

MILITARY MEMBER RESPONSES TO SEXUALLY  
HARASSING BEHAVIOR: RESPONSE TYPES  
AND EFFICACIES

THESIS

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Michael W. Braucher

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Abstract

This thesis uses four sexual harassment response constructs and evaluates the efficacy of the responses. The constructs are built based on individual or joint/collaboratory responses and whether or not the harasser is confronted with his or her behavior(s) perceived as harassing by the victim. The constructs are applied to the 1995 Department of Defense survey of Harassment. Results include each response's effect on the harassing behavior, whether the behavior is ceased or not. A second result is the victim's perception of improvement or worsening of the situation based on the response type used. Tests for proportional differences were used to determine the response type's effect on the harassment (ceased or continuing) and comparisons of confidence intervals were used to determine the response type's effect on the situation (improved or worsened). This study found that respondents used more than one type of response in most cases. Some dual-response constructs were also evaluated for efficacy. Results indicated responses which attack the behavior such as individual or supported confrontation tend to stop the behavior though they do not always result in a more favorable situation. Confrontational responses were not the most frequently chosen though they were the most effective. Reporting channels and advocacy seeking behavior (i.e. social actions) were used minimally.

# MILITARY MEMBER RESPONSES TO SEXUALLY HARASSING BEHAVIOR: RESPONSE TYPES AND EFFICACIES

## I. Introduction

### **Background**

Recent events such as the accusations of Kelly Flynn have amplified the concerns about sexual harassment in the military, though it was the tailhook scandal of 1991 that catalyzed the emergence of military harassment issues. Sexual harassment has certainly never been encouraged in the military, but never have commanders and the military been as acutely aware of the necessity for an effective sexual harassment program, as now. The programs that exist today are a credit to the military's stand against harassment in all forms. The programs are a reflection of civilian laws, through statute and precedent, and civilian attitudes toward the non-acceptance of harassment. The civilian environment has many, mostly economic, reasons for eradicating harassment. The military's programs are not based on economic principles, but rather on the unethical underpinnings of harassment. Furthermore, an effective fighting force requires unity between members, unity that is harmed by harassment.

## **Importance of Research**

The necessity for policies prohibiting sexual harassment is obvious but the policies themselves are more difficult to formulate and integrate into a work environment, whether military or civilian. The harassment must be defined as well as the goals of the policy/program and means to achieve those goals. For example, the eradication of sexual harassment may be a clear goal but there are many different ways to attack harassment. A few examples are:

1. education to prevent harassment, aimed at preventing potential harassers,
2. education to increase incidence of reporting sexually harassing behaviors,
3. education to increase direct personal confrontation,
4. assurance of protection from retaliatory actions for reporting, or
5. any combination of the above or other behavior-modifying methods.

Sexual harassment as a construct is defined by law through statute and case law but the construct is difficult to operationally define in the context of a survey. Sexual harassment can be analyzed from several different perspectives and the reactions to harassment can then be examined. It is my intention to define harassment from the relevant literature and case law, then use that definition to study the reactions of victims of sexual harassment. Ultimately, I would like to determine which method or combination of methods of reacting to perceived sexual harassment is most effective in reducing the incidence of harassment, while providing the victim satisfaction with the outcome of the situation.

Undeniably, the leadership of an organization has the responsibility to set policy and do its utmost to ensure that the rules are followed. The stakeholder (the organizational member), should also have the responsibility to follow the rules and enforce the rules. The military has set policy and created a framework to train members and protect whistleblowers from negative repercussions, that may result from their duty to police and report offensive behavior. However, there appears to be a lack of research that analyzes the outcomes of military harassment policies to determine which reactions to harassment are more effective in achieving the organizations' sexual harassment policy.

There is no legal or predefined response to such behavior which leaves the victim with the decision whether or not to pursue corrective action. The range of response behaviors extend along a spectrum from acceptance to disassociation with the organization. Rationally, it can be argued that there is no single "correct" response; it would not seem just to place the burden of response on the victim who is still possibly struggling with the situation they find themselves involved in. For the harassment policy to be effective, however, the victim needs to take action or at least be aware of the personal and organizational ramifications of their response. I propose that there can be, if not a "correct" response action, a framework to use that suggests a response which will tend to benefit both the organization and the harassed individual. This thesis seeks to assess the response of the individual and the outcome of that response on the situation towards the victim and the harasser.

The legal definition of sexual harassment stems from Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and was forwarded by the Equal Opportunity Employment Commission of 1980.

Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when (1) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment, (2) submission or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis of employment decisions affecting such individual, or (3) such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.

(Wagner, 1992, 18)

Case law further established two basic behaviors which define sexual harassment, unwelcome conduct and conduct of a sexual nature. Unwelcome conduct is easy to imagine but not as clearly defined. For example, Wagner (1992,18) suggests that submittal to sexual favors does not imply consent, even if the pattern is repeated.

## **Research Objectives**

The exploratory question which I seek to answer in this paper is: *How do victims' responses to sexual harassment affect the victims satisfaction with the situation and how effective are the responses in ceasing the harassing behavior?*

This question lends itself to direct analysis from the 1995 DoD Sexual Harassment Survey (DSHA). The exploratory question is subdivided into four investigative questions for analysis using current literature and the DSHA survey.

1. What is sexual harassment?
2. What are the potential responses to sexual harassment?
3. Did the response to harassment improve the harassing situation?
4. Did the response to harassment stop the harassing behavior?
5. Is there a method or combination of methods which is more effective?

Figure 1. Investigative Questions

## **Thesis Organization**

This thesis is organized into five chapters. The second chapter provides a literature review of the possible definitions of sexual harassment as well as potential responses to harassing behavior. Chapter three outlines the methodology used for the analysis and details the methodology of the survey instrument. Chapter three also operationally defines sexual harassment and the

range of responses to sexual harassment. Chapter four presents the analysis of the data while chapter five draws conclusions from the data, and presents recommendations for further research.

## II. Literature Review

### **Chapter Overview**

This chapter surveys the literature relevant to this research effort. It first defines sexual harassment from several different perspectives while justifying the definition chosen for this research. The review then links many of the concepts found in civilian sexual harassment research to military study, and discusses some of the possibilities and difficulties encountered when applying concepts developed in civilian organizational research to military organizations. An element of civilian research which illuminates military harassment is a response construct (the way a victim responds to harassing situations). I could find no military literature which addresses this concept, therefore civilian response constructs are reviewed and adapted into a military framework for use in the research methodology presented in Chapter 3.

### **Legal Sexual Harassment**

Sexual Harassment has arguably existed as long as men and women have been working together. However, the United States did not enact a legal definition of sexual harassment until 1980. The legal definition of sexual harassment as forwarded by the Equal Opportunity Employment Commission of 1980 stems from Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when (1) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment, (2) submission or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis of employment decisions affecting such individual, or (3) such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment. (Wagner, 1992, 18)

The legal definition is fairly specific but the true definition is found in case law that established two basic behaviors which constitute sexual harassment, *quid pro quo* and hostile environment (Legnick-Hall, 1995, 842-3).

