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Sexual harassment in Korean college classrooms: how self-construal and gender affect students’ reporting behavior

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This article examines the reasons why women students may hesitate to report sexual harassment. The research draws on the notion of ‘self-construal’. Self-construal is a form of self-identification in social relationships, which in this case relates, in particular, to gender within cultural environments in Korea. For the purposes of this research, a survey was conducted with 298 Korean college students from 7 to 14 March 2006. The results showed that different types of self-construal had different influences on Korean college students’ and their reporting of sexual harassment, whereas gender did not. Grounded in the theoretical framework of self-construal, people with independent self-construal were found to express their uncomfortable feelings and to report to the university counseling center, whereas people with interdependent self-construal did not. Furthermore, we found that women were more likely than men to directly express their opinions and report sexual harassment to the university counseling center. Men are also harassed by women colleagues or students but are often more reluctant than women to recognize their experiences as ‘sexual harassment’ because of the stereotype that men are the perpetrators of this behavior, not its victims, and because they fear ‘loss of face.’ It is necessary to engage not just with femininity but also with masculinity and the relationship between these constructs because they are both temporally and geographically contingent.

Keywords: sexual harassment; self-construal; gender identities; Korea; college students

Introduction

Feminist geographers in the UK, the USA, and elsewhere have shifted from making women visible at the regional and local levels to studying ‘the geography closest in-the body’ (Rich 1986, 212; Van Hoven 2009). In Korea, however, gender issues still lack visibility in the teaching and studying of geography, even though women have made substantial progress in terms of educational achievement and labor market penetration. As McDowell (1997) suggests, not all women are equal or even similar. The position of women typically depends on their social class, age, family status, and education level. Recognizing these differences and the social status of women, this study examines the sexual harassment experiences of women students enrolled in the higher education in Korea.

The proportion of women in higher education in Korea has been increasing. In 2009 the Korean National Statistics Office reported that 83.5% of female and 84% of male high

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school students go on to enroll in college (Korea National Statistical Office 2009). As of 2009 in South Korea, 727,178 female students and 1,216,259 male students were enrolled in 173 colleges (Center for Education Statistics 2008). Many university students tend to be involved in extracurricular activities such as study groups, athletics clubs, student associations, sororities or fraternities, and several forms of community outreach programs. These activities are structured by intimate hierarchical relationships between seniors and juniors. Juniors are expected to respect their seniors, to obey the rules of the organization, and to protect harmony among its members.

In the higher education environment, female students may experience sexual harassment through their social relationship with their male counterparts. In this regard, this study examines the gendering of space in Korea by introducing a situation in which women students in Korean universities face and experience sexual harassment in the university environment. According to one survey which collected data from local area universities, 11% of female respondents and 8% of male students had reported recently experiencing sexual harassment (YWCA in Daejeon Survey Reports, Yeonhap Press (YP) News, July 21, 2009). The Ministry of Gender Equality (MoGE) found that out of 1414 undergraduate and graduate students in 20 universities, 39.2% students had been victims of sexual harassment in their universities. Furthermore, most female victims were sexually harassed by male co-eds (MoGE 2002).

Most universities in Korea have established campus counseling centers for sexual harassment. Even though the counseling centers try to educate students about sexual harassment and urge them to report incidents in order to provide advice on how to deal with it, students have not relied upon the centers for help, which has resulted in a low rate of reporting sexual harassment incidents on campus. While sexual harassment on campus seems to be prevalent amongst both men and women, the substantially low reporting rate to university officers allows many sexual harassment offenders to avoid penalties. If offenders are not penalized, they can continue to commit sexual harassment. Moreover, victims’ behavior of not reporting incidents hinders the collection of accurate statistics of sexual harassment on campus, leading to difficulties in raising the issue and identifying the real extent of sexual harassment that is occurring on campus grounds.

Therefore, facilitating and motivating college students to express their experiences of sexual harassment encounters to the offenders and to report the offense to the university counseling center is important. Prior to promoting a campaign for reporting sexual harassment on campus to the university counseling center, it is necessary to find out what makes victims hesitate to report sexual harassment.

Through the perspective of self-construal, this study examines the reasons why female students may hesitate to report sexual harassment. Self-construal is a form of self-identification in social relationships and we examine how it relates particularly to gender in cultural environments, such as universities in Korea. Markus and Kitayama (1991) state that self-construal offers a way of conceptualizing the self. For example, those who tend to construe the self as separate from their social context and thus emphasize autonomy and independence are called individuals with independent self-construal. Meanwhile, those who tend to construe the self as a constituent of a broader social context and embody characteristics and qualities of this social environment are called people with interdependent self-construal (Markus and Kitayama 1991). Individuals with an interdependent self-construal tend to inhibit their personal attitudes or emotional impulses to fulfill the expectations of their social environment, which often represents the differences between Eastern and Western cultures. Within social and cultural geography, there is an increasing emphasis on individual performance, the politics of self-identity, and
the gendered and sexualized nature of everyday spaces (Valentine 1997). By conducting a small survey, this study examines the reasons behind female students’ reluctance to report sexual harassment in terms of self-construal as it relates to gendered customs in Korea (McDowell 1997).

