A problem exists in our educational system: many women feel uncomfortable in their college courses. They are experiencing various forms of sexual harassment in the classroom, and this is hindering their educational progress as well as discouraging them from fulfilling their potentials as students. It may well be destroying these women's futures. Sexual harassment is widespread and a well-known phenomenon, but yet many people still do not understand it or realize its impact on victims. In this paper, four undergraduate women share their experiences with sexual harassment in the classroom. Reliving these painful experiences took courage, but the women felt that it was necessary to inform society of the problems they face. Their stories and opinions exemplify much of past research on harassment, but their personal accounts bring the statistics to life and force others to see the reality of sexual harassment.

Anna is an actress in the theater department. She considers herself an artist. She has experienced sexual harassment from the director of her most recent show. She has also had him as a professor. In the classroom, she says he makes "weird little comments," sexist comments, and jokes. She once witnessed him ask a female student in class "how long it had been since she'd gotten laid, and then suggested she should." During her work on the show, he treated her differently than the male actors. She felt that she was "talked down to," and that her ideas weren't taken seriously, "more like 'isn't that cute'." Specific instances of harassment included the director lifting up her
skirt to make sure her legs were "O.K.," and attempting to make others believe that they were sexually involved during a theater festival. He would do things like attempt to give her a handful of change and say "Now you're a kept woman." Anna says he even directed the show from a sexist point of view - entirely differently than almost anyone else would have done it. Anna says she is now aware that he cast her in the show because of the way she looks, and this makes her angry. However, she feels that she cannot do anything to stop him.

Helen is also an actress in the theater department. She feels that gender harassment is prevalent throughout the department. She believes that the department in general is more supportive of men than women. The women do not receive much guidance and praise, nor as many "strokes" as the men do. "Women don't know what professors and directors think," she says, "so they feel insecure and unsure of themselves." The faculty in the department are afraid of women with a serious aspiration to art, rather than wanting to entertain or "sell it." Therefore, women get cast if they are attractive, even if they cannot act. Unfortunately, she believes that these attitudes continue well past school and into her profession. She was once told by a photographer that "Women can't do character faces like men can. You can't tell what they're doing." Helen does not know what can be done to combat this type of harassment.

Linda is a non-traditional student in the social sciences. She experienced sexual harassment from one of her professors.
She says he was "Creepy - the type who undresses you as he looks at you." In class, the students sat in a circle, and soon Linda and other females in the class began to feel quite uncomfortable. They all began moving to different places in the circle so that the professor could not look at them. He had very intimidating "looks." The students felt "squirming" during class. One day Linda had to sit next to the professor. He put his arm around her and said, "Let's pretend like we're married today." She told him, quietly, that it would be a cold day in hell. From that point on, the harassment worsened. He picked on her and embarrassed her in class. He made disparaging remarks about women in class, and if Linda protested these remarks the professor would dismiss what she said as wrong. "It got to the point where people in class were telling me to keep my mouth shut," she says. "He was out to get me because I spoke out as a woman." Linda considered dropping the class, but felt that she needed to learn the material presented. So she stuck it out, and eventually filed a complaint against her professor. This improved her feelings about the situation.

Joan is a student in the social sciences as well. She is a lesbian and the majority of the harassment she has experienced is "gay-bashing" in class. As a matter of fact, it happens so often that she could not even remember a specific instance to relate. She has gotten used to it. "The assumptions are what get to me the most," she says. To her, it seems as though professors overgeneralize things about people. They are white, healthy,
male, and straight, so they assume that everyone else is as well. This bothers her, because she then feels isolated in her classes. She says that gay women are less visible, so "it's easier to forget they are out there." Joan also feels that professors are not very tolerant, and that they are uncomfortable with homosexuality and do not know how to act. Students often do not seem to want to learn about homosexuality either, which simply adds to the problem. In one class, where the topic of homosexuality was part of the course-work, the professor avoided discussing the topic thoroughly because Joan and a few other homosexuals were in the class. He did it in order to shield them from getting hurt or upset by possible "gay bashing", but Joan does not think that tactics such as that are a good idea either. When avoidance occurs in a class, students in that class are denied the opportunity of understanding and becoming more tolerant of homosexuality. When "gay-bashing" occurs in one of her classes, Joan often confronts the teacher. She also speaks to different classes to attempt to educate others about homosexuality.

