

# 1989 Sexual Harassment Survey

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## SEXUAL HARASSMENT AT NORTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY

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### Introduction and Review of Literature

In the late 1970's, when a Yale University undergraduate woman sued a male professor for offering her a higher grade in exchange for sexual favors, the problem of sexual harassment on campus earned national attention. Only recently in the history of higher education has the sexual harassment of women students by

their male professors, and also junior faculty by senior professors and staff by supervisors, been identified and responded to in a serious fashion. Sexual harassment on campus has been largely a "hidden problem" until the last few years (Project on the Status and Education of Women, 1978).

Early surveys attempting to document the scope and incidence of sexual harassment focused on women in the work place and found anywhere from 50% to 92% of the respondents had experienced some form of sexual harassment (Sandler & Associates, 1981). These early surveys, however, were largely informal and exploratory, and the results were not generalizable to larger populations because the researchers used nonrandom, self-selection sampling (Maihoff and Forrest, 1983; Whitmore, 1983). These surveys were useful because they did provide valuable descriptive information on the nature, incidence, and effects of sexual harassment at a time when very little was known about the problem. They also served as a foundation for later research.

Within the last decade, a considerable amount of research on sexual harassment in higher education has been pursued at individual institutions. Since 1980 at least a dozen campus surveys have been conducted (Adams, Kottke & Padgitt, 1983; Allen & Okawa, 1987; Benson & Thompson, 1982; Brown & Maestro-Scherer, 1986; Fitzgerald, Shullman, Bailey, Richards, Swecker, Gold, Ormerod, and Weitzman, 1988; Johnson & Shuman, 1983; Maihoff & Forrest, 1983; Metha & Nigg, 1983; Oshinsky, 1981; Scott, 1984; Whitmore, 1983; and Wilson & Kraus, 1983). The results of these surveys are somewhat difficult to compare because the definitions of sexual harassment, sampling procedures, populations studied, and research methodologies often vary from one study to another. Taken as a whole, however, these studies clearly indicate that sexual harassment is a serious and widespread problem for students, faculty and staff at colleges and universities today.

Most of the campus studies define sexual harassment behaviors in terms of one or both of two major categories: gender harassment (sexist remarks and behaviors) and variously defined levels of sexual advances, bribery and coercion (see for example, Allen & Okawa, 1987, and Fitzgerald, et al., 1988). Incidence of sexual harassment is typically reported in terms of the percentage of respondents who have experienced one or more of the sexual harassment behaviors being investigated.

All of the studies include undergraduate women students in their research samples; a few include both men and women undergraduate students (Adams, Kottke, & Padgitt, 1983; Fitzgerald, et al., 1988; McCormack, 1985; and Sigal, et al., 1987). In general, women students are shown to be harassed significantly more than men, with men experiencing one or more forms of sexual harassment 5% or less of the time, and incidence among women averaging approximately 30% of the time (Dziech and Weiner, 1984). Incidence rates among graduate women students appear to be either comparable to or higher than sexual

harassment experiences among undergraduate women students. At one university the incidence of reported sexual harassment among graduate women students was considerably higher than for undergraduates (Fitzgerald, et al., 1988). At another university, researchers found the difference in incidence rates for graduate and undergraduate students was statistically significant ( $p < .0002$ ). Further, "among both undergraduates and graduates, the incidence of sexual harassment increased with class year: The incidence was 5% for freshmen, 8% for sophomores, 11% for juniors, 16% for seniors, 16% for master's students, and 23% for doctoral students" (Allen & Okawa, 1987, p. 11). Another interesting and similar pattern was found in a study of undergraduate and graduate men and women students at 16 universities in New England. Unlike some campus surveys which document only the incidence and extent of harassment at a certain institution, research by McCormack (1985) also examined the sexual harassment experiences of respondents before college. The results suggest that as women continue their education the chance of encountering sexual harassment increases.

The sexual harassment of staff and faculty has been investigated by only two institutional studies (Fitzgerald, et al., 1988 and Metha & Nigg, 1983). Extrapolating from the current body of research conducted in the university setting, however, it seems reasonable to conclude that the longer a woman pursues her education and professional career, the more likely it is that she will experience one or more forms of sexual harassment. For example, graduate women can experience more harassment than undergraduate women, and professional staff and faculty more than students. Moreover, research at two major universities in the Fitzgerald, et al. (1988) study, found that among female faculty members, administrators and staff, women administrators reported more experiences of sexual harassment than either faculty or staff women.