A majority of the sexual harassment victims choose not to report their experiences for various reasons, including a fear of being evicted from their jobs or relationships, retaliation by the harasser, and skepticism that any constructive actions will be taken to solve the problem (Luthar and Luthar 2007). Furthermore, women who perceive their lack of personal resources, such as self-esteem or locus of control, are more likely not to report their experiences (Gruber and Smith 1995; Valentine 1997). Also, women who feel ashamed or humiliated tend not to bring public attention to themselves. In general, women’s attitudes have been shown to influence their responses to, and reporting of, sexual harassment (Gruber and Smith 1995).

In many ways, negotiating danger is similar to negotiating power (Mehta and Bondi 1999). In particular, female victims who are threatened by an acquaintance often hesitate to publicly report the incident for fear of breaking harmony or relationships within their group. Women in Korea are taught to think of themselves as subordinate in their relationship with others. This tendency of self-construal, an individual’s sense of self in relation to others, seems to be associated with gender, in that women tend to be more interdependent than men. Men are socialized from early childhood to assume supremacy in society by displaying dominance, sexual initiative, and self-interest. Women, in contrast, are expected to be submissive and refrain from making allegations against harassers because they are nurtured to emphasize the importance of harmony (Luthar and Luthar 2007).

Thus, this study suggests self-construal as a gendered custom for understanding victims’ behaviors after sexual harassment. People are said to have both interdependent and independent self-construal. Firstly, people with interdependent self-construal tend to place higher value on relations and harmony with others. Also, people with interdependent self-construal in collectivistic cultures are expected to look after their group’s interests, hold the group’s beliefs and opinions, and cooperate with others (Triandis 1995). As a result, such people have concerns about group harmony, so they may be afraid of breaking it by reporting sexual harassment.

Second, this study suggests that femininity and masculinity are also culturally constructed and thus influence sexual harassment-reporting behavior. Men are brought up to be independent, regardless of their cultural orientation. They are less concerned with group harmony than women. As a consequence, there might be gender differences in reporting sexual harassment.

Thus, this study examines the effects of self-construal and gender on people’s behavior such as expressing their thoughts and feelings to an offender and publicly reporting on their experience in such a public manner. For this purpose, survey data were collected from three Korean universities from 7 to 14 March 2006. The sample consisted of 298 college students taking a communication course in the spring semester of 2006.

**Theoretical background**

**Gendering of space: sexual harassment in Korean society**

*Space, gender identity, and sexual harassment*

An increasing number of studies have examined not only the body but also the construction of gendered and cultural identities and subjectivities in particular spatial
contexts (Longhurst 2001). The gendering of space refers to socially constructed differences and mutually constitutive relationships between gender, identity, and place (Datta 2008; Townsend 1991). Gender performance, i.e. masculinity and femininity, is spatially constituted and shaped by power structures that vary across different places and spaces. That is, gender identity is constructed through the socially and politically established norms and demeanor in different spatial contexts (Datta 2008).

The construction of feminine and masculine gender identities may be related to gender differences in self-construal. Women and men are regarded as being different in the ways that they define the self (Cross and Madson 1997; Gabriel and Gardner 1999). Cross and Madson (1997) have suggested that many observed gender differences are a result of women’s and men’s different self-construal. According to them, the tendency for women to be more interdependent and men to be more independent could explain gender differences in terms of aggression, emotional expression, and self-esteem. That is, women tend to be less aggressive, emotionally more expressive and have lower self-esteem than men because of their differing perceptions of self-construal.

Individual’s notions of self-construal are constituted by their everyday life experiences within different spatial contexts, including the classroom. Women are brought up as interdependent, whereas men are brought up as independent. Interdependency and independency are not traits that we are born with, but are formed through everyday cultural and social practices in certain spaces. Furthermore, these perceptions of self are not static, rather, they are fluid and subject to change as the result of social structures and practices.

Women’s interdependent self-construal and men’s independent self-construal are internalized, resulting in the reinforcement of the gendering of customs. Thus, the construction of feminine gender identities often emphasizes women’s vulnerability and reinforces the idea of public space as dangerous for women (Day 2001). Fear and the perception of danger may make women themselves restrict their activities and feelings of independence within public spaces. The spatial exclusions in women’s lives are a reflection of gendered power relations which are maintained through the naturalization of socio-spatial rules that promote such inequities (Nast and Pulido 2000). Power relations between women and men are embedded in sexual harassment, which needs to be thought of as a collective and structural problem in a specific space (Al-Hindi 2000; Ng 1993)

Sexual harassment in public spaces such as school hallways, classrooms, gym areas, and cafeterias may remind women on a daily basis that they are not wanted in certain spaces. Thus, public space can be mistaken as one territory to which men hold greater rights than women (Gardner 1994). Women’s behavior in certain environments can be affected by the threat of men’s sexual harassment. Women are likely to be unknowingly scared of behaving independently and this may also cause them to hesitate in reporting sexual harassment because they are taught that men, rather than women, have more of a right to inhabit certain places. That is, it makes women accept that their use of space is not based on independent free choices but is a product of social power relations between women and men.

Space plays a role in the reproduction of patriarchal structures and ideologies vis-à-vis violence against women (Kedir and Admasachew 2010). Sexual harassment can be interpreted as mutually constitutive, and reciprocal relationships exist amongst places, gender relations, and social reproduction/production processes.

**Korean society and sexual harassment**

While this study shows that many students experience some form of sexual harassment, it is important to note that Korea as a country is not free from the social implications of sexual
harassment. Social discourse regarding sexual harassment began in the 1980s and the Korean protection law against sexual harassment was enacted in 1994. According to the MoGE, approximately 13/1000 people have experienced sexual harassment, including physical assaults (MoGE 2007). The number of people prosecuted in 2007 for sexual violence was 13,634 (Korean Women’s Development Institute 2008). Based on case reports through hotlines for women established by the MoGE, 8205 sexual harassment calls were answered, accounting for 5.2% of the total counseling calls (Korea National Statistical Office 2009).