Each of these women seems to define sexual harassment differently. Some consider direct physical contact to be harassment, while others believe that sexist remarks constitute harassment. They are all correct. Differing perceptions of sexual harassment is a common occurrence. Therefore, in order to understand sexual harassment and discuss its effects, we must first be able to define it.
Defining sexual harassment is a difficult task, particularly when it occurs in the classroom. There are many aspects to harassment, and it may be difficult to determine which behaviors constitute harassment and which do not. As evidence of this problem, Fitzgerald, Shullman, Bailey, Richards, Swecker, Gold, Ormerod, and Weitzman (1988a) found that large numbers of women who have experienced relatively blatant instances of harassing behaviors fail to recognize and label their experiences as such. Roscoe, Goodwin, Repp, and Rose (1987) echo this finding, discovering that students did not know what behavior constitutes sexual harassment. They apparently recognize how they are treated and know they are uncomfortable with it, but do not know how to classify it. So, how is sexual harassment defined?

Roscoe et al (1987) cite five different definitions of sexual harassment. Most of these definitions, and others, have two common factors: 1) all forms of sexual harassment involve emphasis on the sex of the person harassed; and 2) the person harassed finds the sex-related emphasis objectionable (Cammaert, 1985). Byers & Price (1986) cite the definition constructed by the Canadian Psychological Association. This definition is quite comprehensive, including either or both of the following:

1. The use of power or authority in an attempt to coerce another person to engage in or tolerate sexual activity; such uses include explicit or implicit threats of reprisal for non-compliance or promises of reward for compliance
2. Engaging in deliberate and/or repeated unsolicited sexually oriented comments, anecdotes, gestures or touching if such behaviors: a) are offensive and unwelcome; b) create an offensive, hostile, or intimidating working (or learning) environment; or c) can be expected to be harmful to the recipient.

Although this definition is rather comprehensive, along with others it is vague. Many behaviors may be encompassed by these definitions, causing confusion as to what sexual harassment actually is.

Sexual harassment includes many different behaviors. These behaviors can be divided into five levels:

1. Gender harassment - generalized sexist remarks and behavior
2. Seductive behavior - inappropriate and offensive, but essentially sanction-free sexual advances
3. Sexual bribery - solicitation of sexual activity or other sex-related behavior by promise of rewards
4. Sexual coercion - coercion of sexual activity by threat of punishment
5. Sexual assault - gross sexual imposition or assault

Till (as cited in Fitzgerald, Weitzman, Gold, and Ormerod, 1988b)

These behaviors run the gamut from seemingly harmless to quite dangerous, but all have very serious consequences to the victim. Actually, the subtle and/or inadvertent acts can sometimes do the
most damage, because they often occur without the full awareness of the professor or the student (Hall & Sandler, 1982).

As noted earlier, many students experience sexual harassment but do not realize it because they are unsure of how to classify specific behaviors. The most difficult of these to classify is probably gender harassment. This is a form of sexual harassment that consists primarily of repeated comments, jokes and innuendos made towards a person because of their gender or sexual orientation (The Student in the Back Row). Examples of this form of harassment include:

- disparaging women's intellectual abilities and potential
- using sexist humor as a classroom teaching technique
- turning a discussion of a woman student's work into a discussion of her physical attributes or appearance
- any of the above actions directed toward lesbians or gays

According to The Student in the Back Row, gender harassment is the most widespread form of sexual harassment in the classroom. This is the type of harassment Linda and Anna have experienced. Linda's professor seemed to her to be against women. When she told him she was divorced and that she and her kids were doing fine, he told her, "You need help then - single parents don't do fine." He also told the class that "women who get divorced deserve it" and that "women who are abused asked for it." He continuously made off-color comments and the overtone of the class got to be very anti-women. Even the tests he gave were
biased, using his opinion to be derogatory toward women. Anna experienced the same kind of problems. Her professor called all women "little girl" and "baby," made sexist comments in class, and directed sexually crude jokes toward specific women in the class. In some classes, he had the students perform improvisations that demean women and portray women as victims.