An area of further research yet to be fully explored is the sexual harassment of faculty and staff on campus. Comparisons within and across the three major campus groups--students, faculty and staff--can and should be made in order to better understand the pattern of sexual harassment in the university setting. Most surveys have focused on students, while only the two cited above have looked at patterns among faculty and staff. As in the case of research among student populations, there is a problem comparing data across samples due to the use of different instruments, samples and subsamples. Nonetheless, for individual institutions to obtain a full and accurate assessment of the incidence of sexual harassment on campus, survey research must include faculty and staff as well as students in the research sample. Critical insights about the nature and extent of sexual harassment in higher education which are inclusive of faculty and staff, ideally will result in the further development and refinement of institutional policy on sexual harassment, the removal of barriers to the career development of women in higher education, and the reduction and prevention of sexual harassment on campus.

Sexual harassment of women is serious and devastating at all levels within our

institutions of higher learning. Walker, Erickson and Woolsey (1985) have noted that "sexual harassment in the university is a complex issue which does not directly parallel the problem of sexual harassment in the workplace. Yet it has important implications for women students and for the equal education of the sexes" (p. 424).

In the Spring of 1989, an interdisciplinary team of researchers at North Carolina State University initiated a research project to determine the scope and incidence of various types of sexual harassment behaviors experienced by four groups of women on campus: undergraduate women; graduate women; technical and clerical women staff (hereafter referred to as staff); and teaching and non-teaching professional women (hereafter referred to as faculty). The purpose of the research was to discover types of sexual harassment behaviors experienced by women in each group; the occurrence of each type of behavior; the profile of harassers; the responses of the victims to the harassment; factors which would make victims more likely to report incidents of sexual harassment; and victims' knowledge of the university policy on sexual harassment.

### Method

#### Sample

A computer generated random sample was chosen from four groups of females on campus: undergraduate women students; graduate women students; women staff; and women faculty. Men were not included in any sample because sexual harassment of men students has been found to occur in 5% or fewer of male subjects (Fitzgerald, et al., 1988).

The total sample size was 1,364. This total sample included 10% of the available undergraduate women students (574 undergraduates), 10% of the available graduate women students (115 graduate students), 25% of the available staff women (500 staff), and 25% of the available faculty women (175 faculty).

A total of 527 responses of the 1,364 surveys sent were received (38.63%), indicating a greater than 97.5% reliability (30.31% of undergraduates; 40.86% of graduates; 40.60% of staff; and 58.85% of faculty returned the survey).

#### Procedure

Surveys were mailed to the 1,364 subjects utilizing campus mail whenever possible. Included with the survey was a cover letter describing the research and assuring confidentiality, and with instructions for completing the questionnaire, including definitions of five different types of sexual harassment. Each survey was color coded and numbered to aid in identification of the respondent sample group.

#### Survey Instrument

The survey used for this research was adapted from that used at the University

of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, a campus similar in size and mission to North Carolina State University (Allen and Okawa, 1987). Four general types of sexual harassment were identified by Allen and Okawa: unwanted sexual statements; unwanted personal attention; unwanted sexual propositions; and unwanted physical or sexual advances. A fifth type of sexual harassment (unwanted sexist statements) was added to the survey for this present research. Additional changes from the original Allen and Okawa survey were made for this present research to account for the inclusion of female employees among the subjects surveyed.

The survey was constructed to answer seven research questions:

1. What are the types of sexual harassment behaviors experienced by women at North Carolina State University?
2. What is the incidence of occurrence of each type of behavior?
3. What differences are there in the type and incidence of sexual harassment across the four sample populations?
4. What is the profile of perpetrators of sexual harassment?
5. How do victims respond emotionally and behaviorally to sexual harassment?
6. What do women at North Carolina State University know about the campus policy on sexual harassment and about campus grievance procedures?
7. What factors would make it more likely that victims would report sexual harassment?

Analysis of Data

For each question, frequencies and percentages were tabulated, except for eight questions where respondents were asked to write free responses. For these questions, a content analysis was conducted.

Results

Type and Incidence of Sexual Harassment

Unwanted sexist comments were defined as "jokes or remarks that are stereotypical or derogatory to members of one sex." The majority of respondents (60.12%) reported that they never experienced unwanted sexist comments. But 39.88% did report experiencing unwanted sexist comments one or more times in the previous five years. Almost 7% of the respondents reported that such an incident happened to them at least once, 21.77% said that it occurred several times (2-5 times), and 11.18% reported that it occurred many times (more than 5 times). In Table I the percentage of respondents reporting incidents of unwanted sexist comments are shown by number of incidents and category of respondent.

**TABLE I**  
**Percentage of Respondents Reporting Incidence of Unwanted Sexist Comments**

<b>Group</b>	<b>Never</b>	<b>Once</b>	<b>2-5</b>	<b>5+</b>
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<b>Graduate Students</b>	6.74%	0.58%	0.77%	0.96%
<b>Undergraduate Students</b>	20.81%	3.66%	7.13%	1.73%
<b>Faculty</b>	7.90%	0.96%	6.94%	3.85%
<b>Staff</b>	24.66%	1.73%	6.94%	4.62%
<b>Total</b>	60.12%	6.94%	21.77%	11.18%

Of those respondents who reported one or more unwanted sexist comments, 32.85% said that there was only one perpetrator, 57.97% said that several (2-5) faculty or staff members made unwanted sexist comments, and 9.18% of the respondents said that many (more than 5) faculty or staff members made unwanted sexist comments (58.33% of the graduate students, 43.08% of undergraduates, 68.85% of the faculty and 62.32% of the staff respondents who experienced this form of sexual harassment reported that several faculty and staff members made unwanted sexist comments). Slightly over half (52.31%) of the undergraduate students said that only one faculty or staff member made unwanted sexist comments to them.