According to one survey conducted by the MoGE in 2009, 61% of respondents who experienced sexual harassment in the workplace did not make strong appeals against offenders, even though they felt humiliated. Even worse, no one who experienced sexual harassment reported the incident to the police or to the National Human Rights Association (YP News, September 2009).

Unfortunately, sexual harassment is not just limited to the workplace. It is taking place within institutions of higher education at a considerably increased rate. According to the United Nations’ (UN) report, a study in the USA found that 83% of girls in public schools, grades 8 through to 11, experienced some form of sexual harassment (UN 2009). Sexual harassment against girls and young women in educational institutions is a social phenomenon in Korea. However, the vast majority of research on sexual harassment has focused on either the USA or Canada (Uggen and Shinohara 2009). In comparison, very little research on sexual harassment has been conducted in South Korea.

In Korean society, the term, ‘sexual harassment’ is legally defined as a case in which any employee or employer of any organization commits an act of (1) making another party feel sexual humiliation, or aversion with verbal or physical behavior of a sexual nature and (2) putting the other party at a disadvantage in employment on grounds of not complying with any verbal or physical behavior of a sexual nature or other demands (MoGE 2008). Legally, sexual harassment occurs whenever sexual behavior substantially interferes with an employee’s work performance or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment. Also, it refers to unwanted and potential coercion, however, in practice, even a supposedly friendly come-on by a male superior may have an element of implicit coercion (Benson and Thomson 1982). The definition of sexual harassment in Korea can be found in the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission’s Sex Discrimination Guidelines that includes a statement explicitly prohibiting such gender-based harassment in the workplace.

Sexual harassment is suggested as a multidimensional construct composed of several dimensions (Gelfand, Fitzgerald, and Drasgow 1995; Gruber 1992; Uggen and Blackstone 2004). For example, Gruber’s (1992) typology includes verbal requests, verbal comments, and non-verbal displays (sexual assault and sexual posturing), while Gelfand, Fitzgerald, and Drasgow (1995) categorize sexual harassment as gender harassment, unwanted sexual attention, and sexual coercion. Benson and Thomson (1982) specify unwanted sexual attention as verbal advances (expressions of sexual interest), invitation (for dates), physical advances (touching), body language (standing too close), emotional come-ons (talking about personal problems and writing long letters), and undue attention (obsequiously friendly and too helpful).

In addition to these definitions of sexual harassment, it includes the category of subjective consciousness of sexual harassment, for example, if women/men feel uncomfortable, or if suggestive looks, touching, or requesting an unwelcome sexual favor impact upon one’s self-esteem (Uggen and Blackstone 2004). Objectively defined sexual harassment occurs whenever certain incidents happen, whereas subjectively perceived harassment depends on the victim’s interpretation and judgment of each incident.
In terms of the range of modes in which sexual harassment can occur, a geographical variable has to be focused on. It is influenced by how gender identities, place, and performance intersect within the idiosyncrasies of particular institutions and classes (Nast and Pulido 2000). In this sense, men are also gendered and can be victims of sexual harassment in specific spaces (McDowell 1997; Valentine 1997).

Sexual harassment in this study refers to both objective and subjective, verbal, visual, and physical harassment which occurs among peers in colleges. Many people assume that power flows from those who occupy higher positions down to those who occupy lower positions, which is an accurate description when thinking about sexual harassment from a ‘top-down’ model (Schultz 2001). However, in the workplace and in social life, many women and men experience horizontal harassment, which involves exclusion by peers, and not simply as vertical harassment that involves coercion from bosses (Schultz 2001).

In line with Schultz’s (2001) argument, many nongovernmental organizations for human rights in Korea suggest that not only should behavioral misconduct be considered, but also identified as a set of social relations that are embedded within a larger context of structural inequality. Thus, the concept of sexual harassment can be applied to friends or colleagues on university campuses, and can occur in horizontal relationships, as well as within hierarchical relationship structures.

**Gendering of customs: self-construal**

**Korean culture and self-construal**

Culture is a collection of norms, beliefs, and social perceptions regarding the status and role of gender. Culture has a direct bearing on the way women and men understand or react to violence (Kedir and Admasachew 2010). Culture affects the social construction of femininity and masculinity and the maintenance of gendered identities within a range of places, circumstances, and geographic scales, from the home and the workplace to the nation (McDowell 1997).

In Korean culture, women are conventionally expected to live with their parents before marriage because of customary traditions and the high cost of urban housing. As such, Neo-Confucian customs dictate that parents are responsible for protecting and supervising their unmarried daughter’s sexuality. The Confucian family-centered norm is embedded deeply within social values and most women experience the burden of family pressure to marry, and to maintain their sexual purity before marriage (Song 2010).

Although the pursuit of independence and freedom as an ideal has existed with the liberalization of Korean society through the procedural democracy since 1987 (Song 2010), every aspect of living for Korean women and men is still confined within Confucian culture. This study focuses on self-construal as the individualized cultural factor that is likely to play an influential role in identifying and reconstructing gender power relations in the Confucian culture. Based on Markus and Kitayama (1991), Confucian culture-specific imperatives are thought to become individually internalized standard values that guide each Korean individual’s behavior. Consequently, the formation of self-construal for each Korean would be influenced by these standards. Given that self-construal is culture-bound, it can be characterized as a human production that depends upon everyone constantly doing ‘interdependent/independent self-construal’, just like culture.

