because they need the additional income to support their financial needs. Korean women, in particular, keep this matter to themselves for fear of possible vengeance or retaliation. ". . . The majority of women are still main targets of [sexual harassment],

discrimination, violence, and poverty, and there is a wide gap between the reality and the laws or institutions that are charged with protecting women's human rights" (Kim 18). Throughout Korean history, Korea has perceived women as subordinate to men because women belong to the men (Kim 19). For example, Korean men abuse Korean women and do not feel any guilt or remorse, and they overtly exercise their sexual behavior in the workplace because they capitalize on the cultural taboo that women will not report this behavior. Ironically, they tend to blame women instead of admitting their misconduct.

Gender Differences on Sexual Harassment

While a number of scholars have studied and researched what constitutes sexual harassment, Rotundo, Nguyen, and Sackett report that, "Before the field can reach consensus as to which behaviors constitute sexual harassment, researchers need to obtain a full understanding of the degree to which individual

differences affect perceptions of social sexual behaviors" (914). Gender differences can affect the individual's perception of sexual harassment and also, "... what is known today about the extent to which men and women differ in their judgments about what constitutes sexual harassment" (Rotundo, Nguyen, and Sackett 914). The authors also suggest that gender differences and the individual's perceptions of sexual harassment can create complex and overwhelming court arguments over legitimacy and trying to resolve the problems (916). They further suggest that the views from the person who is accused of sexual harassment and the person who is affected by the behavior can be different based on their perceptions (918). Although Rotundo, Nguyen, and Sackett explain that EEOC has clearly defined what constitutes sexual harassment, they argue that "from whose perspective should the courts evaluate whether a set of circumstances creates hostile work environment?" (914). Beyond this,

some studies show clear evidence that; "women are more likely to perceive an ambiguous incident as sexual harassment" (Sydell and Nelson 100) than men. "Female participants rated the harassing behaviors depicted in the sketches as more inappropriate than did male participants, and the attribution of responsibility in sexual harassment cases also seems to be affected by the gender of the respondents" (Sydell and Nelson 100). Hurt et al. explain that

When federal workers were surveyed in 1994, 64 percent of the men considered a co-worker's sexual teasing, jokes or remarks to be sexual harassment while 77 percent of the women believed that constitutes sexual harassment.

Although there are some exceptions, the empirical literature generally supports the view that women and men workers hold divergent

perspectives concerning what constitutes sexual harassment. (414)

The differences in the "perceptions of men and women create a difficult situation for employers as well as to the public view" (Clark 541), which suggests that these differences of perception are a significant problem for an ongoing legal battle. Furthermore, "subordinate attributions of the intent behind a superior's social-sexual behavior have a great impact on superior-subordinate interaction because individuals work closely together. There is room for individuals to take their relationship to the next level, one that is more intimate" (Luthar and Pastile 212). However, misunderstandings can happen. Simply, men and women tend to be brought up different socially and cultural in this society, and are expected to have diverse views, objectives and perceptions in which reflects within their own self-interests (Luthar and Pastile 213).

Gender Role Stereotypes: Korea vs. America

Women's place in Korea is still limited compared to American women. Since the Civil Rights Act of 1964, American women latched on to the Civil Rights Movement and raised their voices in protest and fought for their rights in both work and public places. However, women in Korea have not been as fortunate. "A conservative tradition has left women socially and economically subordinate to men. Despite the passage of the equal employment opportunity legislation in 1987, few women work as company executives, and sexual discrimination in the work place remains a problem" (*Contemporary Women's Issue* 7). Even with the revised law of the 1987 Equal Employment Act, many Korean companies still oppress women's expression about sexual harassment. It is not surprising that Korean women's belittlement continues abroad as well as in Korea. "While Korean American women are aware that these practices are discriminatory and

unfair, they tend to rationalize them as a . . . Korean [problem] and, thus, tolerate [this abuse]" (Kim 9). For example, Korean women's experience with sexual harassment clearly demonstrates how deeply this cultural marker debases them and is continually embedded in their minds. However, as society changes economically, socially, and politically and more women are in the labor force, they are determined to fight for their rights and justice, although change is slow (*Contemporary Women's Issue* 7). Moreover, Kim argues that, "In Korea, the efforts to achieve human rights have marked the 20th century social developmental history and women's movement and have recently become a national goal as well as a goal for women's policies" (18).

According to a personal interview with Hee Chul Jeon, a small business owner in New York City, he was asked to talk about sexual harassment in Korea and what he knows about it when he worked at the Sin Sae Kyae Department

Store in Seoul. He said he worked for this department from 1989 to 2004 in the marketing office. He said:

I believe that [the] sexual harassment problem in the workplace is perpetual in Korea and is a serious matter. In many large companies, they facilitate orientation sessions to educate employees regarding sexual harassment issues. For example, supervisors tend to make female workers to [sic] run errands for them like bringing a cup [of] coffee or take their clothing to dry [the] cleaners etc. Also the supervisors tend to harass sexually when they give assignment[s] to female workers. They try to have physical contact [with them] while they are handing the papers or materials such as grabbing [their] hands or talking over the [sic] shoulders and [try to] touch [their] waist or smelling [sic] hair. Furthermore, it occurs

often that at a company dinner party, supervisors ask female workers to sit next to male workers and have them pour alcohol beverages into their glass like a bar girl. Often, male workers displayed women's naked body photos on their computers for screen savers, which presented unpleasant, uncomfortable feelings to [sic] the female workers. Many companies are prohibited from putting vulgar and obscene photos on the computer screen. On the other hand, sexual harassment complaints are increasing [among] male workers especially when most [of the] workers are female. . . . Male workers complain that they are pressure[d] to do things they don't wish to [do] during the dinner parties, [such as] women employees ask[ing] men to slow dance with them and [the] guys are

pressured to have partial strip show[s] for female workers as well.

In order to change Korea's male-dominant society, more Korean women need to break their silence and speak publicly about their experiences about sexual harassment while still embracing the most important traditional expectation, the most valued qualities in Korean women: taking care of home.

American and Korean Laws on Sexual Harassment

American Laws on Sexual Harassment

American laws on sexual harassment have been implemented to protect employees based on title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Compared to Korean laws established by the Korean government in 1991, American laws are designed to protect women. With the feminist movement and the lawsuit of Mechelle Vinson against her employer in 1986, after a six-year proceeding, the Supreme Court reached a decision and agreed that her boss

created a "hostile work environment." The Vinson case helped to change the nature of sexual harassment cases as to how they are handled in U.S. courts. In addition, the Anita Hill-Clarence Thomas hearings also gave courage to women to come forward with their unpleasant experiences with sexual harassment and to fight publicly for their rights and justice. These cases and the women's feminist movement reinvigorated women and brought about many changes in sexual harassment laws in American companies, organizations, and academic institutions (Neher 301). American laws now protect all employees as well as men to make sure they fully exercise their rights.

Beyond this, Baum informs us that sexual harassment occurs in a variety of circumstances, including but is not limited to the following:

1. The victim as well as the harasser may be a woman or a man. The victim does not have to be of the opposite sex.
2. The harasser can be the victim's supervisor, an agent of the employer, a supervisor in another area, a co-worker, or even a patient.
3. The victim does not have to be the person harassed but could be anyone affected by the offensive conduct, such as another employee. (37)

Korean Laws on Sexual Harassment

Traditionally, Korean women have been taught to be submissive to males. For example, "A woman was supposed to obey her father before marriage, her husband after marriage, and her son in old age" (Nugent 1). Such cultural learning and background to obey men at an early age also played an important for women at work. However, this cultural taboo has been deeply rooted in the minds

of Korean women, and it was and still to a certain degree difficult and almost non-existence to report sexual harassment cases in Korea (Nugent 2). Thus, Korean women in the workplace had to endure hardship and inappropriate behaviors from male co-workers and the employers for ages until the first revolutionary sexual harassment case was filed in Supreme Court in Korea in 1991. With the effort of Korean Women Organization and other movements, the Korean government has finally established laws to protect women in the workplace and in educational institutions.

Government Guidelines Mapping Out the Sexual Harassment Law

After the first revolutionary in 1991, sexual harassment court *case Woo vs. Professor Shin*, the government established a set of guidelines to enforce sexual harassment laws for employees in the workplace and educational institutions. The law is relatively new and is not sufficient in its contents to protect women

employees in Korea. According to the ILO guidelines, the new laws urged companies to start an in-house complaint/report center and to strictly monitor any institution or individual who would take adverse action against such reports. As mentioned earlier, "The new guidelines state that sexual harassment involves "behavior such as kissing or hugging, touching, telling dirty jokes, obscene telephone calls, demanding sexual favors, display of nude pictures and posters, exposure of body parts or sending smutty letters, including via fax or computer networks" (ILO 1). ILO also reports that, "The Anti-sexual Discrimination Commission outlines that in order to have grounds for a case, the victim must provide sufficient proof that the behavior in question has had a negative affect on his or her working conditions'' (1).