Following are examples of the other forms of sexual harassment:

Verbal Harassment
- sexual innuendos and comments and sexual remarks
- suggestive, obscene, or insulting sounds
- humor or jokes about sex or women in general
- sexual propositions, invitations, or other pressure for sex
- implied or overt threats

Physical Harassment
- patting, pinching, brushing up against the body, and any other inappropriate touching or feeling
- attempted or actual kissing or fondling
- coerced sexual intercourse
- assault
- leering or ogling
- obscene gestures

Sexual Harassment, 1988
Not all types of harassment are illegal, but all cause discomfort or are a nuisance. To become illegal or be dealt with under human rights legislation, harassment must meet the following criteria:

1. Victims of a particular harasser are only of one sex
2. The initiator is in a position to affect the terms or conditions of the victim's employment or schooling
3. The harassment has a verifiable negative impact on the victim

Cammaert, 1985

A student experiencing the previously listed behaviors must interpret them in order to act. This may occur in different ways. The characteristics of a particular act seem to be taken into account when a person determines whether that act constitutes sexual harassment. Thomann & Wiener (1987) found that as an accused harasser's request becomes more flagrant and more frequent, a person is increasingly likely to perceive an incident as a sexual advance. Many other factors are taken into account when labeling an incident as sexual harassment. One such aspect is the harasser's past behavior (Pryor, 1985). If the harasser behaved consistently toward the victim over time and similarly to other women, the potential for labeling his behavior as harassment is increased. Additionally, the general unexpectedness or inappropriateness of a behavior for a person's role and status contributes to labeling that behavior as harassment (Pryor, 1985). If a behavior is attributed to the
male’s hostility or callousness toward the victim, it will also be interpreted as sexual harassment (Pryor, 1985).

These are some of the ways that people interpret behaviors. However, there are some acts that are automatically labeled as sexual harassment by people and some that are not. Terpstra & Baker (1987) surveyed students and working women to discover which acts they consider to be sexual harassment. He found that almost everyone (98-99%) considered propositions involving job threats, promises of positive job changes, and physical contact of an obvious sexual nature to be sexual harassment. However, as behaviors became more ambiguous, fewer subjects judged them to be harassing. 70-86% of the subjects judged gestures, remarks, graffiti of a sexual nature, and unwanted physical contact of a potentially sexual nature to be sexual harassment, and only 34-43% judged "nuisance behaviors" such as whistles, repeated requests for dates, staring, and shoulder squeezes to be harassment. Not everyone agrees about what sexual harassment is. This may be linked to differences in attitudes toward women and tolerance of harassing behaviors.

According to Pryor & Day (1988), if one assumes that men usually have a "male point of view" and women usually have a "female point of view" in social-sexual encounters, then it is easy to see why men and women often disagree in their interpretations of sexual harassment. Males seem to be much more tolerant of harassing behaviors and more likely to find a given sexual interaction within acceptable bounds than women (Kenig &
Males seem to have different, perhaps more lenient, ideas than women of what constitutes sexual harassment. Many studies have found that men rate fewer behaviors as harassment than women (Mazer & Percival, 1989a; Mazer & Percival, 1989b; Pryor & Day, 1988; Valentine-French & Radtke, 1989). In Reilly, Lott, and Gallogly's (1986) study, two of the men surveyed went so far as to question the value of the study and the expenditure of funds for it, and one man verbally attacked one of the researchers. These sex differences may stem from a difference in beliefs. Mazer & Percival (1989b) found that subjects who rate sexual harassment as serious tend to endorse fewer sexist attitudes. In addition, those who define more behaviors as harassment have less tolerance of it and fewer sexist attitudes. If men hold sexist attitudes more than women, then that may partially explain the disagreement about defining sexual harassment.