Many researchers confirm that self-construal is shaped by cultural influences. Research has shown that culture-dependent self-construal is supposed to function as orienting, mediating, and background-shaping, giving rise to individual human cognition and behavior (Christopher and Skillman 2009). Research has also focused on cultural level
differences across nations such as individualism–collectivism. Researchers have also studied individual-level cultural differences such as independent–interdependent self-construal (Yamawaki 2008).

Since the seminal writings of Markus and Kitayama (1991), there have been substantial efforts to figure out the roles of self-construal. According to Markus and Kitayama, self-construal reflects the extent to which individuals from different cultures view themselves either as an individuated entity or in relation to others. People with independent self-construal consider themselves unique and they value characteristics distinguishing them from other members of the group. In other words, individuals with independent self-construal value their own thoughts, feelings, and actions rather than others’ thoughts, feelings, and actions. The goal of independent self-construal is to be unique, achieve his/her own purpose, express him/herself, and be direct (Gudykunst et al. 1996). Whereas, people with interdependent self-construal see themselves as part of a group, they tend to define themselves in relation to other group members, and consider how their own thoughts, feelings, and actions are perceived by others in the relationship. The goal of interdependent self-construal is to fit in with the ingroup, act in appropriate ways, achieve the ingroup’s purpose, read the other’s mind, and be indirect (Gudykunst et al. 1996).

Independent self-construal is representative of individualistic cultures, whereas interdependent self-construal is illustrative of collectivistic cultures (Gudykunst et al. 1996; Singelis and Brown 1995). As classified by Hofstede (1980), a collectivistic society possesses a close-knit social structure. Collectivists tend to be more sensitive to social evaluation and, therefore, try to retain a positive evaluation with their relationship partner, as well as maintain harmony within the relationship. According to Hofstede’s work (1980), South Korea is classified as a collectivistic country. Confucian culture makes it imperative to be an interdependent person and to strive for group harmony.

**Self-construal and gender**

In Korea, gender power relations are reproduced and represented across all levels of society through the internalization of self-construal, resulting in the reinforcement of the gendering of customs. As McDowell (1997) suggests, not only femininity but also masculinity is gendered. Men are suggested to be different from women in terms of the way in which they internalize and restructure self-construal.

This idea has been empirically confirmed through social psychological research. Social psychological theories posit that men and women differ in ways directly relevant to relationship functioning, such as the content and structure of how the self is construed (Cross and Madson 1997), personality traits, and socialized roles. Men and women tend to differ in their conceptions of the self (Cross and Madson 1997; Gabriel and Gardner 1999). Cross and Madson (1997) have suggested that many observed gender differences are a result of women’s and men’s different self-construal. According to them, the tendency for women to be more interdependent and men to be more independent could explain gender differences across several areas of social psychology, including aggression, emotional expression, and self-esteem. Gabriel and Gardner (1999) found that women describe themselves as more relational, have higher scores on relational self-construal, and pay more attention to information about relationships. Whereas, Olver, Aries, and Batgos (1989) found that men have more separate and differentiated selves with clearer boundaries with others. Characteristics of gender in speech patterns also show different goal orientations of men and women. It has been found that women are more relationship
oriented than men, in that young girls are socialized to get along with people and
couraged to communicate to solve conflicts. In comparison, men are more goal oriented
and are socialized to be competitive in achieving goals, encouraged to engage in action,
and be direct in communicating.

Therefore, it is possible to think that men are more likely to develop a separated self-
schema, or independent self-construal, and women, in contrast, are more likely to develop
a connected self-schema, or interdependent self-construal (Cross and Madson 1997).
Research investigating gender differences across nations, such as Canada and Japan, found
that women show higher levels of conformity than men in the context of a ‘threshold
public goods game’ (Cadsby et al. 2007). Also, research found that women see themselves
as higher in relational interdependence than men, and men see themselves as higher in
independence than women (Guimond et al. 2006). Kashima et al. (1995) also suggest that
men from northwestern European backgrounds have higher independence and lower
interdependence than women from non-European backgrounds.

Gender, culture, and reporting behavior of sexual harassment

The belief about male dominance in society is a factor for perpetrating sexual harassment.
Male and female students who scored higher on a cultural power scale that measured male
social role beliefs, perpetrated more sexual harassment than lower scoring peers (Hall,
Howard, and Boezio 1986). Russell and Trigg (2004) found that men who take on more
traditional masculine gender roles were more likely to sexually harass women, have more
accepting attitudes toward sexually harassing behaviors, and misinterpret a woman’s
friendliness as a sexual advance.

Even worse, women who endorse a traditional view of women’s roles in society perceive these roles to be less subjective to harassment (Folgero and Fjeldstad 1995). According to Folgero and Fjeldstad (1995), subjective perceptions of sexual harassment occur only one-fifth to one-tenth as often as do reports of objectively defined sexual harassment experiences. Gruber and Smith (1995) also reported that women generally give fairly nonassertive responses to their harassers. Ignoring or pretending not to notice the harassment is a common response. There are a number of possible reasons for this discrepancy. Among them, culture and gender differences are important factors which can help to explain the less frequent reporting behavior of sexual harassment.