Most of the respondents (77.78%) said that the perpetrator of unwanted sexist comments was male, and 22.22% of the respondents said that sexist remarks were made by both males and females. No respondents reported that unwanted sexist remarks were made by females only.

Of those respondents reporting that they had experienced unwanted sexist comments made by faculty or staff members, the majority (77.29%) said that the remarks were made by a white harasser. No graduate students or faculty respondents reported that unwanted sexist comments were made by an African-American, while 6.15% of undergraduates (4 respondents) and 5.80% of staff (4 respondents) said the comments were made by an African-American. Only one undergraduate student (1.54%) said that the individual who made the unwanted sexist comment was an Asian.

The second category of sexual harassment was unwanted sexual statements, which were defined as "unwanted jokes, remarks, or questions directed to you which have sexual implications or sexual content." Again, a large percentage of the respondents (82.85%) said that they never experienced a faculty or staff member making unwanted sexual statements to them personally, but 6.43% of the respondents reported that unwanted sexual statements were made to them personally at least once, 8.97% reported several (2-5) incidents, and 1.75% of the respondents reported hearing unwanted sexual statements many (more than 5) times in the previous five years. However, neither graduate students nor undergraduate students reported that unwanted sexual statements were made to them more than 5 times. Table II shows the percentage of respondents reporting unwanted sexual statements by category of respondent and number of incidents.

**TABLE II**  
**Percentage of Respondents Reporting Incidence of Unwanted Sexual Statements**

<b>Group</b>	<b>Never</b>	<b>Once</b>	<b>2-5</b>	<b>5+</b>
<b>Graduate Students</b>	8.38%	0.39%	0.39%	0.00%
<b>Undergraduate Students</b>	30.80%	1.56%	1.17%	0.00%
<b>Faculty</b>	13.26%	2.53%	3.12%	1.17%
<b>Staff</b>	30.41%	1.95%	4.29%	0.58%
<b>Total</b>	82.85%	6.43%	8.97%	1.75%

Of those respondents reporting one or more incidents of unwanted sexist statements, 55.68% said that only one individual was responsible for the statements, 43.18% said that several (2-5) individuals made the comments, while only one respondent (a staff member) said that sexual statements were made to them by more than 5 faculty or staff members.

The majority (92.05%) of the respondents who experienced this form of sexual harassment reported that the unwanted sexual statements were made by male faculty or staff members, while one staff respondent (1.14%) said the statement was made by a female perpetrator, and 3 faculty and 3 staff (6.82%) reported unwanted sexual statements were made to them by both males and females.

The majority of respondents (79.55%) who reported one or more incidents of unwanted sexual statements, said the statements were made by a white perpetrator. Four staff respondents (4.55%) said that the perpetrator was an African-American, while one graduate student and one staff respondent said the individual making the comment was an Asian (2.27%). Also, one staff member said that the perpetrator was an American Indian (1.14%).

Unwanted personal attention, the third type of sexual harassment, was defined as "unwanted letters, calls, visits, pressure for meetings, dates, etc., where personal or romantic interest in you was implied, but no sexual expectations were stated." The majority of the respondents (89.96%) reported that they never experienced unwanted personal attention from a faculty or staff member, but almost 5% (4.83%) said that they experienced unwanted personal attention one time, while 4.44% said that they had experienced unwanted personal attention several times (2-5 times). One undergraduate and 3 staff respondents (0.77%) reported that they experienced unwanted personal attention many times (more than five times). Table III shows the percentage of respondents reporting unwanted personal attention by category and number of incidents.

**TABLE III**

**Percentage of Respondents Reporting Incidence of Unwanted Personal Attention**

<b>Group</b>	<b>Never</b>	<b>Once</b>	<b>2-5</b>	<b>5+</b>
<b>Graduate Students</b>	8.88%	0.19%	0.00%	0.00%
<b>Undergraduate Students</b>	31.47%	1.35%	0.19%	0.19%
<b>Faculty</b>	16.22%	1.74%	1.93%	0.00%
<b>Staff</b>	33.40%	1.54%	2.32%	0.58%
<b>Total</b>	89.96%	4.83%	4.44%	0.77%

Of the respondents reporting one or more incidents of unwanted personal attention, the majority (73.08%) said that only one perpetrator was involved. Twenty-five percent reported that several individuals (2-5) gave them unwanted personal attention (2 undergraduates, 4 faculty and 7 staff), while 1 staff respondent (1.92%) reported that many (more than five) individuals were responsible for the unwanted personal attention.