Sexual Harassment in the Workplace in Korea

According to the *National Guidelines in the Republic of Korea*, the Korean government has issued a number of guidelines which deal with sexual harassment, with references to provisions for relief to victims of gender discrimination in employment, education and the supply of goods/facilities/services, or legal/administrative practices. These guidelines provide:

- a) Financial assistance for litigation in cases of gender discrimination - Mandatory education on preventing sexual harassment in private businesses and public facilities such as government offices, educational institutions, and medical facilities
- b) A maximum fine of \$3,000 (Sexual Equality Employment Act); in case of violation of the procedures for handling the perpetrators of sexual harassment or contravention of the legal obligation to provide mandatory education in preventing sexual harassment

- c) A maximum fine of \$5,000 (Sexual Equality Employment Act); in case of injurious actions against victims of sexual harassment
- d) Provision of effective counseling and assistance to persons who have faced gender discrimination or sexual harassment by the Gender Discrimination Complaint Center
- e) Establishment of 20 counseling centers for employment equality within non-governmental women's organizations, or local Labor Offices under the Ministry of Labor. (1-2)

Therefore, this brings us to the next point to discuss early cases of sexual harassment and their legal outcomes.

Early Cases of Sexual Harassment in Korean and America

Early Cases in Korea

The first court sentence against sexual harassment occurred in 1991. Woo filed sexual harassment charges against her boss, professor Shin, and the court ruling

was made on the, "basis that sexual harassment is a criminal violation of women's right to survival and dignity" (*Korean Women Today* 7). Woo, a teaching assistant, was rewarded \$37,500 for compensation as the result being sexually harassed in the workplace. Moreover, Jung, a chief clerk at Saemaetul Gumgo Bank, felt her boss at a dinner table and company parties sexually harassed her. She explained in Jung's article, that her decision was made after her boss made inappropriate comments to her at a New Year's party. She said,

The head of the back pointed at the women present including myself and labeled us with the numbers, 1, 2, 3, and 4 and told us to sit between the men. Labeling women with numbers happens in places with service women (prostitutes), and we were thoroughly offended by his behavior. (25)

Jung filed charges against him but, "the investigation was brought to the Equal Employment Commission; but the decision was made that my case was not one of sexual harassment" (26). She also claimed that she had a difficult time after the verdict and her boss labeled her as a bad worker. She decided to join regional unions and counseled through Equality Hotline. Jung also decided to submit another petition for a re-investigation. In the meantime, she was labeled as, "a bad worker who goes around suing" (26). However, her boss negotiated with her to stop the petition, and he agreed to acknowledge his misbehavior and formally apologized to her in front of all the employees and the apology was published nationwide through the Saemaeul Bank Newsletter. "Sexual harassment and physical and verbal abuse are one of the causes of unstable employment. However, the employer would ignore the appeals by the victims and instead impose unfair measures on them" (Lee 34). The

problem exists not only for the offender but also for the company for not taking appropriate actions against the offender. In her article, Jung said that "May be the struggle is just starting from now. I am not worried any more. I am not alone any longer" (28).

Moreover, four women at Daeyoung Electronics in Kunpo quit their job due to sexual harassment. They took the issue to their company, "when their boss began to hug them, touch their legs, and display obscene pictures on the glass partition of their work space, [and] the four switchboard operators did something women in South Korea seldom do" (Dietz and Lee 115). As expected, "The response: stony silence from the company. Even after the employees took their problem to a women's support group, Daeyoung ignored them. In the end, the telephone operators had no option but to quit" (Dietz and Lee 115). The Korea women's association for Democracy and Sisterhood stated that the case of Daeyoung is no

different than how other companies handle sexual harassment cases. Furthermore, according to Lee, she informs us that, "a total of 1,119 counseling cases were received by the Hotline for Equality from January to May 2001, an increase of 63 percent from the previous year 1,023 cases with the exception of 96 special cases have been analyzed on a case by case basis" (28). It also added that, "in most cases, the assaulters were senior colleagues who hold the power to dismiss them and so it is often difficult for the women to openly resolve the issue of sexual harassment" and "additionally, in most of the cases, sexual harassment had taken place behind doors and so there was little evidence" (Lee 33). To sum, the Korean government is doing something to improve the laws to protect all employees' rights and to create a more pleasant work environment; however, they are not doing enough (Nugent 4).

Early Cases in America

There are few sexual harassment court cases that shocked America. One court case was Mechelle Vinson's lawsuit against her employer. In 1986, in the *Meritor Savings Bank v. Vinson* case, the Supreme Court ruled that Title VII does allow a claim for sexual harassment to arise from conduct of a sexual nature that result in a hostile and an abusive work environment (Luthar and Pastille 213). Another case, for example, was the *Anita Hill vs. Clarence Thomas* hearing that astounded America. "The Thomas-Hill hearings that preceded the confirmation of Clarence Thomas to the United States Supreme Court focused the attention of many organizations, both public and private, on the issue of sexual harassment" (Eberhardt, Moser and McFadden 351). Hill's charges against Thomas may have been for political reasons rather than the actual sexual offense, but it suggested to America that women in any occupation can come forward and

speaking publicly about their unfair treatment and unpleasant experiences with sexual harassment by their male bosses, no matter how long ago it took place.

The Paula Jones case was another example of sexual harassment. In May 1991, Jones claimed that President Clinton made an unwanted sexual advance towards her while he was Governor of Arkansas, when she was a state employee. This case too suggested that the president of the United States is not immune from sexual harassment charges and her case was settled for \$850,000 (Luthar and Pastille 212). Luthar and Pastille go on to explain that, "The number of harassment charges filed with the EEOC and state fair employment practices agencies have risen significantly in recent years. For example, the number of sexual harassment charges has increased from 6,884 in fiscal year 1991 to 15,618 in fiscal year 1998" (211). According to Clark, there have been few sexual harassment settlements made public and they are:

1. *Moore vs. Cardinal Services Inc.*, settled December 1986 in Richland, Ohio. A female suffered emotional distress after her former supervisor allegedly forced her to perform oral sex by threatening her with the loss of her job. Award: \$3,100,000 (\$2,800,000 compensatory and \$300,000 punitive).
2. *Preston vs. Douglas; Soncrant; city of Detroit.* Settled April 1987 in Wayne County, Michigan. A 32-year-old female police officer claimed her commander sexually solicited her and that her rejection of him resulted in hostility from co-workers, which caused her to be hospitalized for emotional distress. Award: \$900,000 compensatory.
3. *Gaffke vs. U-Haul of Oregon.* Settled February 1988 in Multnomah, Oregon. A female executive suffered emotional distress and lost wages after a shipping and vehicle rental company and its subsidiary discriminated against her in the form of lesser

wages, sexual advances from managers and subsequent wrongful termination. Award: \$1,448,969.

4. *O'Connell vs. Local Union 25*. Settled October 1989 in Wayne, Illinois. A 30 year-old female apprentice asbestos worker claimed she suffered sexual harassment, sex discrimination and wrongful discharge. The defendant said she was dismissed for excessive absenteeism. Award: \$1,100,000.

5. *Bibun vs. AT&T information Systems*. Settled May 1990 in Los Angeles, California. A 37-year-old female personnel manager went on worker's compensation following emotional distress allegedly caused by unwelcome sexual advances from her supervisor. When she returned, her job had been eliminated, and she was transferred to a lateral position with the same pay. Award: \$2,000,000.

(542)

According to Sarah Glazer, counter-attacks have been rising. Men who are unfairly accused of sexual harassment are taking a stand to defend themselves by counter-suing (631-632). John Kirsh was publisher of the *South Florida Business Journal* in 1992, and he warned Karen Van Der Eems who was an Advertising Director that she would have to either quit her job or be demoted because of her poor job performance. To save face, he suggested she say, "She wanted to devote more time to her marriage." However, in response to his suggestion, she sent Kirsh a memo indicating that he was emotionally distracted about her marriage, and for that reason, he fired her." The organization never investigated the charges, but he was fired the next week. He counter-sued for defamation and was awarded a settlement of \$40,000 (Glazer 634). Kirsh said . . . "The reality today is that the easiest person to get rid of is the person that will cost you the least to fire is a middle-aged white male" (Glazer 633). Beyond

this, Kirsh's lawyer, Donna Ballman said, "The Company thought it was easier to fire someone than to do the right thing by both parties. She also added that, "Companies should do thorough investigations when charges arise" (Glazer 635). According to Clark, the critics of current trends in sexual harassment laws say cases like Kirsch's is an example of innocent men being crushed, discouraged, and damaged by employers who only think about their reputation from the media or public to show they are reprimanding sexual harassment (548). Despite Kirsh's case, many women are still treated like sex objects in the workplace and are suffering as victims. Consequently, their situation makes the victims miserable because of their economic dependency to survive.