First, cultural forces play a role in facilitating sexual harassment toward women, preventing them from reporting their experiences in public (Luthar and Luthar 2007). The differences between individualist and collectivist societies have been seen as relevant in explaining reactions to sexual harassment in different cultures. Victims of sexual harassment in a low individualistic culture might refrain from making allegations against the harasser because collectivist values emphasize the importance of harmony (Sigal and Jacobsen 1999; Wasti and Cortina 2002). In Korea as one of the collectivistic societies, victims of sexual harassment are not encouraged to publicly report their experiences and feelings in order to maintain their family’s dignity and face in society. Not only the material context of place but also the culture and customs of place play an important role in constructing gender power relations.

Second, gender differences in self-construal can lead to a difference in self-expression and communication style. Kim, Sharkey, and Singelis (1994) found that participants with a strong interdependent construal were most concerned with the importance of not hurting the listener’s feelings. While for those who are more independent, there is an emphasis on communicating in a clear and explicit manner (Kim et al. 1994). Based on their research,
we suggest that men who have strong independent self-construal may be willing to express their uncomfortable feelings when facing sexual harassment, whereas women who have strong interdependent self-construal may react with silence regarding how uncomfortable they feel when facing sexual harassment. Ultimately, it is suggested that men with independent self-construal have high reporting rates of sexual harassment, whereas women with the interdependent self-construal have low reporting rates of sexual harassment.

**Hypotheses**

In this research, we tested five hypotheses. These were:

**H1:** People with independent self-construal are more likely to directly express their own feelings to offenders than those with interdependent self-construal.

**H2:** People with independent self-construal are more likely to report to the university counseling center than those with interdependent self-construal.

**H3:** Female and male victims of sexual harassment are different when directly expressing their feelings to offenders.

**H4:** Women and men are different when reporting sexual harassment to the university counseling center.

**H5:** Women are likely to have interdependent self-construal whereas men are likely to have independent self-construal.

**Methods**

**Overview**

A survey was conducted to test the hypotheses. Experimental design was suggested to be better suited for measuring actual behavior or behavioral intention rather than self-reported survey design. However, it is seemingly unethical for participants to be put into an experimental setting for sexual harassment. Survey design with a scenario of sexual harassment was deemed more appropriate.

Thus, one sexual harassment scenario was designed. After being exposed to this scenario, participants were asked about self-construal, normative beliefs, motivation to comply with several social network members, and behavioral intention to express their uncomfortable feelings to the offender and the university counseling center.

**Sampling and participants**

A non-probability method with college students was employed. In special circumstances, non-probability sampling may be the only feasible method to use in communication research even though it does not represent the entire population (Smith 1988). There are some reasons for using non-probability sampling. First, there was some difficulty getting a list of college students enrolled at every college (comprehensive sampling frame), and doing cluster sampling for probability sampling. Second, there were concerns about examining sexual harassment at colleges with the selected students rather than the generality of the results.

In addition, studying college students' behavior is interesting because their experiences of sexual harassment have been rarely studied in South Korea, and they may be more vulnerable and more confused than employees at workplaces. Participants of
this study (n = 298) were undergraduate students at three major universities in Seoul and Incheon, South Korea. Participants were recruited from advertising, communication, and journalism courses, for which they received extra credit. The sample ranged in age from 19 to 34 years, with an average age of 23. Of the respondents, 49% were men and 51% were women. Consisting of 36% sophomores, 34% juniors, and 30% seniors. Among the 81% of respondents who had experienced sex, 34% were in a sexual relationship.

Procedure
Surveys were conducted in classrooms on two major university campuses in Seoul and one major university campus in Incheon for 1 week, from 7 to 14 March 2006. Participants were given a consent form to sign. Only those who agreed to voluntarily participate in the study were instructed to sign the form. Once signed, participants were asked to read the scenario carefully and complete self-administered questionnaires.

Stimulus material
A scenario was developed and designed in two versions, one for men students and the other for women students. The scenario reads:

One fine Friday night, we had a party. Many classmates were having a great night. The hilarious mood resulted in our going to a Karaoke. The super hero of our department, Chul-Soo (Young-Hee), sang a song and enchanted our classmates with his (her) fascinating melodies. After singing a song, he (she) sat beside me and touched my thigh without the notice of other classmates. It was my turn, so I sang a song and returned to my place. He (She) praised my song and touched my arms and put his (her) arm around my shoulder. And then, he (she) groped my body.

Measures
Gudykunst’s self-construal scale1 was used to measure independent and interdependent self-construals of the participants. Fifteen independent self-construal items were aggregated to make an independent self-construal index. Cronbach’s alpha was 0.77 (M=5.25; SD=0.58). Fifteen interdependent self-construal items were aggregated to make an interdependent self-construal index. Cronbach’s alpha was 0.79 (M=4.75; SD=0.61). Participants were asked to answer self-construal questions on a seven-point scale from 1 to 7 (1=do not agree at all, 7=agree completely).

Behavioral intention was measured in two categories, verbal expression and reporting to the university counseling center. Behavioral intention to verbally express uncomfortable feelings to an offender was measured by two items, ‘I will express my discomfort feeling to the offender’ and ‘I will ask the offender to stop sexual harassment,’ on a seven-point scale from 1 to 7 (1=do not agree at all, 7=agree completely). Another behavioral intent was measured by the item, ‘I will report the offender to the university counseling center for sexual harassment,’ on a seven-point scale from 1 to 7 (1=do not agree at all, 7=agree completely).