All respondents who reported one or more occurrences of unwanted personal attention reported that males were the perpetrators. Most (82.69%) of the respondents (1 graduate student, 9 undergraduate students, 16 faculty and 17 staff) reported that the attention was from a white perpetrator, while 13.46% of the respondents (2 faculty and 5 staff) reported that the perpetrator was African-American.

Unwanted sexual propositions, were defined as "unwanted demands or invitations for sexual favors." Most (96.48%) of the respondents said that they had never experienced unwanted sexual propositions. In fact, no graduate students reported any such incidents. But 2.34% of the respondents (1 undergraduate, 7 faculty and 4 staff) reported that they had experienced unwanted sexual propositions one time, and 1.17% of the respondents (1 faculty and 5 staff) said that unwanted sexual propositions were directed to them many (more than 5) times. Table IV shows the percentage of respondents reporting unwanted sexual propositions by category and number of incidents.

**TABLE IV  
Percentage of Respondents Reporting Incidence of Unwanted Sexual Propositions**

<b>Group</b>	<b>Never</b>	<b>Once</b>	<b>2-5</b>	<b>5+</b>
<b>Graduate Students</b>	8.98%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
<b>Undergraduate Students</b>	33.40%	0.20%	0.00%	0.00%

<b>Faculty</b>	18.55%	1.37%	0.20%	0.00%
<b>Staff</b>	35.55%	0.78%	0.98%	0.00%
<b>Total</b>	96.48%	2.34%	1.17%	0.00%

Of the respondents reporting incidents of unwanted sexual propositions, 77.78% (1 undergraduate, 8 faculty and 5 staff) reported that only one individual was responsible for making the sexual proposition. Four staff respondents (22.22%) said that several (2-5) individuals were responsible for making the unwanted sexual propositions. All of the respondents reported that the perpetrators were male. The majority (77.22%) of the respondents reported that the perpetrators were white (1 undergraduate, 7 faculty and 5 staff), and one faculty and 4 staff (27.78%) said that the perpetrator was an African-American.

Unwanted physical or sexual advances, the fifth type of sexual harassment, was defined as "unwanted touching, hugging, kissing, fondling, sexual intercourse, or other sexual activity." The majority (91.78%) of the respondents reported that unwanted physical or sexual advances were never made to them, but 3.72% of the respondents (1 graduate student, 5 undergraduate students, 6 faculty and 7 staff) said that unwanted physical or sexual advances were made to them at least once, while 3.91% of the respondents (1 graduate student, 7 faculty and 12 staff) said that advances were made toward them several times (2-5 times). One faculty member and 2 staff members (0.59%) reported that advances were made to them many times (more than five times). Table V shows the percentage of respondents reporting unwanted physical or sexual advances by category and number of incidents.

**TABLE V**  
**Percentage of Respondents Reporting Incidence of Unwanted Physical or Sexual Advances**

<b>Group</b>	<b>Never</b>	<b>Once</b>	<b>2-5</b>	<b>5+</b>
<b>Graduate Students</b>	8.81%	0.20%	0.20%	0.00%
<b>Undergraduate Students</b>	32.68%	0.98%	0.00%	0.00%
<b>Faculty</b>	17.22%	1.17%	1.37%	0.20%
<b>Staff</b>	33.07%	1.37%	2.35%	0.39%
<b>Total</b>	91.78%	3.72%	3.91%	0.50%

Of those respondents who reported one or more incidents of unwanted physical or sexual advances, 73.81% (2 graduate students, 5 undergraduate students, 11 faculty and 13 staff) said that only one individual was responsible for the advances. Three faculty and 8 staff (26.19%) reported that several faculty or staff members (2-5) were responsible for the advances. The majority (97.62%) of the

respondents reported that the perpetrator or perpetrators were male, while one staff member (2.38%) said that the perpetrator was a female.

The majority of the respondents (78.57%) who reported one or more incidents of unwanted physical or sexual advances reported that the perpetrator or perpetrators were white (2 graduate students, 4 undergraduates students, 14 staff and 14 faculty). One faculty member and 5 staff members (14.29%) reported that the perpetrator or perpetrators were African-American, while 1 undergraduate (2.38%) said that the perpetrator was an Asian.

When asked: "Have you ever avoided taking a class from or working with an NCSU faculty or staff member because of the person's reputation for engaging in any of the previously mentioned behaviors?" six graduate students, 14 undergraduates, 15 faculty and 17 staff (11.93%) reported that they had, while the majority of the respondents (88.07%), said that they had not avoided a faculty or staff member because of their reputation.