In another sexual harassment case, Peggy Kimzey won her case against sexual harassment. She worked as a shipping clerk at a Wal-Mart but had to quit her job in 1993 due to a four-year long sexual harassment problem

she had with an employee. She sued the company in 1994 complaining that her company did not do a proper investigation of her allegations and had not taken any action to correct the problem. The court ordered the company to pay her \$50,000,000, and it was the largest reward in U.S history (Glazer 637).

The charges against sexual harassment are increasing each year. "In fiscal year 2006, EEOC received 12,025 charges of sexual harassment, and 15.4 percent of those charges were filed by men. EEOC resolved 11,936 sexual harassment charges in 2006 and recovered \$48.8 million in monetary benefits for charging parties and other aggrieved individuals (not including monetary benefits obtained through litigation)" (EEOC 15). William W. Neher, an Organizational Communication scholar contends that

Various surveys and other studies suggest that sexual harassment is still widespread in American and [Korean] organization[s];

nevertheless, organizational rhetoric tends to downplay the seriousness of this issue. While the top levels of organization may tend to frame sexual harassment in ways that discount its presence or its seriousness, even women and men who are subjected to what is arguably harassment may develop [ways] in order to avoid confronting the power structure and bringing formal charges.

(Neher 301)

Since sexual harassment is just as prevalent today in both American and Korean organizations as it was decades ago and few scholars have focused their attention on the difference in perceptions of sexual harassment between Koreans and Americans, the purpose of this study is to compare the perceptual differences of Korean and American college students on sexual harassment, thereby extending the sexual harassment literature to include Koreans

experiences with this important topic. Therefore, this study addresses two research questions:

RQ₁: Are there cultural differences between Korean and American students' perceptions of sexual harassment in conversational appropriateness?

RQ₂: Are there gender differences between Korean and American students' perceptions of sexual harassment in conversational appropriateness?

RQ₃: Will American students report perceptions of sexually harassing conversations more frequently than Korean students?

RQ₄: Based on the interview data, will American students report more awareness and understanding of the definition of sexual harassment than Korean students?

Chapter III—Methodology

Participants

One hundred three Korean undergraduate college students from a university in Korea and 105 American undergraduate college students from a predominantly white university participated in this study.

Data Collection and Procedure

The participants selected for this study completed an informed consent form (Appendix A), Rebecca Rubin's 20-item measure of Conversational Appropriateness Scale (CAS) [Appendix B], and approximately 40 students (20 Koreans and 20 Americans) were asked to volunteer for an interview (see Appendix C). Forty students from each group volunteered to participate in an interview. The principal investigator and Korean instructor used a

convenience sampling to collect data from students at both universities.

Joann Keyton, a communication and research methods scholar, informs us that ". . . Research often relies on convenience sampling . . . in order to gain access to the desired population. . . . Most researchers have immediate access to a body of students who can be encouraged to participate in research studies. . . ." (126).

The principal investigator mailed 400 survey questionnaires to her contact instructor at the Korean university. Of the 400 survey questionnaires sent to the Korean university, only 103 students participated. The principal investigator explained the purpose of the study to the American professors, while the Korean instructor explained the purpose of the study to professors at the Korean university. Both the principal investigator and Korean instructor were granted permission to survey

Korean and American students' attitudes about sexual harassment in conversational appropriateness.

In addition, as part of the instructions and explanation for completing the survey questionnaires, both the principal investigator and the Korean instructor asked students to volunteer for an interview by placing a check mark next to the statement, "*I agree/I do not agree to volunteer to answer the interview questions for this study*" (see Appendix B).

The principal investigator and Korean instructor explained to the participants that their names will be kept confidential and the interview data will be destroyed after the study is finished. The interview took 15-20 minutes.

Data Analysis

The *first research question* answered students' perceptions of cultural differences, as a combined sample by ethnicity, using means, standard deviations,

Independent-samples *t*-tests, and Pearson Product Moment Correlations. The *second research question* answered the perceptions in gender differences, using Independent-samples *t* tests. That is, the mean scores of Korean male and female students will be compared and the mean scores of American male and female students will be compared. The *third research question* answered students' perceptions of conversational appropriateness by comparing students' ethnicity, using Independent-samples *t* tests.

The principal investigator split the SPSS file by gender and ethnicity to analyze students' perceptions of sexual harassment in conversational appropriateness.

The *fourth research question* was answered using the interview data to understand both Korean and American students' holistic experience and awareness of sexual harassment in conversational appropriateness. The interview questions will be adopted from the survey

questionnaire to have students explain their holistic experience with sexual harassing conversations. Some of the interview questions were restructured from CAS to ask the students about their perceptions of sexual harassment.

The purpose of restructuring the interview questions was to capture the essence of what constitutes sexually harassing behavior in conversations. In addition, another question not part of CAS was added to ask students to define what they believe sexual harassment is.

A confirmatory factor analysis was conducted since one of the samples was students of Asian backgrounds. In using confirmatory factor analysis, the researcher thinks he/she may already know what the measures mean and wants to test the hypothesis. For example, one can examine whether the factor structure of the CAS measure is the same for Korean students as it is for American students.

Scale Measures

On the survey questionnaire, participants indicated the frequency with which they perceived sexual harassment in conversational appropriateness. The survey questionnaire was designed as a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly disagree) with which "appropriate behavior is that which receives social rewards and fulfills others' expectations" free of sexual harassing language (Rubin, Palmgreen, and Sypher 149), using a dialogue as a point of reference.

Chapter IV—Findings

In Chapter I, I introduced the topic of sexual harassment. In chapter II, I reviewed the literature on sexual harassment for both Korea and America. In Chapter III, I presented the methodology used to complete this thesis, namely, a rationale for using both quantitative and qualitative methods. This chapter is a presentation of the statistical analyses and analyses performed on the interview responses received from a select number of Korean and American undergraduate students.

The literature review identified four topics that appear to characterize the experiences of Korean and American college students' perceptions and understanding of sexual harassment: cultural differences, gender differences, what constitutes sexually harassing behavior in conversation, and students' definition and experiences with sexual harassment. The researcher presents four

research questions to address the experiences of Korean and American undergraduate students with sexual harassment.

*Factor Analysis and Reliability Estimates:
Cultural Differences*

The *first research question* posed was, "Are there cultural differences between Korean and American students' perceptions of sexual harassment in conversational appropriateness? As a combined sample by ethnicity, a factor analysis, independent-samples *t* tests for significance differences, means, and standard deviations address this question. Table 1 presents the results of the factor analysis.

The 10-item survey questionnaire was subjected to a correlation matrix and an unrotated iterative principal component factor analysis. A minimum primary loading of 0.40 was used. However, not all 10 conversational appropriateness items loaded on a single factor.

The factor analysis accounted for 45.1% of the variance. The reliability estimate for the 10-item conversational appropriateness scale, as determined by Cronbach's alpha, for the combined sample was 0.87. The reliability estimate for the American sample was 0.88, and the reliability estimate for the Korean sample was 0.80. "A high reliability coefficient (.70 or higher) would mean that the test [or survey questionnaire] was accurately measuring some characteristics of the people taking it.

Further, it would mean that the individual items on the test or [survey questionnaire] were producing similar patterns of responding in different people. Therefore, a high value would mean that the test items were homogeneous and reliable" (Bruning and Kintz 81).

The Kaiser-Meyer-Oklun (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was used to evaluate the factor solution. A 0.60 KMO measure ranging in value from 0 and 1 is

considered acceptable (Norusis 23). The KMO measure for the factor analysis (KMO = 0.86) was adequate.

Table 1

Factor Analysis—Combined Sample by Ethnicity						
Item	American			Korean		
	Factor Loadings	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Factor Loadings	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. Similar Experience	.00	2.03	1.256	.00	1.95	1.274
2. Remarks Inappropriate and indicated sexual harassment	.48	3.78	2.139	.73	3.73	1.012
3. Would feel uncomfortable	.00	3.53	1.185	.80	3.77	1.206
4. Hinted to sexual harassment	.81	3.84	1.020	.83	3.55	1.064
5. Improper comments	.88	4.03	.945	.71	3.40	1.079
6. Comments alluded to sex	.87	3.80	1.013	.78	3.53	1.055
7. Comments embarrassing	.72	3.46	1.301	.80	3.74	1.093
8. Some comments Inappropriate	.76	3.91	1.048	.82	3.43	1.134
9. Would feel comfortable With this client	.57	2.25	1.167	.00	2.19	1.094
10. Client violated person's expectations	.73	3.93	.963	.00	2.95	1.360

Table 2 presents the results of the independent-samples *t* test, means, and standard deviations of each statement for both the Korean and American samples.

Culture was measured using students' self-report perceptions of sexual harassment. An independent-samples t test was calculated comparing the mean scores of American and Korean students' perceptions of cultural differences. The t test indicated, as a combined sample, a significant difference between American ($m = 3.84$; $sd = 1.020$) and Korean students' ($m = 3.55$; $sd = 1.064$) cultural perceptions "The client's remarks hinted to sexual harassment" ($t(206) = 1.970$, $p < .05$).