#### Quid Pro Quo Harassment.

*Quid pro quo* harassment is a request for sexual favors from the victim for some advantage, advancement, or retention in the workplace. This type of harassment is fairly clearly defined though there are some surprising court cases that have involved *quid pro quo* harassment. Common law precedents have been supported by rulings which upheld that submittal to sexual favors does not imply consent, even if the pattern is repeated, as in the Supreme Court's analysis of *Vinson* (Wagner, 1992, 18). In the *Vinson* case, the Supreme court upheld that

the behavior was harassing even though it was consensual and lasted for forty or fifty occurrences.

### Hostile Environment Harassment.

Lengnick-Hall (1995, 843) characterizes hostile environment harassment as a condition where the harasser creates an environment which is intimidating or offensive though he argues that the standards have been changing. The standard for intimidating or unwelcome behavior is more difficult to prove and has been shaped repeatedly through case law. Originally, the reasonable person standard was considered as the factor used for determination of a hostile environment by the jury. The reasonable person standard has been transformed through many state rulings, though not all, to the reasonable victim standard. This difference stems from a 1990 policy released by the EEOC which stresses the victim's perspective in order to prevent the possibility of gender-stereotypical behavior being used as a defense of conduct. The offensive conduct can take many forms, though for the purposes herein, we will broadly define the behavior. Why does a reasonable person acts in a sexual harassing manner and how should or do victims respond to that harassment? To define the psychosis of harassment is not within the scope of this research but it is possible to describe and examine the responses to perceived sexual harassment and offer some considerations for the selection of the response. In an effort to establish a level playing field, it is necessary that preferential or harsh treatment must not be awarded on the basis of sex; however, we cannot neglect or disregard the

human sexual nature nor the freedom of the individual's right to believe and act in ways which may be offensive to others, to a point. To punish people because their beliefs are merely objectionable to some is inconsistent with our society's foundation on individual rights (Hart, 1963, 46-7). This is not an absolute defense of course; certain rights have been established through writ or common law precedent. Such is the case with sexual harassment. The offender is punished when their behavior is deemed to interfere with the rights of the victim to a fair work environment based on the sex of the victim.

#### A Different Sexual Harassment Definition.

A sexual harassment definitional conflict exists between the point of view of the analysis and the conflicting literature and beliefs prevalent in the field. An emerging definition of sexual harassment purported by some researchers is a psychological view. Through largely qualitative, critical research, a psychological definition of harassment is "unwanted sexual behavior at work that is appraised by the recipient as offensive, exceeding her resources, or threatening her well-being" (Fitzgerald et al., 1995, 128). This definition is presented to counter the "welcomeness" standard which has developed in the courts.

Fitzgerald (1995) has argued that the standard women are held to is unfair. The victim should not be made to bear the responsibility of proving the unwelcome nature of the behavior; the behavior should stand on its own offensive nature. This concept has some very good foundations but is difficult to

prove. The ties to racial harassment, seemingly a similar situation, is counterpoised, proposed Fitzgerald (1995), to that of sexual harassment. The courts do not require the victim of racism to prove the unwelcome nature of the behavior, the offensive nature is correctly assumed, yet a sexual harassment victim has to prove that sexual advances are unwelcome.

A second argument which classifies sexual harassment response research is based on the underlying nature of responses. Two frameworks are prevalent in the literature, the first, defined by Miceli and Near (1992), Knapp et al. (1997), and Bingham et al., is labeled by Fitzgerald et al. (1995) as *problem centered* and focuses on the response to perceived harassment and the effectiveness of that response in curtailing sexual harassing behavior. Another response network which has roots in the stress-coping literature is more psychological than organizational and depends on the victim's "cognitive evaluation of the situation with respect to its significance for well-being and the options which are realistically available" (Fitzgerald et al., 1995, 129). Fitzgerald seeks to add the victim's evaluation of the situation rather than an objective analysis. It is my contention that the *problem centered* literature assumes the level of distress is part of making the decision whether or not to report/act on the behavior. The division is a philosophical construct which cannot be adequately measured though it is empirically and conceptually obvious. This division can be largely ignored in this research which is empirical and not based on hypothetical situations.

## **Construct for This Research**

Upon consideration of the various aspects defining harassment, I choose to use the legal definition coupled with data from actual stakeholders to observe the response framework for harassment. The framework for sexual harassment response decision is my own and is largely problem-centered, to use Fitzgerald et al.'s (1995) definition. The determination of sexual harassment is made by the respondent. This allows the victim to choose whether they were harassed, which satisfies the possible unwelcome conduct bias which Fitzgerald et al. (1995) believes the legal definition taints.

The victim of harassing behavior has several options available to pursue. These actions range from inaction, to some form of action that can range from acceptance of the behavior to avoidance of the behavior by leaving the organization or problem area of the organization. There are several response frameworks available to evaluate. The earliest suggest the responses lie on a one-dimensional continuum developed by Gruber and Bjorn in the 1980's as reported by Knapp et al. (1997) consisting of :

avoidance - the most passive response, which may include such behaviors as ignoring the behavior or doing nothing;

defusion – slightly more active responses, including such actions as stalling, going along with the behavior, or making a joke of it;

seeking social support – using sympathetic others to express anger and provide emotional support;

negotiation – a more assertive response which may include direct requests to stop the behavior;

seeking outside help - using outside experts; and

confrontation - the most assertive response in Gruber's continuum, which generally includes use of the organizational power structure. (689)

For the purposes of this model, I will use the following options available to the victim of harassment taken from Knapp et al.'s (1997) analysis of target responses to sexual harassment listed and in the framework below (691).

- (1) Avoidance/denial
- (2) Confrontation/Negotiation
- (3) Social Coping
- (4) Advocacy Seeking

	Self-Response	Supported Response
Self-Focus	Avoidance/Denial	Social Coping
Initiator Focus	Confrontation/ Negotiation	Advocacy Seeking

Figure 2. Typology of Responses to Harassment  
(Knapp et al., 1997, 691)

## **Assumptions**

To effectively analyze the responses, certain assumptions regarding the behavior must be made or the argument can decompose into too many options. The offensive behavior is clearly within the realm of sexual harassment; if not pressure for sex, it creates an uncomfortable workplace environment . If the victim is bothered enough by the behavior, the behavior is sexual harassment because it is this discomfort which sexual harassment prevention policies seek to eliminate. A more objective construct could possibly be developed, such as a legal interpretation of each harassment response; however, the effort involved in such an action would be cumbersome theoretically and quantitatively (through survey) and would not align philosophically with the aim of this analysis. Using the respondent's definition, the incidences of harassment should more closely resemble the real scope of the problem since the overall goal of sexual harassment research is to analyze the reality of the situation in an effort to reduce the occurrences. The bottom line is that if a person feels threatened or uncomfortable by another's behavior or actions, there is some force acting on that individual which needs resolution to return the individual to a healthy, productive state. This assumption may be more difficult to support on an individual response though it should be supported when analyzing the aggregate response.