### One Incident in Detail

Respondents who reported having experienced sexual harassment of any kind were asked to describe one incident in detail. Instructions stated: "We want to learn from your experiences so we would like to ask you to give us some detailed information about one specific incident. For questions 7 - 18, please think about the one incident that was most personally distressing to you." Approximately 29% of the respondents provided detailed information about one incident of sexual harassment.

The first of these questions addressed the sex of the faculty or staff member involved in the incident. Nearly all faculty and staff members reported as perpetrators in the incidents were male (98.03%). Three respondents (1 faculty and 2 staff) said the perpetrator in their incident was another woman.

The next question concerned the primary relationship of the perpetrator to the respondent at the time of the incident. Of respondents reporting specific primary relationship of the faculty or staff member involved in the incident, professor/teacher was the relationship mentioned most often (27.81%), followed by supervisor of university employment (7.95%), graduate teaching or research assistant (6.62%), academic advisor (3.31%), and department head or dean (2.65%). Over half (51.66%) of those reporting primary relationship to perpetrator reported some relationship other than those mentioned above and specified the perpetrator to be, for example, a stranger encountered walking across campus, or someone working in the same department. Of the four groups of subjects, graduate students were most likely to report professor/instructor in describing primary relationship of perpetrator to respondent. Respondents in the faculty/staff groups were the most likely to report some relationship other than those specified on the survey, such as a stranger encountered walking across campus, or someone working in the same department.

The behaviors reported by respondents discussing a specific incident in detail in descending order were unwanted sexist comments (57.89%), unwanted personal attention (16.54%), unwanted physical or sexual advances (12.03%), and unwanted sexual statements (11.27%). Two percent of respondents reporting a specific incident in detail said the perpetrator had made unwanted sexual propositions. Faculty and staff were the only respondents reporting sexual propositions in this section of the survey.

The largest number of respondents reporting an incident in detail said that it occurred in a classroom or lab (32.45%), or place of campus employment (29.14%). Also mentioned was a faculty or staff office (19.21%), during a trip off campus or in some other off-campus setting (9.27%), during a meeting on campus or in some other on-campus setting (7.95%), and during a phone conversation or through the mail (1.99%).

Undergraduate students reporting an incident in detail were most likely to say it occurred in a classroom or lab (77.08% of the responses by undergraduates), while graduate students reporting an incident in detail were equally likely to say it occurred in a classroom or lab (45.45% of grads), or in a faculty or staff member office (45.45% of graduate students). Members of the staff reporting an incident were most likely to say that the incident occurred in their place of campus employment (60.86% of the staff respondents). Members of the faculty were slightly more likely to say the incident occurred in their place of campus employment (32.61% of faculty said this) than in the office of a faculty or staff member (30.43% of the faculty said office).

The next question asked respondents about the effects of their experience with sexual harassment. The effects reported most frequently were avoidance of the perpetrator or situations involving the perpetrator (65.75%), and strong emotions such as anger, anxiety, or depression (65.52%). Several respondents reporting specific effects also reported impaired work performance (15.38%), and negative feelings about self (14.62%). Of the four groups, staff and faculty were the most likely to say that they experienced strong emotions. Faculty and staff were also the most likely to say they avoided the perpetrator or situations involving the perpetrator.

The next two questions were open-ended, allowing for more detailed specific remarks and comments. Only those respondents who reported an incident of sexual harassment were asked to complete these questions. Upon receiving the surveys, the comments were compiled anonymously, to avoid any chance that the respondent could be identified.

The first of these questions asked: "In order to help us better understand sexual harassment, we would like to know more about the incident you experienced. Please write as much or a little as you feel comfortable with in order to describe

the incident." Respondent descriptions varied from incidents of sexual comments to sexual advances. One graduate student wrote: "(The perpetrator) mentioned reluctance to take me on as a graduate student because I was female, and 'might get married.'" Another graduate student wrote:

I'm tired of women being abused, even verbally, to make a joke or prove a point. The reported 'incident' was merely a joke with women as the butt of it, but it really wasn't funny. It's just like a joke about 'niggers' or 'pollocks' [sic] -- it's not funny. I lost all respect for the professor for having to stoop so low to attempt humor and fit in, even though he jokingly apologized to the women present. He made me uneasy.

Remarks from faculty and staff often involved cases in which the perpetrators were members of respondents' departments. For example, a faculty member wrote: "This person approached me, inebriated, with a couple of friends at a reception at a professional meeting. He leered, made personal comments, and tried to persuade me to go to dinner with him. This was not the first time I had encountered this type of behavior from this individual...."

Another faculty member wrote: "(Harassment) started out as just compliments. Then to innuendos, jokes in private, the jokes in public about our having 'something going on.' Then asking personal questions in private -- such as was I sexually active, have I ever been unfaithful to spouse, etc."

The next question sought to discover the effects of sexual harassment, and read: "Please describe the effects of this one incident on your life, your work, and/or your school work, in your own words."