For the statement "The client made improper comments, the results indicated a significant difference between American ($m = 4.03$; $sd = .945$) and Korean ($m = 3.40$; $sd = 1.079$) students ($t(206) = 4.486$, $p < .001$).

For the statement, "Some of the client's comments were inappropriate," the results indicated a significant difference between American ($m = 3.91$; $sd = .1.048$) and Korean ($m = 3.43$; $sd = 1.134$) students ($t(206) = 3.218$ $p < .001$). For the statement "The client violated the

person's expectations," the results indicated a significant difference between American ($m = 3.93$; $sd = .963$) and Korean ($m = 2.95$; $sd = 1.360$) students ($t(206) = 6.016$, $p < .001$).

Table 2
Independent-Samples t tests: Cultural Differences

Item	American			Korean		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>
1. Similar experience	1.95	1.274	105	2.03	1.256	103
2. Indicated sexual harassment	3.78	2.139	105	3.73	1.012	103
3. Would feel uncomfortable	3.53	1.185	105	3.77	1.206	103
4. Hinted to sexual Harassment*	3.84	1.020	105	3.55	1.064	103
5. Improper comments***	4.03	.945	105	3.40	1.079	103
6. Comments alluded to sex	3.80	1.013	105	3.53	1.055	103
7. Comments embarrassing	3.46	1.301	105	3.74	1.093	103
8. Some comments Inappropriate**	3.91	1.048	105	3.43	1.134	103
9. Would feel comfortable With client	2.25	1.167	105	2.19	1.094	103
10. Client violated*** Person's expectations	3.93	.963	105	2.95	1.360	103

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

Table 3 presents the results of Pearson product moment correlations. The correlations that produced significant results are reported. "A z larger than 1.96 is significant at the 0.05 alpha level using a two-tailed test. A significant z tells us that the two correlations values [between the two groups] are very likely different" (Bruning and Kintz 82).

As indicated in Table 3, there were positive and significant correlations between the client's statement indicating sexual harassment and students feeling uncomfortable with this client, for both the American and Korean samples, although the correlation was significantly higher for the Korean sample than for the American sample ($z = 3.41, p < .01$).

There were positive and significant correlations between the client's statement indicating sexual harassment and students perceiving the client's comments were improper, although the correlation was higher for

American students than for Korean students ($z = 2.61, p < .01$). There were positive and significant correlations between the client's statement indicating sexual harassment and students perceiving that the client's comments alluded to sex, although the correlation was higher for Korean students than for American students ($z = 2.98, p < .01$). There were positive and significant correlations between the client's statement indicating sexual harassment and students perceiving that some of

Table 3
Pearson Correlations for the American and Korean Samples

Indication of Sexual Harassment	Feel Uncomfortable	Improper Comments	Comments Alluded to Sex	Inappropriate Comments
Americans	.27**	.38**	.37**	.30**
Koreans	.64**	.59**	.51**	.50**

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

the clients comments were inappropriate, although the correlation was higher for Korean students than for American students ($z = 2.87, p < .01$).

Gender Differences: Koreans vs. Americans

The *second research question* asks, "Are there gender differences between Korean and American students' perceptions of sexual harassment in conversational appropriateness?" This question was answered using independent-samples *t* tests. The mean scores of Korean

Table 4
Gender Differences on Sexual Harassment
in Conversation Appropriateness for Koreans and Americans
Independent-samples *t* tests

Item	American		<i>t</i>	Korean		
	Male	Female		Male	Female	<i>t</i>
1. Similar experience**	1.56	2.21	9.984	1.79	2.33	.163
2. Indicated sexual** harassment	3.06	3.90	3.740	3.38	4.18	.597
3. Would feel uncomfortable***	3.53 ^a	3.92 ^b	1.597	3.45	4.18	13.74
4. Hinted to sexual harassment**	3.44	4.10	24.734	3.41 ^a	3.73 ^b	1.879
5. Improper comments***	3.61	4.30	10.242	3.33 ^a	3.49 ^b	1.679

Table 4 cont. . . .

6. Comments alluded to sex**	3.41	4.62	8.179	3.45 ^a	3.64	1.194
7. Comments embarrassing**	2.73	3.92	4.302	3.53	4.00	5.926
8. Some comments inappropriate	3.61	4.16	4.742	3.19	3.97	5.826

9. Would feel comfortable w/client	2.51 ^a	2.08 ^b	.315	2.28	3.09	10.975
10. Client violated person's Expectations	3.54 ^a	4.19 ^b	.422	2.91 ^a	3.00 ^b	.204

^{a,b}Common superscripts indicate a lack of significant differences between means, using Levene's Test for Equality of Variances; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

male and female students were compared and the mean scores of American male and female students were compared for matched-culture purposes. Table 4 presents the results of the independent-samples t test, means, and standard deviations.

As indicated in Table 4, the Independent-samples t test indicated significant mean differences between American males ($m = 1.56$) and females ($m = 2.21$) for having a similar experience to that of the student in the survey dialogue ($t(103) = 9.984, p < .01$). Likewise, the Independent-samples t test indicated significant mean differences between Korean males ($m = 1.79$) and females ($m = 2.33$) for having a similar experience ($t(101) = 7.163, p < .01$).

The independent-samples t test found significant mean differences between American males' ($m = 3.06$) and females' responses ($m = 3.90$) when they were asked if the client's comments indicated sexual harassment ($t(103) = 3.740, p < .01$). Likewise, the independent-samples t test found significant mean differences between Korean males' ($m = 3.38$) and females' ($m = 4.18$) responses when they were asked if the client's comments indicated sexual harassment ($t(101) = 8.597, p < .01$).

The independent-samples t test found no significant mean differences between the American male ($m = 3.53$) and female ($m = 3.92$) sample when they were asked if they would feel uncomfortable with this client ($t(103) = 1.597, p > .05$). However, the independent-samples t test found significant mean differences between Korean males' ($m = 3.45$) and females' ($m = 4.18$) responses when they were asked if they would feel uncomfortable with this client ($t(101) = 13.748, p < .001$).

The independent-samples t test found significant mean differences between American males' ($m = 3.44$) and females' ($m = 4.10$) responses when they were asked if they perceived the client's comments hinted to sexual harassment ($t(103) = 24.734, p < .01$), although the t test found no significant mean differences between Korean males' ($m = 3.41$) and females' ($m = 3.73$) responses when they were asked if they perceived the client's comments suggested sexual harassment ($t(101) = 1.879, p > .05$).

The independent-samples t test found significant mean differences between American males' ($m = 3.61$) and females' ($m = 4.30$) responses when they were asked if they perceived the client's comments were improper ($t(103) = 10.243, p < .01$), although the t test found no significant mean differences between Korean males' ($m = 3.33$) and females' ($m = 3.49$) responses when they were asked if they perceived the client's comments improper ($t(101) = 1.679, p > .05$).

The independent-samples t test found significant mean differences between American males' ($m = 3.41$) and females' ($m = 4.62$) responses when they were asked if they perceived the client's comments alluded to sex ($t(103) = 8.179, p < .01$), although the t test found no significant mean differences between Korean males' ($m = 3.45$) and females' ($m = 3.64$) responses when they were asked if they perceived the client's comments alluded to sex ($t(101) = 1.194, p > .05$).

The independent-samples t test found significant mean differences between American males' ($m = 2.73$) and females' ($m = 3.92$) responses to the question if they perceived the client's comments were embarrassing ($t(103) = 4.302, p < .01$). Likewise, the independent-samples t test found significant mean differences between Korean males' ($m = 3.53$) and females' ($m = 4.47$) responses to the same question whether they perceived the client's comments were embarrassing ($t(101) = 5.926, p < .01$).

The independent-samples t test found significant mean differences between American males' ($m = 3.61$) and females' ($m = 4.16$) responses when they were asked if they perceived that some of the client's comments were inappropriate ($t(103) = 4.742, p > .05$). Likewise, the independent-samples t test found significant mean differences between Korean males' ($m = 3.19$) and females' ($m = 3.97$) responses when they were asked the same question ($t(101) = 5.926, p < .01$).

The independent-samples t test found no significant mean differences between American males' ($m = 2.51$) and females' ($m = 2.08$) responses when they were asked if they would feel comfortable with this client ($t(103) = 0.315, p > .05$), although the independent-samples t test found significant mean differences between Korean males' ($m = 2.28$) and females' ($m = 3.09$) responses when they were asked the same question ($t(101) = 10.975, p < .01$).

The independent-samples t test found no significant

mean differences between American males ($m = 3.54$) and females ($m = 3.19$) when they were asked if they perceived the client violated the person's expectations as to how clients are to behave ($t(103) = 0.422, p > .05$), although the independent-samples t test found significant mean differences between Korean males ($m = 2.91$) and females ($m = 3.00$) when they were asked the same question ($t(101) = 0.204, p > .05$).

Perceptions of Sexual Harassment in Conversation

The *third research question* asks, "Will American students report perceptions of sexually harassing conversations more frequently than Korean students?" For this question, the researcher compared students' ethnicity, using independent-samples t tests. Using split file, the mean scores of students by ethnicity, that is, using matched-race or same nationality to analyze students' perceptions of sexual harassment in conversational appropriateness. The results are presented

in Table 5.