The action taken must be a considered action after an analysis of the possible courses of action. The "considered action" assumption is the one which is most suspect for it is not known what people in that situation are going to do,

whether action is based on consideration or whether action is based on impulse or pre-existing nature. This assumption is necessary for consideration of the constructs presented later, for if there is a correct response, that response must be supported through rational means and not based purely on emotional reactions.

The repercussions must be discernable to the individual with knowledge of the existing policy of the organization. The harasser and victim must be aware of what the organizations policy is and react with consideration to that policy. This is not to say that policy will be followed, but only that the harasser and victim know what actions constitute harassment and what repercussions extend from harassment accusations. The victim, it can be reasonably assumed, will act in his or her own self interest and avoid negative repercussions. This assumption is necessary to study the possible consequences of different responses to harassment.

### **Correct Response Constructs**

Several different viewpoints can be adopted to study the response framework. The rules which govern sexual harassment and organizational policies tend to be consequence-based policies as is consistent with the relationship between ethics and most laws. The vast majority of laws and rules which govern our actions are not primarily concerned with the motivation or thought process which occurs prior to the action; rather, the laws are based and

enforced on the consequences of our actions and the thought process is either disregarded or used as mitigating or enforcing evidence.

If the consequences are evaluated as well as the inherent virtue of the actions, a framework can be tailored for this situation. This framework will capture several important questions which will define the relative results of the response to the behavior, namely:

1. Will the response tend to curb the offensive behavior?
2. Will the response leave the harassed individual with a sense of satisfaction with the outcome of the situation?

The answers to the above questions are necessarily relative and cannot be judged on complete fact but rather on expectation or perceived outcome.

### **Avoidance/denial**

The response action which requires the least amount of effort is the route of inaction. It is not an easy route, however, since this strategy is the least effective method of ending the sexual harassing behavior (Knapp, 1997, 691). This is a difficult conclusion to justify no matter which ethical standard is used to judge it. Though it is apparent that this method involves no action, it is not without damage. It is conceptually obvious that in more cases than not, avoidance/denial leaves the victim weakened and suffering from injustice, anger, and self-recrimination for that inaction (Fitzgerald, 1995, 128). At best, this response leaves the target in a neutral place. This action does nothing to give

just treatment to the offender, though this action would be a just option if the behavior were regarded as mild and inconstant and the victim was not affected by the behavior.

### **Confrontational Strategies**

Confrontational or negotiation strategy as Knapp et al. (1995, 695) characterize the response, deals directly with the offender and the victim, and precludes a mediator or ally. The policies of the organization, such as the military harassment policy, can act as a system of support to empower the accuser, or at least enable the accuser to take personal action with diminished fear of retaliation. The confrontation can be either oral, written, or otherwise communicated, (body language, facial response, etc.). This action is decisive and seeks directly to turn the situation toward the good. It does not publicly punish the offender, a consequentialist drawback, but guides the offender toward correct behavior through realization of the effect of his or her actions. The offender is apt to take the confrontation seriously and adjust his or her actions because the offender now realizes the wrongfulness of the offensive behavior. The offender may also display some gratefulness since this method of handling the situation offers the least possibility of negative repercussions for the offender. This action does leave the target open for retaliatory action. The target has now become a threat to the offender, though not as large a threat as external action. The possible outcomes of the perceived threat depend on a great many

determinants, though the main determinant is the relative power of each individual in the organization and the further evaluation of consequences of retaliatory action. The concept of justice is slightly better than in the previous option of inaction, the punishment is determined only by the perception of the offender though it is more likely than inaction to give the victim freedom from further sexual harassment.

### **Social Coping**

Social coping strategies are in many ways similar to the avoidance/denial strategy because the offender is not confronted with his or her behavior. Social coping strategy encompasses several scenarios whereby the target seeks outside help in dealing with the effects and not the causes of the problem, (i.e. the harasser) (Knapp, 1997, 692). This scenario assumes that the target's confidant does nothing to influence the situation except support the target in some capacity. Social coping strategies are about as effective at ending harassing behavior as is the avoidance method, which is to say, not very effective.

Judging the action by the consequences, again, shows that various trade-offs are made through the social coping response. The consequence for the harasser is the same as in avoidance unless the harasser perceives the outside support which the target is getting, a situation that may assist in preventing further actions though the situation will remain basically unaffected. The victim is

better off in several ways through seeking outside assistance. First, an audit trail of actions is created, though by hearsay, which can be beneficial if the action ever comes to light. Also, and almost as important, is the perceived support the target receives which can strengthen his or her will toward resisting the harassing behavior. Unfortunately, this action does nothing to further the cause of justice for the harasser, who is free to continue such behaviors and has felt no retribution for his or her action. A corollary effect is the perception of the avoidance by the harasser. If the harasser perceives avoidance as denial, they may be more likely to cease such behavior.

### **Advocacy Seeking**

The final response strategy considered is that of advocacy seeking behavior. Advocacy seeking behavior would encompass methods including individual and/or organizational support and remedies which would somehow take action against the harasser (Knapp, 1997, 692). In the military context, there are a wide range of options available for those seeking help within or outside the work group, organization, or unit. The First Sergeant is a viable option for support and resolution of organizational issues for enlisted personnel. Other inter-organizational support personnel include those in the victim's chain of command; however, when the harasser is in the victim's chain-of-command, the victim may be forced to seek help from other sources. External agencies such as Social Actions or the Inspector General are also valid conduits for harassment

complaints/accusations. The drawback in seeking external support is the increased visibility of the claim and the actions which are mandated in response to such complaints.

In the military, the consequences of harassment will force the offender to analyze his or her behavior and may even receive punishment for that action. The victim is empowered by the received support and is arguably protected by the policies designed to handle this type of situation. The possibility of retaliation still exists, but the harasser knows that there are other factors involved which are not under his or her control which should curb retaliatory impulses. Perhaps the lack of further harassment is reward enough though the victim really is not compensated for his or her actions and the risk of retribution involved when using confrontational or advocacy seeking behaviors.

Through the literature, a framework emerges which is useful for further analysis. Sexually harassing behavior, defined through the victim's point of view can be used to determine incidents of harassment. Further, the response constructs can be used to categorize and test the victim's response to perceived harassment.

### III. Methodology

#### **Introduction**

With the goal of gauging which responses to perceived sexual harassment by DoD military members are more effective in increasing victim satisfaction as well as organizational change (curbing harassment), I chose to analyze survey information based on pre-existing constructs. The constructs for sexual harassment and sexual harassment responses developed in Chapter 2 were obtained through an interpretive analysis of current literature accepted within the field of sexual harassment. The five constructs as used in this research are fairly conservative, because the assumption of sexual harassment is based on the perceptions of the victim. This victim-focused orientation lends credibility to the responses chosen by the respondent .

Chapter 1 outlined the need for this research and Chapter 2 identified the constructs employed and grounded those constructs in applicable literature. This chapter develops the specific methodology employed to answer the investigative questions posed previously. These questions are listed again, below:

1. What is sexual harassment?
2. What are the potential responses to sexual harassment?
3. Did the response to harassment improve the harassing situation?