Answers ranged from respondents commenting that the incident had "no effect" upon them, to "anger," or "taking actions to avoid the perpetrator." One graduate student wrote: "...I would like to have a baby while...in graduate school but I don't think I could...because I believe he would hold a grudge and ruin my career." An undergraduate wrote, "I lost respect for the instructor and dropped the class." Another undergraduate commented: "This incident made me feel very uncomfortable about my overall safety on and around campus. I'm afraid of being alone on campus at any time of day or night. I now make sure that someone is with me all times."

A member of the faculty wrote: "I feel I am locked in a dead-end job because my ideas and concerns are not taken seriously. I get little respect for the professional position I have in the department." Another faculty member wrote: "Although I knew it was irrational to think these advances were my fault, I could not help but wonder what the other individuals present must think of a woman who elicited this kind of behavior."

And a staff member wrote: "(The incident) made me worry if I had in some

way led him on, or was there something (in the) way I dressed, acted, etc. It made me self-conscious, nervous, angry. It made it difficult to interact with co-workers."

Respondents who had reported an incident of sexual harassment were asked if they expressed objections about the behavior to the person involved in the incident, and if so, whether or not the behavior stopped following their objections. Nearly half (43.84%) of the respondents said they expressed objections about the behavior to the person involved. Of the four groups, members of the staff reporting a specific incident, were the most likely to say they expressed objections to the perpetrator (43.75% who expressed objections were staff), and faculty members were the second most likely to express objections (31.25% of the respondents were faculty).

Nearly half of the respondents reporting a specific incident who also reported expressing their objections to the perpetrator said the behavior did not stop after they expressed their objections (45.31%). Fifty percent of the respondents who reported expressing objections said the behavior stopped following their objections.

Respondents were asked about the people with whom they discussed the harassing incident, such as friends, parents or other family members, resident advisor or other residence hall staff, faculty member, counselor, sexual harassment liaison, supervisor, or co-worker. Respondents reporting a specific incident who said that they did talk with someone about it, were most likely to say they discussed it with friends (71.22%), co-workers (35.16%), and parents or other family members (31.09%). Among the four groups, undergraduate students were the most likely to say they discussed the incident with friends (about half of the respondents who said they would talk with friends were undergraduates), but in all groups the percentage who listed friends as someone with whom they would discuss the sexual harassment was high (90.91% of graduate students; 76.60% of undergraduate students; 69.23% faculty; and 61.90% staff). Undergraduate students were also the most likely to talk with parents or other family members, and faculty were most likely to say they discussed the incident with co-workers, though staff also seemed likely to talk with co-workers about the incident.

A large percentage of respondents said they did not talk with any of the people in the university who are designated to receive complaints (sexual harassment liaisons). Only one of the 111 respondents answering this question said that she had talked with a sexual harassment liaison. Nor did the respondents report talking with their supervisor (only 17 said they did; 97 did not), a counselor (4 did; 109 did not), a resident advisor or other residence hall staff (2 undergraduates did, but 42 undergraduates and 9 graduates did not), or a faculty member (21 did; 98 did not).

Respondents were asked if they complained to a university official or office

about the incident, and if so, to whom the complaint was made, any action resulting from the complaint, and their satisfaction with the outcome. Only 4.79 percent of the respondents reporting a specific incident said they made a complaint to a university official or office, and only undergraduate students, faculty and staff respondents reported making these complaints (a total of only 7 respondents complained, and 139 did not complain).

These seven respondents reporting a specific incident who said they made a complaint to a university official or office, listed senior faculty member (1 respondent), campus security (1 respondent), dean (2 respondents) and department head (3 respondents) as those to whom the complaint was made.

Of the seven respondents making a specific complaint to a university official or office, four reported that action was taken after the complaint was made. The outcomes reported were: one respondent reported an apology was made to her by the offender; one respondent reported that she had a discussion with her supervisor; one respondent said the offender was removed from his/her position; and one respondent said the offender's behavior changed in a positive direction. Of these four respondents, two reported that they were satisfied with the outcome.

If the respondent did not report making a complaint, she was asked to indicate the reasons for their decision not to complain. The leading factor was the feeling by the respondent that she handled the situation adequately (98 respondents). Other leading factors in the decision not to complain by those reporting this behavior were not perceiving the problem as one the university could or would help with (79), concern that no action would be taken (47), concern about retaliation (46), concern about personal responsibility for the incident (46) and embarrassment at being involved in the incident (40). Lack of knowledge about where to complain (33), concern about actions that would be taken (35), concern about anonymity (30), and concern about not being believed (20) also figured prominently in the reported reasons not to complain.

#### Visibility of campus policy

All survey respondents were asked about their awareness of campus policy on sexual harassment, federal law prohibiting sexual harassment, and their knowledge of campus resources for help with sexual harassment cases. Most (82.51%) of the respondents said that prior to the survey they were aware that campus policy prohibits sexual harassment. Respondents in the faculty and staff groups were more likely to report awareness of the campus policy than were respondents in the two student groups, although 70% or more of those in the two student groups reported awareness of the policy.