We wished to control for several variables known to be significantly associated with behavioral intention to report to the university counseling center in order to rule out plausible alternative explanations for any observed effects of self-construal. Specifically, self-efficacy, sexual harassment experiences, and having past and/or current romantic partners may have an impact on the current study, so they were included as control variables in all relevant analyses.
In detail, self-efficacy refers to the conviction that one can successfully execute a given behavior (Rogers 1983). It is a person’s belief that they have the ability to perform a given behavior. If victims of sexual harassment have low self-efficacy, they may not express their uncomfortable feelings to offenders or report it to the police. The Rogers’s self-efficacy was measured by eight items and its reliability coefficient was 66.

Sexual harassment experiences, and having past and current romantic partners may enhance the sensitivity and vulnerability to sexual harassment, therefore, participants were asked if they had experienced sexual harassment, as well as any past and/or current romantic partners. They were measured by yes/no categories.

Data analysis
Hypotheses 1 and 2 were tested by performing partial correlations which assess the linear relationship between the two variables controlling the other variables. Of primary concern in Hypotheses 1 and 2 was how well types of self-construal and types of verbal expression move together in a linear way. Multiple regression analysis could be more useful, however, partial correlation analysis rather than regression analysis was used because (1) the estimate of partial correlation is equal to that of simple-linear regression; (2) the two independent variables (independent self-construal and interdependent self-construal) seemed to be related, so the collinearity problem in multiple regression analysis was of concern; and (3) simple and easy to understand statistics are often the best.

Hypotheses 3, 4, and 5 were tested by performing a paired t-test, which is suited for data from two groups that may be paired in some meaningful way. The t-test assesses the significance of the difference between population means based on data derived from two samples. In Hypotheses 3, 4, and 5, the differences between men and women in terms of expressing uncomfortable feelings to offenders, reporting an offender to the university counseling center, and self-construal were analyzed.

Results
Hypotheses 1 and 2
H1 and H2 proposed that people with independent self-construal are more likely to directly express their feelings to offenders and to report to the university counseling center than those with interdependent self-construal. Results indicated that people with independent self-construal are more likely to directly express their feelings to offenders (‘I will express my discomfort feeling to the offender,’ \( r=0.12, p < 0.05 \); ‘I will ask the offender to stop sexual harassment,’ \( r=0.12, p < 0.05 \)). In addition, people with interdependent self-construal are less likely to report the offender to the university counseling center than those with independent self-construal (\( r=-0.14, p < 0.05 \)).

Hypothesis 3
H3 was proposed to test gender differences in terms of verbal expression in a sexual harassment situation. It was expected that men and women would respond differently to sexual harassment. The hypothesis was supported but in an unexpected way (\( t(296)= -13.197, p < 0.05 \)). Women (\( M=12.9, SD=1.8 \)) directly expressed their uncomfortable feelings to offenders more than men (\( M=8.7, SD=3.5 \)). This was not the expected result, as men with strong independent self-construal were predicted to be more likely than women to directly express their feelings to offenders. Given that there was no
significant gender difference between women and men in terms of self-construal (the finding of Hypothesis 5), the result was not problematic. This result may indicate that (1) women may be more aware of sexual harassment than men; (2) men may think that their experience of sexual harassment might not be socially accepted, which leads to hesitation in expressing their experience; and (3) men may not think of touching ‘just’ body parts as sexual harassment.

**Hypothesis 4**

H4 expected a gender difference in terms of the reporting intention of sexual harassment to the university counseling center. This hypothesis was supported ($t(296) = -12.3, p < 0.001$). Again, women ($M = 6.47, SD = 0.94$) seem to have a stronger intention of reporting sexual harassment than men ($M = 4.43, SD = 1.82$).

**Hypothesis 5**

H5 proposed that there would be a gender difference in terms of self-construal. This hypothesis was not supported. There was no gender difference in the independent self-construal score ($t(296) = -1.27, p > 0.05$) and the interdependent self-construal score ($t(296) = 1.32, p > 0.05$). The scores from men ($M = 5.20, SD = 0.62$) and women ($M = 5.28, SD = 0.53$) were very similar on the interdependent scale. Similarly, they did not show any significant difference on the interdependent scale ($M = 4.8, SD = 0.62$ for men and $M = 4.7, SD = 0.58$ for women).

**Discussion and limitations**

This study examined sexual harassment in Korea in terms of the gendering of space through a survey. It determined how gender power relations are socially and culturally reproduced and reinforced by the internalization of self-construal and the gendering of customs. The research contributed to understanding why some people actively report or express their experiences of sexual harassment, whereas others do not. Grounded in the theoretical framework of self-construal, people with independent self-construal were found to express their uncomfortable feelings and to report to the university counseling center, whereas people with interdependent self-construal did not, confirming Hypotheses 1 and 2. These findings were consistent with the characteristics of independent self-construal, that is, people with strong independent self-construal are likely to deliver clear messages in any situation (see Kim et al. 1994).