4. Did the response to harassment stop the harassing behavior?
5. Is there a method or combination of methods which is more effective?

To answer these questions, I will be making conclusions based on the analysis of the data collected in the DOD 1995 Sexual Harassment Survey (Edwards, 1995). Only parts of the survey will be used as described herein to answer questions which should give some insight into the various response characteristics of sexual harassment victims surveyed. The methodology will proceed as per the diagram in figure 3.

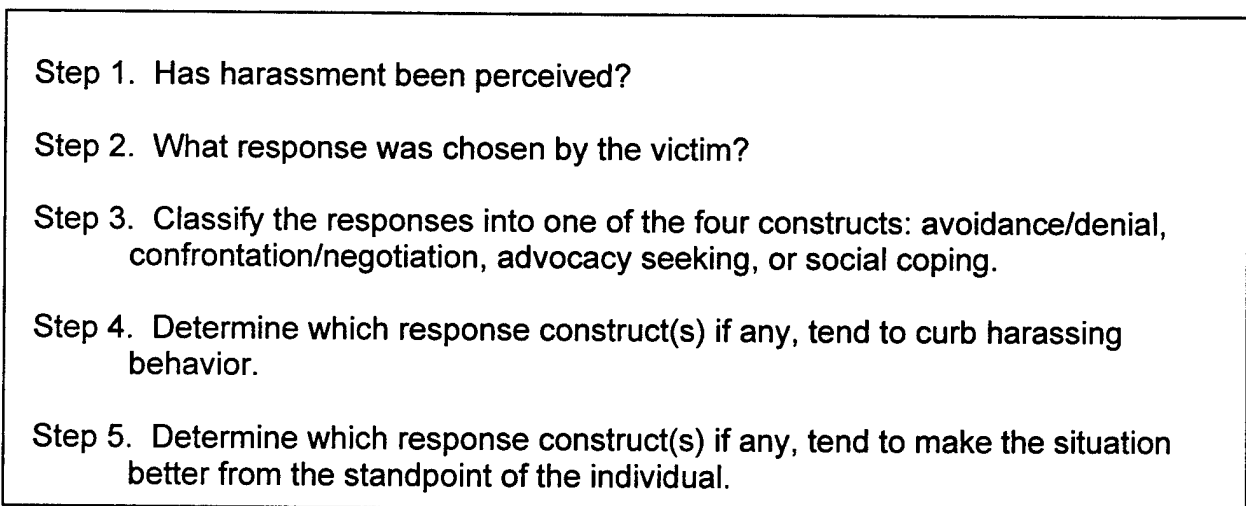


Figure 3. Basic Data Analysis Methodology

### **The Survey**

The Survey was actually three separate survey instruments (A, B, and C) targeted for non-proportional stratified random sample of 91,006 military personnel. Survey A, sent to 30,756 (identical to a 1988 survey) (Edwards, 1995) had the purpose of studying longitudinal factors. Survey B added several

behaviors classifying possible sexual harassment and additional reporting possibilities. Survey B, sent to 50,394 people, was built to reflect the current situation based on policies which had been enacted since the 1988 survey. Survey C, sent to the remaining 9,856, was built to determine correlation of responses between surveys A and B. (Mason et al., 1995, XX)

For this analysis I will use only survey B since I am concerned with the reporting actions of and consequences for DoD military members based on the harassment policies as current in 1995. The response rate for survey B (hereafter referred to interchangeably as 'the survey' or DSHS) was 38,448/50,394 or 76.3 percent.

The survey instrument will be analyzed using a standard SPSS package which converted the SAS transport files to SPSS files without altering responses, system missing values, or variable names. There were 50,394 potential respondents to the survey of which 28,404 responded with useable surveys corresponding to a response rate of 56.3 percent, sufficient to adequately analyze the responses.

### **Sexual Harassment Construct**

The operational definition of sexual harassment was presented in chapter 2 and will be used to extract relevant respondents from the survey. The definition includes all behaviors perceived by the victim of harassment to be harassment, in short, the broadest possible definition. Survey B has specific

questions (see Appendix A, page 37). I will draw a distinction between behaviors which could have been but were not considered sexually harassing and behaviors which could be considered harassing and were perceived as harassing by the victim (respondent). If the respondent answered positively to the presence of a behavior which could be classified as harassment, I will only consider it sexual harassment if the respondent answered in the affirmative to the question, whether or not the individual perceived the behavior to be harassing. This should eliminate behaviors which could have been sexually harassing but are not because the victim did not perceive the action(s) to constitute harassment.

### **Victim's Response Constructs**

The response topology used was the Knapp-proposed typology developed in the literature review which classified responses in four categories based on whether other people (other than the harasser) were involved and whether action was taken against the harasser (see Fig 2, page 12). The survey questions used to classify the four responses (listed below) are cataloged in Attachment B.

Response Constructs, page 39.

- (1) Avoidance/Denial
- (2) Confrontation/Negotiation
- (3) Social Coping
- (4) Advocacy Seeking

## **Data Interpretation**

The interpretation of the data will follow logically from the structure of the investigative questions. After selecting those respondents who encountered sexually harassing (qualifying) behaviors, I will then select respondents who felt that they were harassed. Based on their perceived harassment, what was their reaction (avoidance/denial, social coping, confrontation/negotiation, advocacy seeking)? For each set of harassment responses, did the situation improve and did the harassing behavior continue? From these questions I will relate the victim's response to the outcome of the situation.

## **Methodological Considerations**

I will avoid a key methodological problem that exists in current sexual harassment research. This fairly prevalent problem (Legnick-Hall, 1995) is the use of college students or other potentially non-situational respondents to decide, through experiment or scenario-dependent survey, what action they would take *if* sexually harassed. This research uses responses from military personnel who believe they actually were sexually harassed. Though the respondents are solely military, the response options are universal, and thus should generalize to other types of employees. Differences could exist between the military and civilian work environments that may restrict the generalizability of this research.

## Potential Findings/Hypotheses

*Respondents who took action against the harasser in the form of confrontation/negotiation or advocacy seeking experienced a discontinuation of harassing behavior and a sense that the situation was improved with greater frequency than with avoidance/denial and social coping.*

I intend to test this hypothesis using the following steps.

1. Identify from the data which individuals perceived sexually harassing behavior by isolating those respondents who answered the question, "Did you consider this behavior to be sexual harassment," as Definitely or Probably, thus eliminating those who answered Did not consider, Probably not, or Uncertain. This distinction will allow only those who considered the behavior harassing to be considered for responses.
2. Ascertain from the data how many respondents took action in each of the four constructs.
3. Ascertain whether the harassing situation was resolved based on the survey question, "Is the [harassing] situation still continuing?" based on the respondent's Yes or No answer.
4. Ascertain whether or not the response to the behavior made the situation better. For this question I will present whether the action specified made the situation better or worse based on the respondents choice of "made situation better" or "made situation worse" from the survey.

#### IV. Data Analysis

##### **Harassing Behavior**

Of the 28,404 respondents, the following table breaks down the perception of harassment. The percentages listed after the numbers are indicative only within the table and are not percentages of the sampled population.