Table 5
Korean and American Students'
Perceptions of Sexual Harassment in Conversation

Item	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
1. Similar experience**	-2.581	102	<i>p</i> < .01
2. Indicated sexual harassment	-.797	102	<i>p</i> > .05
3. Would feel uncomfortable w/comments***	-4.540	102	<i>p</i> < .001
4. Hinted to sexual harassment***	-3.344	102	<i>p</i> < .001
5. Improper comments***	-3.868	102	<i>p</i> < .001
6. Comments alluded to sex***	-3.238	102	<i>p</i> < .001
7. Comments embarrassing***	-5.046	102	<i>p</i> < .001
8. Some comments inappropriate***	-2.789	102	<i>p</i> < .001
9. Would feel comfortable w/client	1.862	102	<i>p</i> > .05
10. Client violated person's expectations***	-3.551	102	<i>p</i> < .001

p* < 0.05; *p* < 0.01; ****p* < 0.001

As indicated in Table 5, the independent-samples *t* test indicated significant differences between American and Korean students' responses when they were asked if they had had a similar experience with sexual harassment in a conversation, as indicated in the survey dialogue ($t(203) = -2.581, p < .01$).

The independent-samples *t* test indicated no

significant differences between American and Korean students' responses when they were asked whether the client's comments indicated sexual harassment in the conversation, as indicated in the survey dialogue ($t(203) = -.797, p > .05$).

The independent-samples t test indicated significant differences between American and Korean students' responses when they were asked if they would feel comfortable having a conversation with this client ($t(203) = -4.540, p < .001$), as indicated in the survey dialogue.

The independent-samples t test indicated significant differences between American and Korean students' responses when they were asked if they perceived the client's comments hinted to sexual harassment in the conversation with the student ($t(203) = -3.344, p < .001$), as indicated in the survey dialogue.

The independent-samples t test indicated significant

differences between American and Korean students' responses when they were asked if they perceived the client's comments were improper and indicated sexual harassment in the conversation with the student ($t(203) = -3.328, p < .001$), as indicated in the survey dialogue.

The independent-samples t test indicated significant differences between American and Korean students' responses when they were asked if they perceived the client's comments alluded to sexual harassment in the conversation with the student ($t(203) = -5.046, p < .001$), as indicated in the survey dialogue.

The independent-samples t test indicated significant differences between American and Korean students' responses when they were asked if they perceived the client's comments were conversationally embarrassing to the student ($t(203) = -5.046, p < .001$), as indicated in the survey dialogue.

The independent-samples t test indicated significant

differences between American and Korean students' responses when they were asked if they perceived that some of the client's comments were conversationally inappropriate with the student ($t(203) = -2.789, p < .001$), as indicated in the survey dialogue.

The independent-samples t test indicated no significant differences between American and Korean students' responses when they were asked if they would feel comfortable having a conversation with this client if the client made sexually harassing comments to them ($t(203) = 1.862, p > .05$), as indicated in the survey dialogue.

The independent-samples t test indicated significant differences between American and Korean students' responses when they were asked if they perceived the client violated the student's expectations as to how clients are to behave in a business-related conversation ($t(203) = -3.551,$

$p < .001$) , as indicated in the survey dialogue.

*Interview Data: Korean and American Male and Female
Participants*

Finally, based on the interview data, the *fourth* research asks, "Will American students report more awareness and understanding of the definition of sexual harassment than Korean students?" This last question helps us to understand both Korean and American students' holistic experience and awareness of sexual harassment in conversational appropriateness.

The American and Korean students who volunteered and agreed to an interview responded to four questions. For organizational purposes, the interview responses to each question for both American and Korean students will be introduced separately.

*Interview Responses of American Male and Female
Participants*

The **first interview question** asked was "How do you define sexual harassment"? The **male sample** said:

- "My definition of sexual harassment is any behavior that makes someone feel uncomfortable in a sexual manner, which can be obvious or inferred.
- "Unwanted and/or unprovoked advances towards another of the opposite sex or same sex of a sexual nature deemed inappropriate. By social norms to include language, touching, suggestive actions, including body language, jokes, put downs, and racial slurs."
- "The unwanted physical or mental interaction between two people, one of the people does not want to be involved."
- "Sexual harassment is the inappropriate use of power or power to make sexual comments, which make a person uncomfortable."
- "Unwanted physical verbal attention of a sexual nature."

- "Any unwanted or unsolicited verbal or physical action based on gender that makes the other party uncomfortable upset, etc."
- "Improper touching or sexual related talking to words, gestures, etc., by the opposite sex."
- "Anything that upsets a person with the use of sexual sayings such as touching speaking, or hurting someone sexually."
- ". . . When a man or woman invades the other's privacy without their consent. This does not necessarily mean rape; it can be as simple as spying on them or when someone makes another feel uncomfortable in a sexual way."
- "Sexual harassment is violating or saying something that is unacceptable about private parts."
- "I believe that sexual harassment is any action whether physical or verbal that causes an unwanted

feeling toward the opposite or same sex against their will."

- "The act of sexual interest towards an individual using physical and/or verbal innuendo."

The **Female sample** said:

- "When someone gives another person unwanted/unwelcome attention."
- "When one person expresses sexual feelings to another person."
- "Any type of sexual content that is forced and not wanted by the other person."
- "Any form of sexual conduct that if inappropriate and unwanted from words to rape can be from the same sex or opposite sex."
- "Is any kind of unwanted sexual reference or advance whether it is physical or verbal."

- "Any unwanted physical or emotional contact. It can be a man or a woman who commits sexual harassment. It violates a person's boundaries."
- "I feel that sexual harassment is anything that violates another individual's comfortable sexual boundaries. This act may be verbal, physical, and/or implied."
- "In my opinion, sexual harassment refers to any unprompted, unwanted sexual advances."
- "Any unwanted or inappropriate physical or verbal advance."
- "Unwanted, sexually based, verbal and physical advances towards another person."

The **second interview question** asked, "Explain whether an individual has said things to you that seemed out of place in a conversation."

- "Within the context of the conversation, nobody has said anything that has seemed out of place or

inappropriate. Somebody with no frame of reference that may have overheard a conversation between my friends and me may have thought it was inappropriate but comments were not inappropriate or offensive to me," said a male student.

- Another female student said, "Sure, if you are referring to anything that could be out of place, but sexually—not so much. If you are referring to anything I would be the one to say something abnormal."
- One female student said, "There have been many instances where an individual has said something to me that has been out of place. Generally, these situations occur at work when a guest is unhappy with their service or just life itself."
- One male student said, "Rarely do individuals say things that seem out of place to me. But when it

happens, I get an awkward feeling that something was going on that I didn't know about."

- "When I worked at a doctor's office, I became friends with the office manager. We would laugh and joke together. My friend and I took a road trip to Nashville, Tennessee that year for my birthday. When I got back, I took in a CD full of all of our pictures from the trip. My office manager knew the friend I went with. When I was showing him the pictures, he kept looking at her picture saying how beautiful she was and just went on and on and on. He's married and twice her age. To say she is beautiful once would have been sufficient, but he just went on and on," said a male student.
- "Yes, it was a female friend of mine, her brother. He just met me and one of the first comments he said to me was 'Damn, you thick so can I get with you?'"

- Another female student said, "I think that sometimes when people use slang or shortened words or phrases when having a conversation, they can seem out of place. Sometimes in class discussions, other students that may be from foreign countries do not speak English very well and say things that are out of place or do not fit right into the conversation, which is the same when people say things that may allude to sex and taken out of context."
- "I have worked in a couple restaurants in the past few years and have had some comments that have been a little inappropriate. Although the comments may have been inappropriate, I was never bothered, hurt, or felt threatened by the comments. I have never been touched or put in an awkward situation that I have felt has been sexual harassment," said one female.
- Another female student interviewee said, "I have experienced individuals making comments which seemed

out of place in conversation, but I don't know if it was something that I just took the wrong way of if it could have been related to sexual harassment."

- "I cannot think of a situation where an individual has said something out of place to me regarding sexual harassment. However, I can think of times when men have said something or whistled at me while I walked passed them that made me feel uncomfortable. Perhaps this is a form of sexual harassment," said one female participant.
- Another female interviewee said, "I had a manager I felt was verbally abusive. He would make degrading remarks like, 'I guess that's what I get for letting a woman do a man's job,' or "You fit the role of a dumb blond."
- One male interviewee said, "No, I have never had an experience where someone said something out of place to me."

- A male interviewee said, "While I was at a party, a friend suggested something very vulgar out of nowhere right in the middle of our conversation."

The **third interview question** asked, "Do you believe you have been sexually harassed? Why or why not?"