All graduate students who responded to the question concerning awareness of the federal law prohibiting sexual harassment said they were aware that it is prohibited by federal law. Undergraduate students, faculty and staff respondents

answering this question were somewhat less likely to say that they were aware that it is prohibited by federal law, but the percentage of respondents in each group was high (87.36% of the undergraduate respondents; 89% of faculty and 92.55% of staff).

Respondents were asked to list any university office that they thought was officially designated to answer questions about sexual harassment, take reports, or give advice on informal and formal complaints. Human Resources, the Counseling Center, Campus Security and the Affirmative Action Office received the highest number of mentions among those responding to the question. Sexual Harassment Liaison was mentioned by only 3% of the respondents. Nine percent of those answering this question said they did not know of a university office designated to respond to issues of sexual harassment.

### Respondent Suggestions

The next question sought to discover the factors that would make respondents more likely to report an incident of sexual harassment. A very high percentage of the respondents (96.35%) said that assurance of protection from retaliation would increase the likelihood that they would report an incident of sexual harassment. Similarly, 96.08% reported that they would be more likely to report incidents of sexual harassment if they thought the complaint would be taken seriously, while 94.43% said that they would be more likely to report if they knew that confidentiality would be assured. Other important issues to the respondents concerned the importance of the person to whom they report having authority to take action (90.25%), having an investigation team which is independent of the department of the perpetrator (90.14%), clear and uniform consequences for specific behaviors with severity of the punishment increasing with the severity of the incident (89.94%), having a certain person designated by the campus to handle initial complaints (81.42%), and having the person responsible for hearing the complaint a member of their own sex (73.85%).

## Discussion

### Types and Incidence of Sexual Harassment

The survey instrument utilized in this study identified five types of sexual harassment behaviors: unwanted sexist comments; unwanted sexual statements; unwanted personal attention; unwanted sexual propositions; and unwanted physical or sexual advances. Almost 40% of the respondents reported experiencing unwanted sexist comments one or more times within the last five years, and slightly more than half of these said they had experienced unwanted sexist comments several times. Seventeen percent of the respondents experienced unwanted sexual statements, almost 11% reported several incidents. Slightly over 10% were victims of unwanted personal attention, almost 5% had experienced it once and 5% several times. Almost 4% reported that unwanted sexual propositions were directed toward them, and 8% of the respondents were victims of unwanted physical or sexual advances, almost 4% one time and over 4%

several times. Overall, 29% of the respondents said that they had experienced one or more forms of sexual harassment and went on to complete the section of the survey asking them to discuss one incident in detail. Eight percent of those who completed that section were graduate students, 32% were undergraduates, 30% were faculty and 31% were staff.

Other campus studies report that 9% to 37% of the students sampled experience one or more forms of sexual harassment (Allen & Okawa, 1987; Benson & Thompson, 1982; Maihoff & Forrest, 1983; Markunas & Joyce-Brady, 1987; McCormack, 1985; Metha & Nigg, 1983; Wilson & Kraus, 1983). Some institutional surveys document 50% to 76% of women students have experienced sexual harassment (Adams, Kottke, & Padgitt, 1983; Fitzgerald et al, 1988). Twenty-seven percent of the combined student samples in this research reported experiencing sexual harassment.

Overall, 30% of the combined faculty and staff samples in this study (working women) reported one or more forms of sexual harassment. This is consistent with what was found in the Fitzgerald, et. al. study (1988), which reported 34% of the workers experienced gender harassment. But it is considerably higher than the percentage of faculty and staff reporting sexual harassment in the study conducted at Arizona State University (Metha & Nigg, 1983). Metha and Nigg found 13.7% of their faculty sample experienced sexual harassment. 43.7% of the faculty sample in this study reported sexual harassment. Metha & Nigg (1983) found 11.2% of the staff sample in their study had experienced sexual harassment. 23.2% of the staff sample in this study said they had experienced sexual harassment.

The type of sexual harassment behavior most often reported by respondents in this study was unwanted sexist comments. This was the most commonly reported sexual harassment behavior by all four groups of respondents. Thirty-eight percent of the undergraduate students said they had experienced unwanted sexist comments, while 26% of the graduate students, 60% of the faculty respondents and 35% of the staff respondents reported incidence of unwanted sexist comments.

When all four groups of respondents are combined, the incidence rate decreases as the level of seriousness of the harassment increases (with the exception of the most serious type of harassment, physical or sexual advances). Table VI shows the relationship of the types of sexual harassment (least to most serious) to the percentage of respondents reporting one or more incidents of harassment.