In addition to differences between sexes, other groups of people differ in opinions as well. Younger students seem to have a greater acceptance of sexual harassment than older students (Reilly et. al, 1986), and are half as likely as older students to perceive themselves as having been harassed (Fitzgerald et. al, 1988a). Fitzgerald (1988a) states that perception and labeling of experiences as harassment may be a function of the actual extent and severity of those experiences and age. This seems to be true. In a comparison of female students and working
women, Terpstra & Baker (1987) found that working women judged more behaviors to be harassing than students. Joan says that this is true of her. When she began college, she did not realize that the derogatory comments she heard in class could be considered sexual harassment. However, with age, she is more aware of the things happening around her, and better able to define the behaviors that she experiences. As a result, she has come to realize that harassment is a broader concept than she once believed. As this example illustrates, defining and recognizing sexual harassment is a difficult and often confusing task. However, harassment needs to be recognized because it is widespread and occurs relatively often on campus.

Judging from the statistics, women experience sexual harassment on campus all too often. 20-30% of students surveyed have experienced some form of harassment on campus (Cammaert, 1985; Fitzgerald et. al, 1988a; Mazer & Percival, 1989a; McKinney, Olson and Satterfield, 1988; Reilly et. al, 1986; Roscoe et. al, 1987). Schneider (1987) found an even higher rate. In her study, 60% of the subjects reported at least one experience of "everyday harassment" by male faculty during their educational careers. As expected, in these studies verbal comments occurred more often than physical contact, the most commonly cited incidents being sexual jokes, remarks that put down women, and sexual looks (Mazer & Percival, 1989a; Schneider, 1987; Roscoe et. al, 1987). Incidents were not limited to these "milder" forms, however. In Fitzgerald et. al's (1988a) study,
15% of the subjects experienced seductive sexual approaches from professors, 5-14% reported unwanted attempts to touch or fondle them (with half indicating that the attempts were forceful), and 5% had been subtly bribed or threatened with retaliation for refusing sexual advances. Reilly et. al (1986) also found that 8.3% of the women surveyed experienced deliberate touching and pressure for social contact by professors, and in McKinney et. al’s (1988) study, 2-6% of subjects had experienced verbal and physical advances, explicit sexual propositions, and sexual bribery. Harassers may use different types of persuasion in their interactions with students. Of the harassment reported in Reilly et. al’s (1986) study, 50% of the harassers used begging and appeals for sympathy, 20% used promises for academic reward, 20% used threats of academic penalty, and 21% used physical coercion, such as grabbing, restraining, and slapping.

Not only do women experience a wide variety of forms of harassment, it may occur in various settings as well. According to Roscoe et. al (1987), sexual harassment most frequently occurred in regular classroom interaction, followed in frequency by occurring in association with the student’s academic job or assistantship, or during the acquisition of assistance in course work. Women can experience harassment at all levels of their education as well. Although most were at the college level, in McCormack’s (1985) study 12% of the women reported experiences at more than one educational level. And many of these women are aware that they are not alone. Schneider (1987) found that 26%
of the women surveyed had specific knowledge of other women’s experiences with a sexual proposition, and 45% knew of incidents of comments and jokes. However, even though many women are aware that harassment occurs often, they may still not recognize that it is happening to them. Only 5% of the women reporting incidents that can be defined as harassment in Fitzgerald et. al’s (1988a) study actually believed that they had been harassed. At first Anna did not think she had been harassed either. Until she left school for some time and went through therapy to deal with her feelings, she thought she had never experienced sexual harassment at all. She thought that the comments and actions that she found offensive were just something she had to put up with. She thought that was "just the way people are." It never occurred to her to be angry. Sometimes students do not even notice it. "This stuff happens so much," says Joan, "you don’t really pay attention to it." This is unfortunate, since one in six women will experience harassment (McCormack, 1985). More women need to be aware that they have experienced harassment, because it has profound effects on women that must be dealt with.

Sexual harassment has serious negative consequences for women students (Cammaert, 1985; Dziech & Weiner, 1984; Hall & Sandler, 1982; McKinney et. al., 1988; Sexual Harassment, 1988; Reilly et. al, 1986; Walker, Erickson, and Woolsey, 1985). Victims are damaged emotionally and sometimes even physically. They report many different reactions, most of which are quite similar to the reactions of rape victims (Walker et. al, 1985).
Cammaert (1985) found that victims most often reported experiencing anger, frustration, and anxiety. They also reported experiencing confusion, breakdown in communication with peers, problems in interpersonal relationships, feeling self-conscious, distrustful and wary, and low self-esteem. Linda reported some of the same feelings. She left class feeling irate, ready to "fly off the handle." It often took her 15-20 minutes to calm down after class because she was so upset. She found herself frustrated and embarrassed to speak in class because the professor would only argue with her. This was particularly upsetting for Linda because under normal circumstances she is very active in class participation. She felt vulnerable in class, which later led to feelings of anger and resentment toward the professor. She says she "suffered through the whole class."