- "I cannot recall being sexually harassed because nobody has ever said anything to me that I have found inappropriate," said a male student.
- "No, I can't say I have. I am usually around classy people. If they have, they are always joking."
- "There has been numerous occasions when I have been verbally sexually harassed, and on very few occasions physically sexually harassed. Most of these occurrences took place in an environment involving alcohol or lenient social places," said a female student.

- A female student said, "I don't believe I have been sexually harassed physically, but verbally I have. I was in a bad position with the wrong people."
- "No, but one of the doctors I worked for would make a couple of sexually comments about me. He and I were friends, so I never took it seriously," said another female student.
- "A guy approached me at a gas station and said, 'Girl, you are fine; I bet you like it rough.' A sexual comment is very inappropriate comment to make to a stranger."
- "I have heard a few lewd or 'inappropriate' comments thrown my way. I have been friends with many guys throughout my life and also by being in a college setting makes me feel as if I have just gotten used to 'inappropriate' comments. I have never actually felt bothered or hurt by lewd comments from the opposite sex," said another female.

- Another female participant said, "I do not believe I have been sexually harassed because, although I have experienced people saying, things that seemed out of place, the comments came from friends and they seemed to be couched in a joking manner."
- "I cannot think of a time when I have been sexually harassed. I think this just might be because I have been fortunate enough to have escaped it so far. I think that most women have experienced it sometime in their lives, especially in the workforce," said a female participant.
- Yet, another female participant said, "I believe I have been sexually harassed in the past."
- A male interviewee said, "Even though I have friends who I joke with in sexually explicit ways, there are boundaries we do not cross."
- Another female interviewee said, "At work, people constantly talk about my figure in front of me."

- "During work one day, a woman smacked my butt and I was really offended. She made me feel very uncomfortable," said a male participant.
- "I have had men say sexually inappropriate things to me or smacked my butt or touched me on the shoulders that made me feel uncomfortable. It's usually someone that I don't know very well, and they think it's okay to make these comments when it really is not," said another female interviewee.

The **fourth interview question** asked, "When dealing with the opposite sex, has anyone ever said anything that made you feel uncomfortable with respect to lewd remarks? Explain"?

- "A couple of my friends will go into extensive detail about a female they may be seeing or are intimately involved with that I would find lewd if I were the person being talked about. Sometimes, they tell me information that I don't want to know about and/or

tell me things that a person wouldn't want people knowing about them," said a male student.

- "No, because I don't get offended too easily," said one female student.
- A female student said, "Yes. As stated earlier, when I am in environments such as clubs or bars, those sorts of things happen all the time. When a member of the opposite sex makes me feel disrespected or uncomfortable, I politely let him know that I didn't appreciate his actions and that kind of behavior or language will not be tolerated."
- "Maybe, it's hard to tell sometimes when people are being sarcastic or not, especially as a guy. It's sometimes difficult to draw the line," said a male student.
- "Embarrassing, because most of the time, I'm not alone. I'm with friends and it makes me uncomfortable not only by the sexual comments that

are being made, but all the attention being brought to me regarding sex," said one female student.

- "Yes, a girl I worked with brought the little boy who was 2 years old into see everyone. I was holding her son in my lap and he had his head on my chest. One of the male doctors walked and said, 'I would like to have my head there too,'" said a female student.
- Yet, another female participant said, "No, because in the past, my male friends have joked around, but I know their intentions and they do not mean to make me feel uncomfortable or to harass me in anyway. I have never felt uncomfortable in dealing with the opposite sex regarding lewd remarks. However, if a stranger were to say something like one of my friends have said I know I would feel uncomfortable."

- "I cannot think of a situation where someone of the opposite gender has made me feel uncomfortable," said a female participant.
- Another female participant goes on to say, "At my current job, I sometimes feel uncomfortable when I walk into a conversation between male coworkers . . . They have gotten into trouble for yelling lewd remarks so loud that customers would hear them in the dining room. We also have a dishwasher who looks me up and down and says, 'You're doing great today, just great.' It definitely makes me feel uncomfortable when male coworkers look me up and down or stare at my chest when I'm talking."
- One male interviewee said, "There is not much that can make me uncomfortable. I take comments in a joking way, so I don't let stupid things bother me."

- Mexicans at work usually make lewd comments in Spanish that make me feel uncomfortable," said a female participant.

The **last interview question** asked, "Has anyone of the opposite sex said anything that made you feel embarrassed with respect to sexual harassment? Were their remarks appropriate? Explain."

- "No body of the opposite has ever said anything to me that I have found to be inappropriate in a conversation. Whenever somebody would make remarks that were inappropriate, I would feel uncomfortable," said a male student.
- "No. Most people don't ever say anything like that to me. If they do, they are usually joking. If not, I have tough skin and it doesn't bother me. I wouldn't consider it sexual harassment," said another female student.

- "This has also happened to me. In this case, I responded similarly to what I stated to an earlier question. I let them know how the behavior made me feel and that I don't appreciate it. I don't feel any behavior that makes someone feel uncomfortable is acceptable or should be tolerated."
- One male student went as far to say, "Sometimes girls have called me out on certain behaviors and made obscene suggestions. Their remarks were not appropriate."
- A female student said, "I went to the company Christmas party and had on what I thought was a cute outfit. I had on a skirt that came to my knees, high heeled boots that came up to my knees and a pink furry sweater. The next day at work, one of the male doctors were in a procedure room with a nurse and the first words out of his mouth were 'Did you see what Kelly was wear; that was hot!' He and I always joke

around and were friends, so I didn't think much about it. He's married with kids close to my age, so I just laughed it off. I did wonder if maybe I shouldn't have worn that outfit."

- Another female student said, "I cannot think of an exact situation that I have felt embarrassed by a comment from the opposite sex. If someone becomes embarrassed by or feels uncomfortable by a comment made, I do not think that the comments should be classified as appropriate in any way. I would hope that if the comment is borderline sexual harassment, I know that I would be upset and would tell that person."
- "I have never experienced anyone of the opposite sex saying anything to me that made me feel embarrassed. I think this is mainly because of the way I present myself around the opposite sex. I feel I portray a

strong woman and men know better than to say something to me that is out of line," said a female interviewee.

- "I cannot think of a situation where someone of the opposite gender has said anything that has embarrassed me," said one female interviewee.
- One female goes as far to share her experience with a co-worker who was eventually accused of rape. She said, I can't exactly remember what the circumstance was, but when I was sixteen working at my first job, I said something to my manager about a certain employee who was always making comments and putting his arm around me. The manager just looked at me and told me I was overreacting because he does that all the time, and I wasn't the only one he did this to. Two months later, he had a warrant out for his arrest, due to statutory rape. In this situation, I believe the manager's remarks were very inappropriate. He turned a blind eye to my concerns."

- "Not really, I try to watch what I say and people around me usually give me the same respect. I blow comments off that could be embarrassing," said a male interviewee.
- "Of course, men are very good at making comments that make me feel embarrassed. The remarks are never appropriate. Any comments made about my physical appearance are inappropriate and make me feel uncomfortable, whether they are at work, in a bar, or on the street," said one female.
- "Every time a male that I don't know says something sexually explicit, it makes me uncomfortable because I don't know what the context of what they are saying may be," said a female interviewee.

Interview Responses of Korean Male and Female Participants

The **first interview question** asked was "How do you define sexual harassment?" The **male sample** said:

- "When a women tries to have intimate touching (pinching, hitting, touching face etc)."
- "Sexual harassmt could be interpreted depends on the individual. The definition of sexual harassmt is broad and unclear but one could say it is sexual harassmt when the other person feels uncomfortable."
- "Sexual harassmt is when the other party perceives it as an unpleasant act or verbal statement. I never had that sort of experience but it would be nice if a good-looking woman tries to sexually harass me."
- "One could not conclude sexual harassmt just because she or he feels like it. The definition of sexual harassmt should be widely accepted by public and agree with majority."
- "If a person feels uncomfortable in anyway, it is a sexual harassmt."

The **female sample** said:

- "When a person makes sexual moves and the other party is not interested in the person."
- "The definition of sexual harassment could be different depends on the place and time and who you are with. For example, there was a boss who had to quit his job due to sexual harassment issue. At the company dinner party, the boss told the female worker who had to leave early that she should give him a kiss if she had to go soon. That remark became an issue and he ended up quitting his job."
- "No matter how intimate relationship, if one's behavior is lack of true love feelings or care for other person."
- "Sexual harassment is one's sexual behavior toward the other that can be conducted either verbally or physically. It usually occurs between someone superior (ex. Boss at work) and an inferior person"

in terms of their positions. In many cases, women are more likely to be the victims."

- "Sexual harassment often occurs in Korean company. I also had unpleasant experience with my ex-boss, however, because of my position, and needed my job, I kept it silence. I would say that sexually harassment means, when a person makes unnecessary moves, off-color jokes or physical touch when the other party didn't ask for."

The **second interview question** asked, "Explain whether an individual has said things to you that seemed out of place in a conversation." Both males and females said:

- "I have had experience with sexual harassment in the work place with my boss who said things out of place to me," said one female participant.
- "Once in a while, some impolite reaction without any good reasons," one male said.
- "No, I have not experienced," one female said.