An interesting finding in the study shows that women were expected to have interdependent self-construal, whereas men were expected to have independent self-construal. However, no gender difference in self-construal was found, despite the expectation in Hypothesis 5 that women have interdependent and men have independent self-construal. Men and women had both independent and interdependent self-construal. This result was not expected, considering previous research indicating that men would develop a separated self-schema, or independent self-construal, and women, in contrast, would develop a connected self-schema, or interdependent self-construal (Olver, Aries, and Batgos 1989; Cross and Madson 1997). Furthermore, we found that women were more likely than men to directly express their opinions and report sexual harassment to the university counseling center. Although we conjectured in Hypothesis 3 and 4 that women were less likely to express their opinions, the results indicated the opposite. This result is
consistent with previous research. According to Uggen and Blackstone (2004), there is no gender difference in the probability of experiencing sexual harassment; however, women are more likely than men to report that they have been sexually harassed. In addition, relatively more women than men believed that they would report sexually harassing behaviors (Baker, Terpstra, and Larntz 1990), that is, substantial bodies of research generally conclude that men are more tolerant of sexual harassment than women (Russell and Trigg 2004; Saperstein, Triolo, and Heinzen 1995; Smirles 2004).

Men do experience sexual harassment by female colleagues or students but are often more reluctant than women to recognize their experiences as ‘sexual harassment’ because of the stereotype that men are the perpetrators of this behavior, not its victims, and because they fear ‘loss of face’ (Valentine 1997). Based on these results, it is suspected that many men might feel ashamed if they were known to be victims of sexual harassment, especially in a male-oriented, collectivistic culture. Thus, they may have difficulty in directly expressing and reporting their sexual harassment experience. However, female students might be better informed of what they need to do when they experience sexual harassment because women are frequent victims of sexual harassment. Examining perceptions of being a victim of sexual harassment among men and women may give more support to this plausible explanation. As Berg and Longhurst (2003) note masculinity is also a (re) constructed identity through a system of gender relations, and thus, the self-construal of male students in Korea may be cultivated differently from that of male students in other societies. As several studies have suggested (Longhurst 2000; McDowell 1997), it is necessary to engage not just femininity but also masculinity and the relationship between these constructs because they are both temporally and geographically contingent (Berg and Longhurst 2003).

Harassment can occur between people in any direction, including (1) by a man toward a woman, (2) a man toward a man, (3) a woman toward a man, and (4) a woman toward a woman. In this regard, future research is warranted to examine the various forms of sexual harassment that can occur between peers, same-sex partners, and toward sexual minorities (Fineran and Bennett 1999; Ivy and Hamlet 1996; Saunders and Senn 2009; Williams et al. 2005). Furthermore, future research should explore specific gender relations in Korea in terms of not only femininity versus masculinity but also across other gender categories including gay, lesbian, and queer (Starkweather 2007; Valentine 1997; Wright 2010). Similarly, any future research would benefit from a more in-depth analysis of cultural factors such as, age, race, and class because these variables represent interlocking dimensions of power that produce unequal social relationships and interactions.

Gender was not related to self-construal, however, we found that independent self-construal promoted direct verbal expression and active reporting behavior to official organizations. Consequently, this research provides important implications for designing sexual harassment prevention education, and we argue that education needs to focus on ways to develop male and female self-concepts to be independent, especially in relation to sexual harassment.

According to Bingham and Scherer (2001), participants in a training program had more knowledge of sexual harassment and held stronger views that sexual behavior at work is inappropriate. So, it is suggested that several methods of education be made available, such as workshops with audience interaction, reading scenarios, discussing issues of harassment and concepts of the self, asking participants to prepare a workshop on how independent self-concept influences the prevention of sexual harassment, and setting up a mock counseling session for role-play victims. These workshops would aim to
promote independent self-concept, which would be useful in helping students cope with sexual harassment. Also, campaign design and development in the context of sexual harassment would need to be considered for future studies. Furthermore, efforts should be made to establish appropriate procedures for addressing various issues of sexuality (e.g. handling ‘crushes’, managing consensual relationships between faculty members and students, addressing sexual harassment, and creating sexually tolerant environments) within an academic context, including geography departments (Valentine 1997).

Several limitations of the present research need to be taken into consideration. First, in terms of data limitations, students’ actual experiences and police reports were not used as a dependent variable, so the data may have resulted in an overestimation of the level of verbal expression of victims’ sexual harassment at the universities. However, there is some difficulty in taking police reports as a dependent variable and focusing on students’ actual experiences.

Cortina et al. (1998) suggest that 30% of undergraduate women are victims of sexual harassment, but only 5–10% of these women report the harassment to the police. Underreporting may be attributed to unclear perception of policies regarding sexual harassment, a lack of education regarding sexual harassment policies, or a fear of negative consequences. Especially in South Korea, few female victims report sexual harassment to the police, given the prevalent male-oriented culture and the minimal attention given to sexual harassment education. Thus, neither police reports nor students’ actual experiences were chosen to be dependent variables.

Second, this research focuses on behavioral intention rather than on actual behaviors. Even if the consistency between attitudes/behavioral intention and behaviors has been confirmed in the field of psychology and communication, there is a chance of inconsistency between attitude/behavioral intention and actual behavior in different sexual harassment situations, considering that sexual harassment is a harmful and critical experience. Thus, a consistency study between attitude/behavioral intention and behaviors in different sexual harassment situations is planned for a future study.

Third, in-depth interviews of participants should be added to make up for the explanatory power of the quantitative data. Reinhart (1992) suggested that interviewing is best for neglected or marginalized participants because it permits them to put their experiences into their own words, rather than relying on terminology provided by the researcher. Even if this research does not treat students’ actual experiences, but their attitudes, in-depth interviews would be a fine addition to this research. Given the difficulty and resistance against expressing opinions (Nast and Pulido 2000), geographers in Asian cultures should explore the space and identity constructed through multiple narratives and transnational borders (Mains 2004; Singh 2009). In addition, there is a need for faculty members to avoid heterosexist presumptions when teaching any geography class (Valentine 1997).