Table 1. Occurrences of Harassment

<b>Total Number of Respondents</b>	<b>Respondents Perceiving Harassment</b>	<b>Probably Was Harassment</b>	<b>Definitely was Harassment</b>
28,404 (100%)	7,219 (25.4%)	3,901 (13.7%)	3,318 (11.7%)

The remainder of the data analysis was based on the subset of 7,219 cases, 25.4 percent of the sample population, which constituted perception of sexual harassment.

##### **Frequency of Types of Responses**

A difficulty in the analysis was that the respondents' actions did not clearly fall into one response construct. To more clearly ascertain how many constructs respondents used as a response to harassment, I catalogued the number of responses through the use of dummy variables. Dummy variables were used to

flag the presence of the responses and added to determine the number of constructs used by the respondent.

Table 2. Number of Constructs That Respondent Used

<b>Number of Constructs</b>	<b>Respondents (percentage)</b>
1	3,094 (42.9)
2	2,828 (39.2)
3	881 (12.2)
4	91 (1.3)
None*	325 (4.5)

\* - no response construct indicated though harassment was perceived

Clearly there are some problems with analyzing the data resulting from interdependencies between constructs without insight on the order of their use and the number of constructs used, which prevented the use of regression to determine the differences between the response constructs. The lack of independent, mutually exclusive, categories created a pitfall though analysis of the respondents who answered in one or two constructs would still provide useful information. The 3,094 respondents which use behaviors in only one construct (avoidance/denial, confrontation/negotiation, social coping, or advocacy seeking) and the 2,828 respondents which used two types of responses constitute the majority (82.1 percent) of the sample population.

### Single Construct Responses

The respondents who responded within one construct were analyzed to determine the frequency of each response.

Table 3. Single Construct Response Frequencies

Construct	Frequency (percentage)
Avoidance/Denial	1628 (52.6)
Confrontation/Negotiation	1248 (40.3)
Social Coping	7 (.2)
Advocacy Seeking	211 (6.8)

Note: Total =99.9 percent due to rounding

### Single Construct Effects on Harassment.

Of those who answered within one construct, the effect on the harassing behavior was determined through the response to the question, "Is this situation still going on?" The missing column indicates what number (percentage) did not respond to the question thus returning a "missing" indication on the survey.

Table 4. Single Construct Effects on Harassing Behavior

Construct	Behavior is Ongoing	Behavior Ceased	Missing	Total
Avoidance/Denial	625 (38.4)	980 (60.2)	23 (1.4)	1628
Confrontation/Negotiation	226 (18.1)	1005 (80.5)	17 (1.3)	1248
Social Coping	4 (57.1)	2 (28.6)	1 (14.3)	7
Advocacy Seeking	45 (21.3)	164 (77.7)	2 (.95)	211

Responses were compared to test for statistical differences in the proportion of cases where the harassment ceased after the response. The responses were compared using the test for proportional differences on dichotomous variables

(each behavior either stopped the behavior or it did not) (Bruning and Klintz, 1968, 199). The analysis is reprinted in Appendix C-Tests for Significance of Differences in Proportions. The results are below. Social coping is not included due to the low numbers of respondents choosing that method which resulted in the lack of enough data for comparison. The table shows significant differences in each responses' effectiveness in stopping harassing behavior.

Confrontation/negotiation seems very powerful though it is only marginally more significant than advocacy seeking responses.

Table 5. Single Construct Effectiveness in Stopping the Harassing Behavior

<b>Construct</b>	<b>N (%)</b>	<b>Con_Neg</b>	<b>Adv_Seek</b>	<b>Avod_Deny</b>
Con_Neg	1231 (82)			
Adv_Seek	209 (78)	2.1317**		
Avod_Deny	1605 (61)	17.6040***	11.6268***	

\*\*-p-value < .05

\*\*\* p-value <.0001

Single Construct Effects on the Situation.

Further analysis determined the respondent's opinion on whether or not the situation improved after action was taken. Each question which is part of the construct was answered: "1-made worse, 2-made no difference, 3-made better or 0-I did not take this action" (Edwards, 1995, 11-12). The frequencies of the

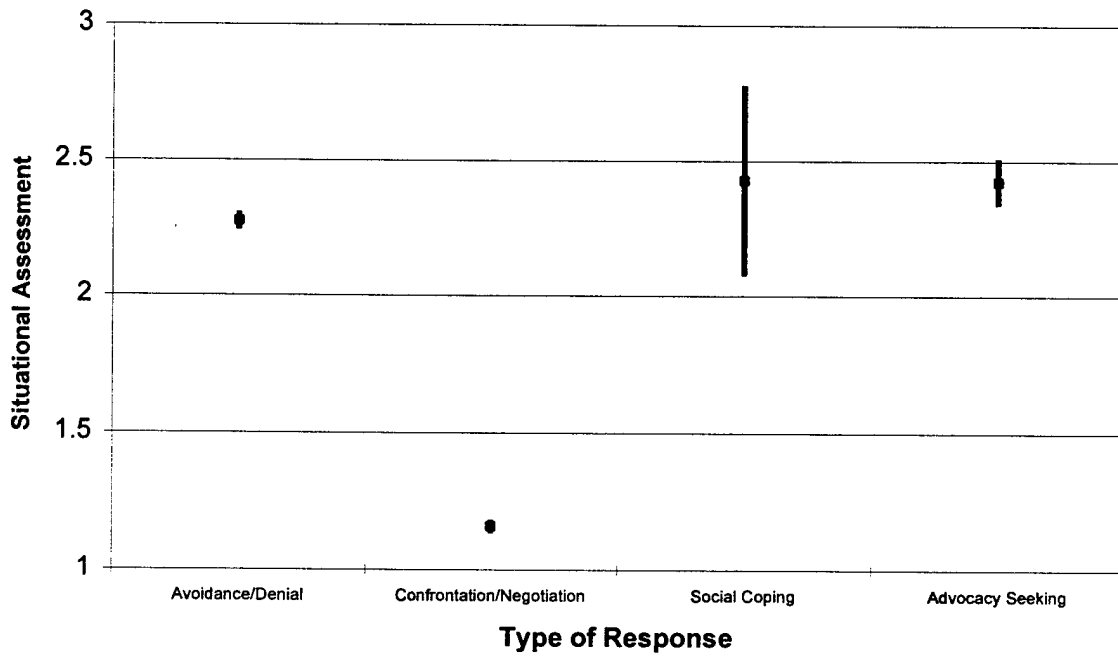
individual responses is reprinted in Table 6 on the following page. Many respondents used several responses within each construct, therefore, the number of responses is greater than the number of respondents.