- "No," I cannot recall anyone saying anything inappropriate to me," one male said.
- "None," one male said.
- "No," one male said.
- "No," one male said.
- "When I stayed in Korea, it's not common to talk about sex or making a comment about individual's appearance. I never experienced. But here I make jokes or sexual comment with co-workers," said one female.
- "No," one male said.

Even though Korean male and female participants tended to be very direct about their experience, perhaps the cultural taboo of talking about sexual harassment limited their responses, as suggested by the literature.

The **third interview question** asked, "Do you believe you have been sexually harassed? Why or why not?"

- One female said, "I have had no experience with sexual harassment."
- Another female interviewee said, "Yes I have been sexually harassed."
- "No. I am usually kind to women," one male said.
- "While I was working I didn't feel comfortable when my co-worker or boss touched my body unnecessarily," said one female.
- "No," one male said.
- "None," one male said.
- "No," one male said.
- "No," one male said.
- "No," one male said.
- "I think it's possible but I don't take it as sexual harassment," said one female.

The **fourth interview question** asked, "When dealing with the opposite sex, has anyone ever said

anything that made you feel uncomfortable with respect to lewd remarks? Explain”?

- Another female participant said, “In Korea, when people talk about job-related issues, women usually have low expectations for women. Generally, the married women are less respected and valued.”
- “When I was a student, a male student asked me if I could bore a child and then he said he wanted to have sex if I could get pregnant. To me, he was sexually harassing me into having sex with him,” said another female interviewee.
- “Sometimes, they don’t trust me when I approach them because they don’t know me well (for initial acquaintance), said one male.
- “No, I have not experienced such lewd remarks,” said one female.
- “No,” one male said.
- “None,” one male said.

- "No," one male said.
- "No," one male said.
- "No," one male said.
- "One of my American co-workers asked me if I like to have sex with Korean or American," one female said.

The **last interview question** asked, "Has anyone of the opposite sex said anything that made you feel embarrassed with respect to sexual harassment? Were their remarks appropriate? Explain."

- "No, it has never happened. Nothing has been said to me to make me feel embarrassed," said a female participant.
- "No," said one female.
- "At workplace, some times female workers try to take advantage of sexual harassment for their advantages although I did not do any sexual harassment," one male said.
- "No, I have not experienced," said one female.

- "No," one male said.
- "None," one male said.
- "No," one male said.
- "No," one male said.
- "No," one male said.
- "I try not to be embarrassed. I try to take that as a joke," one female said.

Discussion of Statistical and Interview Findings

The *first research question* asked whether there were cultural differences between Korean and American students' perceptions of sexual harassment in conversational appropriateness. The independent-samples *t* tests indicated a number of insignificant differences in that both Korean and American students shared similar experiences to the student in the survey dialogue such as, feeling uncomfortable, perceiving sexual harassing comments are embarrassing, and would feel uncomfortable if someone alluded to sex in a conversation. That is,

the results indicated no significant cultural differences. Contrary to the literature, individuals' lived experiences with any kind of traumatic situation are not culture-bound, but how such experiences affect them personally because individuals' perceptions could mean anything and people's perceptions are real to them.

On the other hand, the results indicated a few cultural differences between the two samples with reference to a person making improper and inappropriate comments and violating an individual's expectations of what constitutes or deems a proper conversation in both formal and informal contexts. Again, their responses, contrary to the literature, are not perceived culture-bound. Consequently, one person might view sexual harassment as an acceptable behavior while others might view it as unacceptable.

Some studies have shown that gender differences bring different views on the topic of sexual harassment,

specifically people with power as well as those without power (Paludi 5).

Even though females in both Korea and America have been and are still subjected to oppressive male-dominated societies, Korean women have been the victims of sexually harassing behavior and have keep silent. Although American and Korean societies are patriarchal, conventional wisdom tells us that America has opened many doors of opportunity for women to participate in occupations that were once male dominated. Nugent contends that, "Korea has been a patriarchal society since the beginning of its history. The role of women has been a part of this system and [is somewhat] traditionally very limited and specific" (1). However, this sample of students, both Korean and American, are more informed about sexual harassment and appear to deal more effectively with it since they are armed with more information and ways of handling the situation. Perhaps

according to previous research, “. . . both men and women employed external and internal coping responses to deal with” (DeSouza and Fansler 541) sexually harassing behavior.

Moreover, unlike some of the insignificant results of the independent-samples t tests, the correlation analyses indicated significant differences between the two samples. “The Pearson r is a ‘robust’ test, meaning that rather large departures from normality still allow for its use” (Sprinthall 301). Said differently, the independent-samples t tests measures differences, whereas Pearson r is concerned with relationships and/or comparisons between variables.

The *second research question* asked whether there were gender differences between Korean and American students' perceptions of sexual harassment in conversational appropriateness. According to the results, there were several significant gender differences between the Korean

male and female samples and the American male and female samples. When compared based on matched-race or same ethnicity, the results indicated a significant difference between both Korean males and females and American males and females. For example, both samples of males and females indicated they had experienced sexually harassing behavior from the opposite gender.

Because there were significant differences, Nancy Chodorow argues that gender socialization begins early in life through the development of gender identity. . . . That is, . . . gender identity of girls and boys develops differently because of the influence of the primary caregiver, who is usually other mother. . . . Through differing paths of development, males are likely to come to value independence or autonomy, and females are likely to come to value relationships" (119). Likewise, Marjorie Jaasma and Randall Koper suggest that females view their relationships with "themselves at the center

of connection," while males view themselves at the top of a hierarchy (119).

The results also indicated they believed the sample dialogue indicated sexual harassment and would feel uncomfortable if they found themselves in a similar situation. Both samples of Korean and American males and females perceived that the client's comments hinted to sexual harassment and alluded to sex. They further perceived that the comments the client made to the student were embarrassing. It appears from the perceptions of both Korean and American male and female students that their well-rounded experiences, regardless of culture, are similar. However, only the American students said they would still feel comfortable with an individual even if they found themselves in a sexually harassing situation, but both samples of students perceived that individuals' expectations would be

violated if they are subjected to sexually harassing situation.

Robin Clair, an organizational communication scholars, would likely attribute these students' experiences to a perhaps a "simple misunderstanding," or "flirting," or "human nature," suggesting that this is "just the way things are" (119-21). William Neher, also an organizational communication scholar, argues that "various surveys and other studies suggest that sexual harassment is still widespread in . . . organizations; nevertheless, organizational rhetoric, tends to downplay the seriousness of this issue" (301). That is, both Clair and Neher suggest that sexual harassing behavior is all around us and it is impossible to escape unanticipated behavior of this nature.

The *third research question* asked whether American students will report perceptions of sexually harassing conversations more frequently than Korean students. The

statistical results indicated several significant differences between the two groups having experienced a similar situation as that of the student in the survey dialogue and were consisted with the interview data. That is, American students perceived having experienced more sexually harassing comments in conversation than Korean students. Perhaps many scholars would suggest that individuals' upbringing, socialization, affective and cognitive linguistic styles, and modes of learning may account for perceived differences in their experiences or knowledge of sexual harassment (Jaasma and Koper 119).

Based on the interview data, the *last research question* asked whether American students will report more awareness and understanding of the definition and other experiences with sexual harassment than Korean students. According to the interview data, there appears to be no difference in the way Korean and American students define

sexual harassment based on the way their respective countries define sexual harassment.

Although "it is widely argued that problems in understanding and addressing sexual harassment stem from the lack of a clear, concise, universally accepted definition of sexual harassment" (Roscoe, Strouse and Goodwin 516), college students have a general understanding of the definition of sexual harassment.

With respect to the first interview question, both Korean and American students' understanding of the definitions of sexual harassment approximate the definitions the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the Korean International Labour Organization, as defined in Chapter II. Both groups defined sexual harassment as unwanted, unprovoked advances toward the opposite sex as well as improper comments and touching of the opposite sex.

The second interview question asked students whether anyone has said things to them that seemed out of place in a conversation. For both samples, the results were mixed. While some American students perceived inappropriate comments in conversation, most Korean students did not recall anyone ever saying anything out of place to them in a conversation.

The third interview question asked students to explain whether they believe they have been sexually harassed. For the American sample, the results were mixed, but for the Korean sample, students did not perceive they had ever been sexually harassed. Even though a few Korean students may have perceived they had been sexually harassed, they did not view it as sexual harassment.

Finally, the last interview question asked students whether anyone from the opposite sex has said anything that made them feel embarrassed with respect sexually

harassing behavior. Again, the results were mixed for the American student sample, but most Korean students did not recall anyone making embarrassing sexually harassing comments to them.

Conclusion

Contrary to the literature, both Korean and American students who participated in this study did not differ in their perceptions of sexual harassment with respect to culture. However, they did differ with reference to gender. Gender differences still exist when males and females discuss the topic or experience sexual harassment. Even though gender does not matter, women are still likely to experience sexual harassment more than men. Furthermore, the interview data only revealed mixed results based on matched-race experiences. That is, American male and female students perceived having more experience with sexual harassment than Korean male and female students.