Joan feels frustration more than anything when she hears derogatory comments about homosexuals. She also often feels isolated because she feels her needs are not being addressed in the classroom. "Infuriating" is how Anna described her experiences. She felt much anger and frustration, but she also said, "it makes me feel bad about myself not to say anything about it and to put up with it. It makes you feel like you're kissing someone's ass." Anna also feels bastardized because of the way she was treated during the show. Such low self-esteem is one of the biggest problems victims face, because as a result of the harassment female students may feel that they are viewed by faculty primarily in sexual terms, rather than as a competent
student (Hall & Sandler, 1982). Anna echoes this sentiment. "What really bothers me is that I see the way he sees me, and he has no clue of the person I am." Sexual harassment is degrading and embarrassing for a woman, especially when she feels she can do nothing to control the situation because the culprit is her professor (Walker et al, 1985). Quite often the victim fears what will happen if she resists or reports the incident, fears reprisals by the harasser and his colleagues, and also worries that by protesting she will call attention to her sex rather than her work (Dziech & Weiner, 1984). These are the very reasons Anna has not reported the harassment she has experienced. "He’s a professor and he’s my director, and there’s certain lines that you don’t want to cross." She doesn’t feel that she can say anything, because her harasser gives her a grade so she doesn’t want to make him mad. These experiences alter a women’s attitudes toward institutions and may have effects on their perceptions of men and sex that last far beyond college (Dziech & Weiner, 1984). Walker et al (1985) reports that many victims become cold, formal and unnatural in their approaches to men. Victims also often report feeling guilt and shame. They may feel that they have caused the harassment themselves, or that they did not do enough to stop it (Dziech & Weiner, 1984; Sexual Harassment, 1988; Walker et al, 1985). Guilt is also sometimes experienced because the woman was initially flattered by the attention (Dziech & Weiner, 1984; Walker et al, 1985), and at times the victim is simply ambivalent about the situation and may
even feel sympathy for the harasser. However, these feelings usually become negative later. The victim will feel exploited and betrayed by someone she trusted (Dziech & Weiner, 1984; Walker et. al, 1985). All of this can hinder the female student in her academic performance. In fact, even less "serious" acts such as sexist humor and overtly sexist comments can interfere with classroom learning by alienating students and affecting the climate of the classroom (Hall & Sandler, 1982).

The effects of sexual harassment are not always just emotional. Many victims of harassment report physical effects as well, such as headaches, nausea, weight loss or gain, insomnia, high blood pressure, and gastrointestinal disorders (Sexual Harassment on Campus is a Problem, 1988). This can also affect them academically because they may miss class as a result. Skipping class is just one of many actions a victim of sexual harassment may take.

Victims of sexual harassment react to their situations in a variety of ways. These reactions include:

1. Leave field (quit or transfer)
2. External report (affirmative action or other agency)
3. Internal report (dean or supervisor)
4. Physical reaction (push away, physically resist)
5. Alteration (change behavior or looks, change environment)
6. Negative verbal confrontation (verbally attack or abuse)
7. Positive verbal confrontation (discuss, ask or tell to stop)
8. Avoidance
9. Ignore/do nothing
10. Other (tell others, give in, be flattered or complimented)

(Terpstra & Baker, 1989)

The types of actions a victim takes varies according to the type of behavior they experienced (Terpstra & Baker, 1989). As a result of gender harassment in the classroom, a female may alter the way she speaks in class by using a high pitch, using "tag" questions (i.e. don't you think?), being excessively polite and deferential, and by being hesitant while speaking (Hall & Sandler, 1982). Physical reactions are often used as a response to unwanted sexual contact, and alteration is a common response to graffiti (Terpstra & Baker, 1989).