Table 6. Single Construct Effects on Situation

<b>Construct</b>	<b>Made Better</b>	<b>No Difference</b>	<b>Made Worse</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Mean (SD)</b>
Avoidance/Denial	1333 (32.2)	2,554 (61.6)	257 (6.2)	4,144 (100.0)	2.2752 .4717
Confrontation/Negotiation	1083 (60.9)	677 (38.0)	19 (1.1)	1,779 (100.0)	1.1614 .2595
Social Coping	5 (41.7)	7 (58.3)	0 (0.0)	12 (100.0)	2.4286 .4600
Advocacy Seeking	250 (46.1)	247 (45.6)	45 (8.3)	542 (100.0)	2.4245 .5572

To test for statistical differences between the responses a 95% confidence interval for each mean was used. Any overlapping portions of confidence intervals indicate a lack of statistical difference between response effects. Again, the range of possible responses is 1 to 3, respondents who did not take the response were excluded from evaluating that response. The lower the mean response for a set of behaviors, the more effective the behavior was in improving the situation. The figure on the following page is a graphical depiction of the comparative widths of the confidence intervals. The confidence intervals are very tight because of the relatively large number of responses. The calculations for the confidence intervals are located in Appendix D, page 46. Though confrontation/negotiation has the lowest mean, statistically, of note is the relative lack of difference between the other responses' ability to improve the situation.

### Single Construct Mean Effectiveness



**Key**

- 1- made situation better
- 2- no difference
- 3- made situation worse

Figure 4. Comparison of Single Construct Response Effect on Situation

Table 7. Confidence Intervals of Single Construct Responses

Name	95% lower CI	95% upper CI
Avoidance/Denial	2.2523	2.2981
Confrontation/Negotiation	1.1470	1.1758
Social Coping	2.0878	2.7694
Advocacy Seeking	2.3493	2.4997

Note: Confidence Interval Calculations in Appendix D, page 46

## Dual-Construct Responses

The 2,828 dual-construct responses were analyzed separately from the individual responses using the same tools as the single-construct responses.

Table 8. Dual Construct Response Frequencies

Construct Pair	Frequency (percentage)
Avoidance/Denial & Confrontation/Negotiation	1,749 (61.9)
Avoidance/Denial & Social Coping	19 (0.67)
Avoidance/Denial & Advocacy Seeking	327 (11.6)
Confrontation/Negotiation & Social Coping	21 (0.7)
Confrontation/Negotiation & Advocacy Seeking	695 (24.6)
Social Coping & Advocacy Seeking	17 (0.6)
Total Number of Respondents	2,828

Note: percentage does not equal 100% due to rounding

## Dual Construct Effects on Harassment.

Calculating the degrees to which combinations produce a cessation of the harassing behavior is reprinted in the frequency table below.

Table 9. Dual Construct Effects on Harassing Behavior

Construct Pair	Behavior is Ongoing	Behavior Ceased	Missing	Total
Avoidance/Denial & Confrontation/Negotiation	518 (29.6)	1,214 (69.4)	17 (0.9)	1749 (100)
Avoidance/Denial & Social Coping	6 (31.5)	13 (68.4)	0 (100)	19 (100)
Avoidance/Denial & Advocacy Seeking	131 (40.1)	194 (59.3)	2 (0.6)	327 (100)
Confrontation/Negotiation & Social Coping	6 (28.5)	15 (71.4)	0 (0.0)	21 (100)
Confrontation/Negotiation & Advocacy Seeking	193 (27.8)	493 (70.9)	9 (1.3)	695 (100)
Social Coping & Advocacy Seeking	7 (41.2)	9 (52.9)	1 (5.8)	17 (100)

Only three of the dual-constructs were tested for significance since the others are in numbers too low to attempt any statistical comparison. The responses were compared using the test for proportional differences on dichotomous variables as in the single-construct section (each behavior either stopped the harassment or it did not) (Bruning, 1968, 199). The analysis is reprinted in Appendix C-Tests for Significance of Differences in Proportions. The most powerful pairs are those in some combination with confrontation/negotiation though when confrontation/negotiation is paired with advocacy seeking and avoidance/denial, there is not a significant difference between the pairs lending more credibility to confrontation/negotiation responses' power.

Table 10. Dual Construct Effectiveness in Stopping the Harassing Behavior

Construct	N (%)	Con/Neg & Adv_Seek	Avod_Deny & Con/Neg	Avod/Deny & Adv_Seek
Con/Neg & Adv_Seek	686 (72)			
Avod_Deny & Con/Neg	1732 (70)	1.358 *		
Avod/Deny & Adv_Seek	325 (60)	5.816**	7.029**	

\* not significant – p-value >.05

\*\* P-value < .0001

### Dual Construct Effects on the Situation.

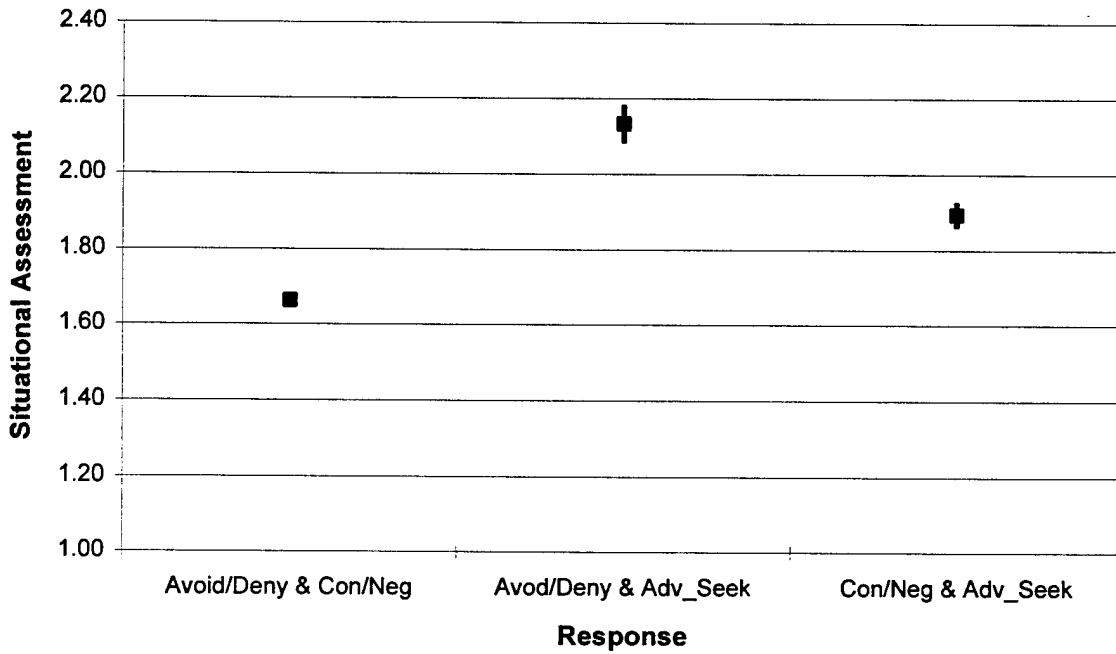
The effects of the dual responses on the resulting change in the situation were examined using the same method as previously for the single construct responses. Pairs with social coping were excluded due to the low number of responses.