Chapter V—Summary, Conclusions, and
Directions for Future Research

Summary

The purpose of this study was to compare the cross-cultural differences of Korean and American college students' perceptions of their experiences with sexual harassment and how it impacts their thoughts and feelings. The social problem of sexually harassing behavior has affected both men and women in both countries throughout time; however, it seems that Americans look more closely at this issue than Koreans. Therefore, this social topic has encouraged the American and Korean societies to establish organizations to help victims and other affected individuals.

The purpose of these organizations is to discuss the issue of sexual harassment more openly and to demand

equality in the workplace, work, and social lives as well as help college students understand this phenomenon.

Sexual harassment is just as prevalent today in both American and Korean organizations as it was decades ago. In addition, few scholars have focused their attention on the difference in perceptions of sexual harassment between Koreans and Americans. It is for these reasons that the purpose of this study is to compare the perceptual differences of Korean and American college students on sexual harassment. This will extend the sexual harassment literature to include Koreans' experiences with this important topic. Therefore, this study addresses two research questions:

RQ₁: Are there cultural differences between Korean and American students' perceptions of sexual harassment in conversational appropriateness?

RQ₂: Are there gender differences between Korean and American students' perceptions of sexual harassment in conversational appropriateness?

RQ₃: Will American students report perceptions of sexually harassing conversations more frequently than Korean students?

RQ₄: Based on the interview data, will American students report more awareness and understanding of the definition of and other experiences with sexual harassment than Korean students?

However, the results indicated few cultural differences, contrary to the literature, several gender differences, and several significant differences based on same national or ethnic differences.

Conclusions

Sexual harassment is a very important topic to study because it is a widespread problem both in the workplace and on college campuses, especially in Korea. It is

recognized and yet it is still seen as unimportant. Many people, particularly women, are suffering from psychological and physical abuse and that could cause permanent damage in their lives.

The topic of sexual harassment involving college students is important to study because sexual harassment education would help them protect themselves. Students entering colleges are not prepared to experience such unpleasant, demeaning and often they do not know how to react. In college settings, sexual harassment could take place with anyone, including peers.

However, in many cases, sexual harassment occurs between people with authority such as professors. Sexual harassment is unclear and often ambiguous behavior and it can be interpreted differently depending on the individual. Under the circumstances, it is not easy to retaliate or report against teachers. Universities must recognize the sexual harassment issues and establish

appropriate programs and orientation to help prevent and support the students. What we need is more studies being published as well as discussion about sexual harassment. This would be effective for education and prevention.

Beyond this, as with other cultures, sexual harassment is an immense social problem in Korea. Since the 1980s, it has been occurring daily. There has been rapid economic growth and more women started to work outside home. Therefore, it became clearer that important social issues such as this have been ignored for decades. More importantly in Korea, the topic is a cultural taboo.

Korean people do not talk about sexual harassment, and the students have a difficult time dealing with this issue. Often they do not know how to respond to sexual harassment behavior practices. Until the early 1990s, Korean people did not even have any perceptions about sexual harassment. Korean women, in particular, accepted sexual harassment as a social norm and endured suffering.

More often, women thought sexual harassment was shameful and embarrassing; therefore, they buried it in their hearts and kept silent about it. In many cases, when women complained and reported it to higher ranking personnel, it backfired on them and they were blamed and questioned about what happened. However, with the help of the government, people's attitudes and perceptions towards sexual harassment cases began changing, though this change was slow. Women in the workplace and college students no longer have to tolerate this unpleasant experience.

However, Korean college students need to be educated and informed that sexual harassment is a crime. Perpetrators need to be held accountable for their actions. In addition, although there is a plethora of information about sexual harassment in Korea, few sexual harassment studies have been completed in Korea. People want to learn more about sexual harassment because it is

a social and political issue in Korea.

Directions for Future Research

Although sexual harassment is an important topic to many people, it is still prevalent in the workplace and on college campuses. It is like a weed that keeps growing and dealt with according to one's culture. Sexual harassment is universal. It is difficult to define, and people need to get actively involved in fighting this crime. More studies need to be done on this very important topic, and people need to learn how to exercise their rights in battling against sexual harassment, regardless of their gender. People have a right to feel safe in the workplace and in educational environments. Sexual harassment can affect people's lives negatively and hinder their full potential to perform their duties to the best of their ability in order to achieve their goals. Sexual harassment is no longer a private issue. It needs to be discussed in a public forum. With more

scholars writing about this important topic, people can benefit from the information.

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Appendix A
Cover Letter

Dear Fellow Student:

The purpose of this study is to invite you to participate in a study for which I am conducting for my Master's of Humanities thesis. My name is Yune-Kyong Chae, and I want to compare the cross-cultural differences between Korean and American college students' perceptions of their experiences with sexual harassment and how it impacts your thoughts and feelings. Your cooperation is needed to help me examine these cross-cultural differences to so I can make a contribution to the discipline of Humanities.

This study will employ a survey questionnaire in order to calculate the mean average of students' scores to compare the differences or similarities of Korean and American students' responses to statements in the survey questionnaire.

The participants for this study will be Korean and American undergraduate college students. You are free to ask questions concerning the nature of this research and your role in it. You are free to withdraw from this study at any time without prejudice.

There are no risks of psychological distress in the study. When you are informed about the study and if the subject matter poses any psychological distress to you, you can choose NOT to participate in the study. If you participate in the study and do not perceive any psychological risks, please complete the survey questionnaire. However, if you experience psychological distress as you complete the survey questionnaire due to a past experience, you can choose to withdraw from the study under these circumstances.

The findings of the study may yield theoretical insight for how sexual harassment may play a communicative role in participants' lives in academic settings. A benefit of the study is that it will provide insight into the role of communication of how social support is enacted and how it serves both the participants and the immediate academic institution and its students. Some modest educational benefits may result from participation in the study. However, there is no direct benefit to you for your participation in the study.

The participants in this study can obtain the results of this study from me, the principal investigator, or from my thesis advisor. Participants should direct their correspondence to the attention of Yune-Kyong Chae and Dr. Mary L. Rucker, Department of Communication, 425 Millett Hall, 3640 Colonel Glenn Hwy, Wright State University, Dayton, Ohio 45435.

If you have general questions about giving consent or your rights as a research participant in this research study, you can call the Wright State University Institutional Review Board at (937) 775-4462.

Your cooperation in participating in this study is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Yune-Kyong Chae
Principal Investigator

Mary L. Rucker, Ph.D.
Thesis Advisor and Co-principal Investigator

Appendix B

Conversational Appropriateness Scale:
Perceptions of Sexual Harassment

Please check, circle, or write in your response to the information written below.

1. Nationality: _____
2. Gender: Male _____ Female _____
3. Age in years and month(s) in American age:

4. Class standing in school. Check one
 - a. freshman
 - b. sophomore
 - c. junior
 - d. senior
5. Academic major: _____
6. In case you want a copy of the results of this study, please provide your e-mail address below

Thank you for your cooperation

Instructions: Use the following scale and write one number before each statement to indicate your feelings whether you perceive the below example constitute sexual harassment and whether you have had a similar experience.

- 5 = strongly agree
- 4 = agree
- 3 = Undecided
- 2 = disagree
- 1 = strongly disagree

Example: *A student tutor was assaulted by a client, who said to him/her that he/she "exuded sexuality all over the place." He/She remained silent, embarrassed by the experience and frightened by the powerful message he/she felt he/she must be*

projecting. A month later, a co-worker filed a complaint of sexual assault against the same client and the student tutor spoke up. In the ensuing legal proceedings, another student victim came forward, and records revealed that several previously reliable tutors had resigned after working with this client.

Does the above example constitute sexual harassment?

1. ___ I have had a similar experience.
2. ___ Everything he/she said was inappropriate and indicated sexual harassing behavior.
3. ___ Would you feel uncomfortable and appear to be sexually harassed if this happened to you?
4. ___ Some of the things he/she said were awkward and hinted to sexual harassment.
5. ___ His/her comments were very improper.
6. ___ He/she said some things that should not have been said, which alluded to sex.
7. ___ Would you have been embarrassed by his/her remarks.
8. ___ Some of his/her remarks were inappropriate
9. ___ I would feel comfortable with this client's comments.
10. ___ He/she violated this person's expectations with his/her comments.

Appendix C

Cross-Cultural Differences in Perception of Sexual
Harassment

Interview Schedule

1. Define sexual harassment? What does it mean to you?
2. Explain whether an individual has said things to you that seemed out of place in a conversation, which appeared to be sexually harassing behavior.
3. Do you perceive you have been sexually harassed? Why or why not?
4. When dealing with the opposite gender, has anyone ever said anything that made you feel uncomfortable with respect to lewd remarks?
5. Has anyone of the opposite gender said anything that made you feel embarrassed with respect to sexual harassment? Or were their remarks appropriate? Explain.