Some actions are taken more often than others. Terpstra & Baker (1989) reports that positive verbal confrontation, reporting internally and ignoring were the dominant reactions in his study. Linda and Joan both attempted positive verbal confrontation to deal with the harassment they experienced. Linda went to her professor's office to speak with him about the problem. He was very nice inside his office, but "as soon as you walked out of the office he was like the dirty old man again." Joan's confrontations had more favorable outcomes. She has corrected professors concerning incorrect statements they have
made about homosexuals, and she has confronted professors about teaching more women's issues in the classroom. However, she does not feel comfortable confronting all her professors. She will not tell professors that she thinks might make her feel uncomfortable that she is a lesbian. This most likely limits her ability to confront all professors who discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation. In addition, Joan does not feel that she can or should take official action, because the type of harassment she experiences is subtle. To a certain extent, Anna confronted her harasser also. While in character for her show, she told her director that she would not tolerate being called Baby. However, he continued to call her Baby when she was out of character. She says that she and the other female students cannot avoid the classes he teaches because they are required, and they cannot avoid the shows he directs because they need the parts for their resumes. So, she and Helen both mostly talk among others in the theater department about the problem, but don’t take any action. Some students go along with the harassment. Helen knows of students who use it to their advantage. "They get what they want through sexuality." In Linda's class, if students laughed at the professor's sexist jokes, they "had it made." But if a student did not think he was "cute", that student was doomed.

External report does not seem to be a widely used action to combat sexual harassment, but it is used by some students. Linda reported her harasser to Affirmative Action at her school. She
got six other people in the class to write letters citing complaints, and the professor was reprimanded. She was nervous about it at first, and continuously made sure that he wouldn't "come and get her" if she reported him. She found the process difficult, and quite humbling because she had to go to others to support her actions, but overall she was relieved and pleased with the outcome.

Alteration seems to be a dominant behavior as well. Many women change the way they look in class in order to make themselves unattractive to the harasser. This dressing down expresses a desire to deal with the situation, but also it expresses self-doubt and inferiority (Dziech & Weiner, 1984). This is what Linda did. As a result of her discomfort around her professor, she made sure that she never wore a skirt to class. She also changed where she sat in the circle in class so that "he'd really have to stretch to even see my face."

Many women leave the environment of the harassment altogether. This action may range from dropping a class to dropping out of school. Joan took this route during one experience. It was a sex education class, and the instructor made assumptions that didn't include lesbians. She felt isolated in the class, so she dropped it. According to Sexual Harassment, women have forfeited research, work, and even careers as a result of harassment. Victims report avoiding classes or working with certain instructors, dropping classes, and changing majors or educational programs. Some drop out of school completely. These
reactions not only affect learning experiences, but also may affect future economic opportunities. Altering plans concerning obtaining a university education at all or changing a major or graduate field due to sexual harassment may have long-term implications for a woman, in terms of getting jobs and enjoying careers (Cammaert, 1985). Unfortunately, these actions occur often. McKinney et. al (1988) reports that out of the victims in her study who took action, 30% avoided or dropped a class, 6% changed majors, 3% changed committees, and 3% temporarily dropped out of the program. Dziech & Weiner (1984) report that the number of women who leave college because of harassment is "substantial."

Often, a victim of harassment does not feel the damage and pain of the experience until long after leaving school (Dziech & Weiner, 1984; Walker et. al, 1985). This may be due to the fact that many students resign themselves to a harassing situation and deny its seriousness (Dziech & Weiner, 1984). Negative feelings then surface later, after being suppressed during the incident. This may occur long after the woman has left the institutional environment and her claims to its protection. As a result, the victim may find her situation even more difficult to cope with.

Anyone in a position of power can be a harasser (Sexual Harassment). Most often a harasser is a victim's professor, but instructors or lecturers, graduate assistants, residence hall assistants, and staff members are all frequently cited as sexual harassers (Cammaert, 1985; Mazer & Percival, 1988b; McKinney et.
al, 1988; Reilly et. al, 1986; Roscoe et. al, 1987). In Schneider's (1987) study, 2/3 of all harassment was by a faculty member in a position to seriously influence the woman's status both at the time and in the future (such as with grades or recommendations). Full professors in their 50s and 60s are no less likely to date students than assistant professors in their 20s and 30s. Also, sexual interaction and/or sexual harassment is no more prevalent in the so-called "hard sciences" or in counseling and psychology than any other field (Fitzgerald et. al, 1988b).