Table 11. Dual Construct Effects on Situation

<b>Construct Pair</b>	<b>Made Better</b>	<b>No Difference</b>	<b>Made Worse</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Mean (SD)</b>
Avoidance/Denial & Confrontation/Negotiation	2,186 (30.8)	4,121 (58.2)	783 (11.0)	7,090 (100.0)	1.6633 0.2678
Avoidance/Denial & Social Coping	25 (25.8)	61 (62.9)	11 (11.3)	97 (100.0)	
Avoidance/Denial & Advocacy Seeking	373 (23.8)	981 (62.6)	214 (13.6)	1,568 (100.0)	2.1333 0.3951
Confrontation/Negotiation & Social Coping	35 (39.3)	49 (55.1)	5 (5.6)	89 (100.0)	
Confrontation/Negotiation & Advocacy Seeking	1,418 (39.6)	1,725 (48.2)	437 (12.2)	3,580 (100.0)	1.8942 0.3563
Social Coping & Advocacy Seeking	62 (47.0)	46 (34.8)	24 (18.2)	132 (100.0)	

The 95% confidence intervals were calculated from the mean and standard deviation of the respondents perception of the change, if any, in the situation after the responses were taken. Again, overlapping confidence intervals in Figure 5, on the following page, demonstrate a lack of statistical significance.

### Dual Construct Effectiveness Means



Key

- 1- made situation better
- 2- no difference
- 3- made situation worse

Figure 5. Comparison of Dual Construct Response Effect on Situation

Table 12. Dual Construct Response Confidence Intervals

Construct	95% lower CI	95% upper CI
Avoid/Deny & Con/Neg	1.6507	1.6759
Avod/Deny & Adv_Seek	2.0905	2.1761
Con/Neg & Adv_Seek	1.8677	1.9207

Note: confidence interval calculations in Appendix D, page 46

## V. Conclusion

### **Introduction**

Initially, before starting the literature review or studying harassment, I believed that the majority of victims reported or took action when perceived harassment occurred. It is the disparity between this initial "gut feel" and the literature which excited me about this analysis. Though not completely familiar with the field of sexual harassment, as a military member for approximately 11 years, I have been indoctrinated into the culture and have, in working with hundreds of people from all ranks, in all environments, developed a sense of the relations that military members have and the programs and policies regarding sexual harassment. I will not be able to implement change and test the results of that change but I will, hopefully, have useful recommendations for possible improvements or for follow on research to further the analysis. Both the single construct responses and dual construct responses have approaches which seem more effective than others.

### **Single-Response Construct Findings**

Single-construct responses which constituted 42.9 percent of the responses to perceived sexual harassment favored avoidance/denial as the method most practiced (52.6 percent) even though confrontation/negotiation and advocacy seeking are intuitively more effective in stopping the behavior and resulting in an improved situation. Statistically, Confrontation/Negotiation and

Advocacy Seeking responses were more effective in stopping the behaviors (Table 5, page 30). Social coping was used in very few cases, in numbers too low to draw conclusions from. The relatively small use of advocacy seeking responses, used in only 6.8% of the situations, was effective though its limited use is highly surprising. Advocacy seeking is not only formal reports with the Social Actions office; it includes any chain of command or outside authority reporting of the behavior. Since the reporting of sexual harassment is something the Air Force encourages, the low numbers using the official reporting channels is not what was expected. Advocacy seeking numbers could be low due to use of confrontation/negotiation strategies which minimize outside involvement. The lack of outside involvement may be one of the reasons confrontation/negotiation leads in stopping harassment and in improving the situation. If the harasser realizes that he/she has been saved the trouble of external inquiry, they may be grateful as well as wary.

The single response effects on the situation also demonstrated statistical significance in most cases (Figure 4, p. 32). The large sample size used tends to draw a very narrow confidence interval. Confrontation/negotiation responses seem to have a greater ability to improve the situation from the viewpoint of the victim. The relative lack of difference between the confidence intervals of avoidance/denial and advocacy seeking responses is surprising since I expected to find that advocacy seeking responses improved the situation more often than avoidance/denial responses

## Dual-Construct Response Findings

The six possible Dual-Construct responses accounted for 39.2 percent of the respondents who felt harassed (2,828 respondents). Of the possible pairs, avoidance/denial & confrontation/negotiation had the largest number of respondents accounting for 61.9 percent of the paired responses. This is an unexpected pairing since avoidance/denial and confrontation/negotiation differ exactly on whether or not the individual confronts the harasser. The survey was not designed to analyze the concurrent or subsequent use of a second behavior so the dual-response constructs can be interpreted in many ways. However the responses occurred, pairs with confrontation/negotiation used were more effective than pairs without (Table 10, page 34). When confrontation/negotiation was paired with advocacy seeking and tested against the pairing of confrontation/negotiation and avoidance/denial, the results were proportions in which the behavior ceased was not statistically different. As in the single responses, it appears that confrontation/negotiation responses seem effective in ceasing harassing behavior. Social coping pairings were excluded from the comparisons due to their low comparative numbers which would have yielded no significant findings.

Dual construct responses' ability to improve the situation seem different although there is no clear leader (Figure 5, Table 12, page 36). All three dual construct response "situation improvement" means are lower (better) than the single construct means with the exception of confrontation/negotiation. The pairings which include confrontation/negotiation are statistically better than the

other pairing of avoidance/denial and advocacy seeking. This adds still more credence to the argument that confrontation/negotiation is more effective in improving the situation.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations for Further Research**

The analysis seems to favor confrontation/negotiation responses whether used alone or when paired with other responses to end the harassing behavior. There is also evidence to indicate that confrontation/negotiation responses, used alone or when paired tends to improve the situation, however, there is ample room for more specific analysis within the field and within this data set. The relative lack of use of advocacy seeking behavior is slightly disturbing though it wouldn't be so if more people used some method to combat the behavior instead of relying on avoidance/denial responses in so many cases. One reason the advocacy seeking method is used in relatively few instances is the success of the confrontation/negotiation strategy. Once the victim has decided to take action, if the confrontation/negotiation is used as the first method, there may no be a need for any further action.

The field is interesting, fairly new, and fairly muddy which allows for exploration. This survey was designed to be a longitudinal effort though another administration of the survey has not yet been accomplished. The differences between this survey and what follows will be a ripe area for analysis. Also, analysis into confrontation/negotiation may be able to reveal its effectiveness.

### Appendix A. Sexual Harassment Construct

The construct to test for the occurrence was built from the following questions. Any one or more of the behaviors constituted harassment if the respondent also answered the final question, "Do you consider this situation to be sexual harassment?". All questions taken from the codebook for form B (Edwards et al., 1995, B-8-11)

Of the following behaviors experienced, which one had the most effect on you?

- A. Repeatedly told sexual stories or jokes that were offensive to you?
- B. Whistled, called, or hooted at you in a sexual way?
- C. Made unwelcome attempts to draw you into a discussion of sexual matters (for example, attempted to discuss or comment on your sex life?
- D. Made crude and offensive sexual remarks, either publicly (for example, in your workplace) or to you privately?
- E. treated you differently because of your sex?
- F. Made offensive remarks about your appearance, body, or sexual activities?
- G. Made gestures or used body language in a sexual nature which embarrassed or offended you?
- H. Displayed, used or distributed sexist or suggestive materials (for example, pictures, stories, or pornography, which you found offensive)?
- I. Made offensive sexist remarks (for example, suggesting that people of your sex are not suited for the kind of work you do)?
- J. Made unwanted attempts to establish a romantic sexual relationship with you despite your efforts to discourage it?
- K. Put you down or was condescending to you because of your sex?