Finally, self-construal may be different on a cross-cultural basis. However, few studies have conducted cross-cultural fieldwork. Thus, researchers should share their experiences and assess the impact of culturally sensitive modifications on research outcomes so that more effective methods for bridging the cultural divide can be developed (Wesche et al. 2010).

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**Note**

1. Gudykunst’s self-construal scale:

   1. I enjoy being unique and different from others in many respects.
   2. I feel comfortable using someone’s first name soon after I meet them, even when they are much older than I am.
   3. Even when I strongly disagree with group members, I avoid an argument.
   4. I have respect for the authority figures with whom I interact.
   5. I do my own thing, regardless of what others think.
   6. I respect people who are modest about themselves.
   7. I feel it is important for me to act as an independent person.
   8. I will sacrifice myself interest for the benefit of the group I am in.
   9. I’d rather say ‘No’ directly, than risk being misunderstood.
   10. Having a lively imagination is important to me.
   11. I should take into consideration my parents’ advice when making education/career plans.
   12. I feel my fate is intertwined with the fate of those around me.
   13. I prefer to be direct and forthright when dealing with people I’ve just met.
   14. I feel good when I cooperate with others.
   15. I am comfortable with being singled out for praise or rewards.
   16. If my brother or sister fails, I feel responsible.
   17. I often have the feeling that my relationships with others are more important than my own accomplishments.
   18. Speaking up during a class (or a meeting) is not a problem for me.
   19. I would offer my seat in a bus to my professor (or my boss).
   20. I act the same way no matter who I am with.
   21. My happiness depends upon the happiness of those around me.
   22. I value being good in health above everything.
   23. I will stay in a group if they need me, even when I am not happy with the group.
   24. I try to do what is best for me, regardless of how that might affect others.
   25. Being able to take care of myself is a primary concern for me.
   26. It is important to me to respect decisions made by the group.
   27. My personal identity, independent of others, is very important to me.
   28. It is important for me to maintain harmony within my group.
   29. I act the same way at home that I do at school.
   30. I usually go along with what others want to do, even when I would rather do something different.

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**ABSTRACT TRANSLATIONS**

Acoso sexual en las salas de las universidades coreanas: cómo el autoconcepto y el género influyen sobre el comportamiento de denuncia

Este artículo estudia las razones de las mujeres estudiantes para dudar de denunciar el acoso sexual. La investigación se basa en la noción de ‘autoconcepto’. El autoconcepto es una forma de autoidentificación en las relaciones sociales, el cual en este caso se relaciona en particular con el género dentro de los ambientes culturales en Corea. A los objetivos de esta investigación, se llevó a cabo una encuesta con 298 estudiantes coreanos desde el 7 al 14 de marzo de 2006. Los resultados mostraron que los diferentes tipos de autoconcepto tuvieron distintas influencias sobre los y las estudiantes universitarios coreanos y sus denuncias de acoso sexual, mientras que el género no. Fundamentado en un marco teórico del autoconcepto, se encontró que las personas con un autoconcepto independiente expresan sus sentimientos incómodos y realizan denuncias al centro de apoyo de la universidad, mientras que las personas con un autoconcepto interdependiente no lo hicieron. Más aun, encontramos que las mujeres eran más tendientes que los hombres a expresar sus opiniones en forma directa y denunciar el acoso sexual al centro de ayuda de la universidad. Los hombres también son acosados por sus colegas o estudiantes mujeres.
pero a menudo son más reacios que éstas a reconocer a sus experiencias como ‘acoso sexual’ debido al estereotipo de que los hombres son quienes acosan, no las víctimas, y debido a su miedo a la ‘pérdida de imagen’. Es necesario involucrarse no solo con la feminidad sino también con la masculinidad y con la relación entre estas construcciones debido a que son temporal y geográficamente contingentes.

Palabras claves: acoso sexual; autoconcepto; identidades de género; Corea; estudiantes universitarios

韓国大学教室中的性骚扰：自我概念与性别如何影响学的通报行为

本文检视女学生为何会迟疑申报性骚扰的原因。本文运用“自我概念”的概念，此概念是一种在社会关系中进行自我指认的方式，在本案例中则特别有关韩国文化环境中的性别。为了此研究目的，本研究在2006年3月7日至14日间对298位韩国大学生进行调查。研究结果显示，不同类别的自我概念，对于韩国大学生及其所通报的性骚扰案件有着不同的影响，但性别则不具影响。根据自我概念的理论架构，研究发现拥有独立自我概念的学生会表达他们不舒服的感受，并向学校的审议中心通报，而拥有相互依赖自我概念的学生则不会。我们更进一步发现，相较于男性而言，女性更可能直接表达她们的意见并向学校审议中心通报性骚扰。男性虽然也会受到女性同侪或学生的骚扰，但却因男性做为性骚扰加害者而非受害者的刻板印象，以及害怕丢脸的考虑，因此较女性而言，更不愿认定他们的经验为“性骚扰”。这也表示，我们不仅需要涉入女性气质，亦需考虑男性气概以及这些建构之间的关系，因为它们同样是取决于时间和空间的。

关键词：性骚扰、自我概念、性别认同、韩国、大学生