Many harassers have common traits. Generally, the harasser is a repeat offender who will not stop on his own (Sexual Harassment). In addition, most harassing faculty members feel that overtly sexist comments and related behaviors are trivial, harmless features of everyday conversation that must be accepted (Hall & Sandler, 1982).

The harasser usually does not see his actions as harmful in any way. The professor/director who harassed Anna may feel this way. Anna says that the theater department is a very intimate group, but her professor goes beyond what he should. He likely does not believe that his actions are outside the boundaries of "normalcy." Fitzgerald et. al (1988b) surveyed male faculty members concerning their own behaviors. More than 37% of the men indicated that they had attempted to initiate personal relationships with students (dating, getting together for drinks, etc.). Over 25% had dated students, and a slightly larger
percentage indicated that they had engaged in sexual encounters or relationships with students. 11% of the men had attempted to stroke, caress, or touch female subjects. Even though the faculty members reported this large amount of activity, only one subject reported that he believed he had ever sexually harassed a student.

This amount of sexual behavior by male faculty is astounding. However, the professor may not be aware of the damage he may be doing to the student. For instance, during classroom lectures and interactions, a professor may not be aware that his gender-discriminatory comments have linked the female student's academic performance to her sex by communicating a perception of her not as an individual capable of learning, but as a woman who, like "all women", is of limited intellectual ability, is operating outside of her "appropriate" sphere, and is likely to fail (Hall & Sandler, 1982). However, professors are not entirely unaware of the consequences of their actions. Linda believes that her professor was aware of his actions. "I felt like he knew I was uncomfortable and he preyed on that." Other faculty often tacitly or explicitly support harassers (Schneider, 1987), which would not occur if the faculty members did not recognize the harassment.

Although some male faculty members feel that no circumstances exist in which faculty/student romantic and sexual behavior would be appropriate, many feel that situations do exist in which such relationships would be acceptable (Fitzgerald et.
al, 1988b). These situations include mutual consent, no opportunity for the professor to evaluate the student, student status (graduate vs. undergraduate), if student and faculty member are close in age, outcome (successful relationship and/or marriage), and student-initiated relationships. Male faculty members seem to believe that these factors legitimate any sexual relationships they may have with students. However, such factors do not dissipate the power differential inherent in faculty-student relationships. There were a very few subjects in Fitzgerald et. al's (1988b) study who seemed to realize this fact. Although these men reported having engaged in sexual relationships with students in the past, they now feel as though this behavior is not a productive or even legitimate part of the teacher/student relationship. Perhaps this means that some male faculty members are aware, or if not aware then capable of becoming aware of the power differential between students and faculty and its relationship to the causes of sexual harassment.

Evaluating the causes of sexual harassment is a difficult task. One might attempt to focus on a particular situation or a particular individual. However, viewing harassment in this way is an over-simplification of the larger problem. Sexual and gender harassment occur as a result of the wider social structure and gender stratification in our society. Focusing the issue on particular individuals provides a rationale for maintaining the status quo and permits women who report sexual harassment to remain isolated (Paludi, Grossman, Scott, Kindermann, Matula,
Ostwald, Dovan, and Mulcahy). It ignores the larger issues in harassment. Sexual harassment is tied more closely to structural conditions and historical patterns of sex-role interaction than to individual attitudes and behavior (Hoffmann, 1986).

Sexual harassment has been viewed and explained in many ways. Tangri, Burt & Johnson (1982) (as cited in Paludi et. al) devised three models of harassment from these explanations. They are:

Natural/Biological - sexual and gender harassment is natural sexual attraction between people. This model maintains that harassing behavior is a natural expression of men’s stronger sex drive. It denies the consequences of sexual harassment for women.

Organizational - sexual and gender harassment results from the opportunities presented by power and authority relations which result from the hierarchical structure of organizations. This model holds that institutions provide the opportunity structure that makes harassment possible. Women are viewed as being vulnerable to the economic, psychological, social, and physical consequences of harassment. It relates sexual and gender harassment to aspects of the structure of academia that provides asymmetrical relations between professors and female students.