- L. Stared, leered, or ogled you in a way that made you feel uncomfortable?
- M. Exposed themselves physically (for example 'mooned' you) in a way that made you feel uncomfortable?
- N. Continued to ask you for dates, drinks, dinner, etc., even though you said, 'No'?
- O. Made you feel like you were being bribed with some sort of reward or special treatment to engage in sexual behavior?
- P. Made you feel threatened with some sort of retaliation for not being sexually cooperative?
- Q. touched you in a way that made you feel uncomfortable?
- R. Made unwanted attempts to stroke fondle or kiss you?
- S. Treated you badly for refusing to have sex?
- T. Implied faster promotions or better treatment if you were sexually cooperative?
- U. Made you afraid you would be treated poorly if you didn't cooperate sexually?
- V. Offered to be sexually cooperative to you in exchange for a favor or special treatment from you?
- W. Attempted to have sex with you without your consent or against your will, but was unsuccessful?
- X. Had sex with you without your consent or against your will?

Did you consider the situation to be sexual harassment?

## Appendix B. Response Constructs

### **Avoidance/denial**

- A. I ignored the behavior.
- B. I avoided the person(s).
- F. I acted as though it did not bother me.
- I. I requested a transfer or temporary assignment elsewhere.

### **Confrontation/negotiation**

- C. A asked or told the person to stop (either orally or in writing).
- E. I threatened to tell or told a coworker(s).
- H. I requested additional training for the person(s)' work center/unit.
- D. I asked someone else to speak for me.

### **Social coping**

- G. I called a hotline for advice/information (not to file a complaint).
- J. I discussed it or got advice from someone unofficially
- K. I informally requested advice/assistance from other base/post sources, such as the chaplain or counselors.

### **Advocacy seeking**

Did you report this unwanted sex-related attention to any of the following individuals or organization; and if so, did it make things better or worse for you?

- A. Reported it to my immediate supervisor
- B. The supervisor of the person bothering me
- C. Someone else in my chain of command

- D. Law enforcement officials (for example, Military Police)
- E. A special office responsible for handling these kind of complaints (such as Equal Opportunity, Social Actions, Military Civil Rights Office, etc.)
- F. The Commanding Officer
- G. the Inspector General (IG) Office
- H. Judge Advocate General (JAG)
- I. A member of Congress

## Appendix C. Tests For Proportional Significance

### Single-Response Constructs

#### Avoidance/Denial and Confrontation/Negotiation

	Missing	Valid N	Behavior Ceased	P1	P2	Z-value	P-value
Avod/Deny	23	1605	980	0.6106			
Con/Neg	17	1231	1005		0.8164	17.6041	0.0000

#### Avoidance/Denial & Advocacy Seeking

	Missing	Valid N	Behavior Ceased	P1	P2	Z-value	P-value
Avod/Deny	23	1605	980	0.6106			
Adv_Seek	2	209	164		0.7847	11.6268	0.0000

#### Confrontation/Negotiation & Advocacy Seeking

	Missing	Valid N	Behavior Ceased	P1	P2	Z-value	P-value
Con/Neg	17	1231	1005	0.8164		2.1317	0.0330
Adv_Seek	2	209	164		0.7847		

### Dual Response constructs

#### Avoidance Denial & Confrontation/Negotiation and Avoidance Denial & Advocacy Seeking

	Missing	Valid N	Behavior Ceased	P1	P2	Z-value	P-value
Avod/Deny & Con/Neg	17	1732	1214	0.7009		7.0296	0.0000
Avod/Deny & Adv_Seek	2	325	194		0.5969		

#### Avoidance Denial & Confrontation/Negotiation and Confrontation/Negotiation & Advocacy Seeking

	Missing	Valid N	Behavior Ceased	P1	P2	Z-value	P-value
Avod/Deny & Con/Neg	17	1732	1214	0.7009			
Con/Neg & Adv_Seek	9	686	493		0.7187	1.3590	0.1742

#### Avoidance Denial & Advocacy Seeking and Confrontation/Negotiation & Advocacy Seeking

	Missing	Valid N	Behavior Ceased	P1	P2	Z-value	P-value
Avod/Deny & Adv_Seek	2	325	194	0.5969			
Con/Neg & Adv_Seek	9	686	493		0.7187	5.8169	0.0000

$$Z = \frac{P_1 + P_2}{\sqrt{\frac{P_1(1-P_1) + P_2(1-P_2)}{N_1 + N_2}}}$$

Above is the equation used to compute the Z-value used to compare the statistical difference between response effects on ceasing harassing behavior (Bruning, 1968, 199).

## Appendix D. Preparation of Construct Effectiveness Confidence Intervals

Confidence intervals were constructed using a large sample estimation with the following equation:

$$CI = x \pm Z_{\alpha/2, .975} \left( \frac{s}{\sqrt{n}} \right)$$

$$Z_{\alpha/2, .975} = 1.96$$

### Single Construct Confidence Intervals

Name	95% lower CI	95% upper CI	mean	Std dev	N
Avoidance/Denial	2.2523	2.2981	2.2752	0.4717	1628
Confrontation/Negotiation	1.1470	1.1758	1.1614	0.2595	1248
Social Coping	2.0878	2.7694	2.4286	0.46	7
Advocacy Seeking	2.3493	2.4997	2.4245	0.5572	211

### Dual Construct Confidence Intervals

Name	95% lower CI	95% upper CI	mean	Std dev	N
Avoid/Deny & Con/Neg	1.6507	1.6759	1.6633	0.2678	1749
Avod/Deny & Adv_Seek	2.0905	2.1761	2.1333	0.3951	327
Con/Neg & Adv_Seek	1.8677	1.9207	1.8942	0.3563	695

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<b>13. ABSTRACT (Maximum 200 Words)</b> This thesis uses four sexual harassment response constructs and evaluates the efficacy of the responses. The constructs are built based on individual or joint/collaboratory responses and whether or not the harasser is confronted with his or her behavior(s) perceived as harassing by the victim. The constructs are applied to the 1995 Department of Defense survey of Harassment. Results include each response's effect on the harassing behavior, whether the behavior is ceased or not. A second result is the victim's perception of improvement or worsening of the situation based on the response type used. Tests for proportional differences were used to determine the response type's effect on the harassment (ceased or continuing) and comparisons of confidence intervals were used to determine the response type's effect on the situation (improved or worsened). This study found that respondents used more than one type of response in most cases. Some dual-response constructs were also evaluated for efficacy. Results indicated responses which attack the behavior such as individual or supported confrontation tend to stop the behavior though they do not always result in a more favorable situation. Confrontational responses were not the most frequently chosen though they were the most effective. Reporting channels and advocacy seeking behavior (i.e. social actions) were used minimally.			
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