Sociocultural - Sexual and gender harassment is only one manifestation of the much larger patriarchal system in which
men are the dominant group. Therefore, harassment is an example of men asserting their personal power, based on sex. In this model, sex would be a better predictor of both recipient and initiator status than would organizational position.

Actually, harassment seems to be best explained by a combination of the organizational and sociocultural models. According the McCormack (1985), educational institutions are microcosms of society. The socialization process in our schools include patterns of interaction between men and women as well as interactions between superordinates and subordinates that have been established in our society. Both of these patterns converge in interactions between faculty and students. Bureaucratic forms of decision-making and control (non-participatory, non-democratic, and hierarchical) reinforce and are reinforced by culturally socialized patterns of male and female authority (Hoffmann, 1986). Faculty have power over students on account of their organizational positions, and as a result of traditional male dominance in society they can use their positions to exert social control over women. Linda claims this is exactly how her professor behaved. "He uses his authority role for power. He wouldn't be able to act this way if he wasn't in his position."

For many men, sexuality and dominance are inseparable. To be sexual is to dominate and thereby be reassured of the possession of the power to dominate (Stimpson, 1988). Joan feels that this is the reason that "gay-bashing" occurs in her classes.
"It (i.e., homosexuality) threatens people - men find it a threat to their balance of power." This attitude is reinforced in our society by systems of gender stratification in which women's access to resources, power, and authority is disadvantaged relative to men (Hoffmann, 1986). In addition, historically, women have been objectified and their individuality subsumed by stereotypes of female attitude and demeanor (Hoffmann, 1986). Anna's harasser is a clear example of this. "He's got it locked in his head that women are ornaments, objects," she says. "It's like you're not a real person, you're a second-class citizen." Helen also sees this attitude in the acting profession. She has found that women are expected to wear skirts and makeup, and to present themselves through their appearance, not their talents. All of these problems function as forms of social control over women. This control is then coupled with the power the professor has due to his position. The female student is dependent on professors for admissions, grades, recommendations, and financial and research opportunities. Careers for the students are many times determined through the association and contact with one or very few faculty members (Schneider, 1987). This dependence, and the hierarchical organization of educational institutions, gives professors great status and power over students. The degree of power that the teacher has over the student increases the more the student wants to attain a goal set by the teacher, and decreases as the possibility of accomplishing these goals outside of the relationship increases. However, considering the nature
of the colleague system, professors rarely interfere with actions imposed on students by other professors (McCormack, 1985). Therefore, the power held over a student is usually great. Schneider (1987) found that when departments are small, relatively decentralized in terms of decision-making, and when female faculty have significant presence, sexual harassment is far less likely to occur. Having few women in high places in education has enormous implications for sexual harassment (Dziech & Weiner, 1984). This again shows the social control of female students by male professors. "We were to know that he was the male instructor and the women were just to be there," Linda says of her professor. The educational system, beginning at nursery school and continuing through college, reinforces women's dependency and reliance on authority. Women are taught submission, not aggression (Dziech & Weiner, 1984). The interaction of these two forms of social control - societal and educational - leave women in a position to be threatened by sexual harassment.

Faculty and students are not immune from the limiting attitudes held by the larger society toward women nor from the everyday behaviors through which perceptions of women are expressed. However, some male students may experience reinforcement of these negative preconceptions about women when such views are confirmed by persons of knowledge and status (Hall & Sandler, 1982). Joan believes this to be true. "You take the professor's word, because you think he's smart and intelligent."
This carryover of attitudes from male professors to male students perpetuates the system of social control in society. Perhaps the elimination of coercive forms of sexuality in the educational setting would eliminate one of the mechanisms through which gender stratification is sustained and perpetuated.

The women in this paper brought to life what the studies and statistics show. Sexual harassment is a serious problem in the educational system today. In order to combat this, we need to educate society about issues of homosexuality, feminism, traditional gender roles, and the hierarchical order of the educational system and male/female relations in our society. It will be a long and difficult process, but as more and more women like Anna, Helen, Linda, and Joan speak out about their distressing experiences, we will become more and more aware of the need to change. Perhaps we should begin now before more women are hurt.
REFERENCES