**TABLE VI**  
**Relationship Between Incidence Rate and Level of Seriousness of Sexual Harassment**

	Level of Seriousness	Incidence Rate
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<b>Least</b>	Sexist Comments	40 %
	Sexual Statements	17%
	Personal Attention	10%
	Sexual Propositions	4%
<b>Most</b>	Physical/Sexual Advances	8%

While this pattern of decreasing incidence and increasing seriousness holds true for each group of respondents, the faculty and staff groups accounted for 63% of the responses in the sexist comments category, 80% of the responses in the sexual statements category, 81% of the personal attention category, 95% of the sexual propositions category and 83% of the physical or sexual advances category of behavior. It seems that undergraduate and graduate students, while experiencing some of the more serious forms of sexual harassment, are primarily victims of unwanted sexist comments. But women in the work force at NCSU are much more likely than students to experience all forms of sexual harassment, and especially the more serious forms. The faculty and staff respondents were also more likely than students to report multiple incidents of harassment, either by the same perpetrator or by different perpetrators, although all groups of respondents reported multiple incidents at a fairly high rate. Fifty-eight percent of the undergraduates, 63% of the graduates, 71% of the faculty and 76% of the staff respondents said that more than one faculty or staff member perpetrated the sexual harassment incident. Apparently the longer a woman pursues her professional career at NCSU, the greater are her chances of becoming a victim of sexual harassment.

It is unclear why the pattern of decreasing incidence with increasing seriousness does not hold true for the most serious category of sexual harassment, physical or sexual advances. Twice the number of respondents reported physical or sexual advances (8%) than reported sexual propositions (4%). It may be that the broad definition of physical or sexual advances used in the survey was too inclusive. The definition included a wide range of behaviors, from unwanted touching, hugging and kissing, to fondling, sexual intercourse, or other sexual activity. It is not possible to determine which of those behaviors respondents had experienced. It may be, for example, that most, or all of the respondents reporting incidence of physical or sexual advances had experienced unwanted touching or hugging, and not fondling or sexual intercourse. Yet the category did not allow the respondent to identify which behavior they experienced. Had the survey separated into different categories the various behaviors, the rate of decreasing incidence with increasing seriousness of offense may have continued to hold through all of the categories of sexual harassment behavior.

An examination of answers to the free response question, where respondents were asked to describe in their own words the one incident that was most personally distressing to them, shows that all of the behaviors specified in the

definition of unwanted physical and sexual advances were experienced by respondents (except for sexual intercourse). If physical advances (unwanted touching, hugging and kissing) had been separated from sexual advances (unwanted fondling, sexual intercourse, or other sexual activity), free responses indicate that about 60% of those reporting this type of sexual harassment experienced physical advances, and 40% experienced sexual advances. We might assume then, that if the category had been separated into two categories, about 5% of the respondents (overall) would have reported incidence of physical advances and 3% (overall) would have reported sexual advances. Though that would still not clearly show a descending incidence with increasing seriousness of the categories of behavior, the difference would not be as dramatic as the data presently indicates.

In both the Fitzgerald, et al (1988) and Allen & Okawa (1987) studies, incidence of sexual harassment increased each year a woman student attended the University. Sophomores experienced more than freshmen, juniors more than sophomores, etc. Graduate students were sexually harassed at the highest rate among all students. At NCSU, the highest percentage of students reporting sexual harassment in every category are juniors, though graduate students are the second highest, except for the category of unwanted sexist statements, where seniors are slightly higher than graduate students. It may be that the trend shown on other campuses of graduate students having higher incidence of sexual harassment than other classifications of students, does not emerge here because the sample of graduate students in this study was rather small. Only 47 graduate students responses were received. But the sample (10%) was the same as that for undergraduate students, and the return rate among graduate students was almost 41% as opposed to 30% return rate among undergraduate students. It may be that by the time a student reaches her senior year she has either learned how to discourage potential perpetrators, or she has become so conditioned to the harassment that when asked, she is unable even to identify it and report it. As one woman student told us, "My parents told me I'd better get used to it, because that's the way it was in the real world."

#### Profile of Sexual Harassers

The overall percentage of respondents identifying males as perpetrators in the five categories of behavior ranged from 78% to 100%. Both males and females were identified as perpetrators in the categories of sexist comments (22% of the respondents said perpetrators of sexist comments were both male and female), and sexual statements (8% of the respondents identified the perpetrators as both male and female). But no females were identified as perpetrators in the categories of personal attention or sexual propositions, and only one person reported that physical or sexual advances had been made to her by both male and female perpetrators. At NCSU, 56% of the faculty and staff population is male (75.8% of faculty are male; 40.9% of staff are male). Sandler and associates (1981) found "male harassment of female students and employees is the most common kind of sexual harassment because in most work and academic settings, the majority of

supervisors or professors are men." Adams, Kottke, and Padgitt (1983) found that only male perpetrators were identified by all of the women students and one-half of the men students who were victims of sexual harassment. Allen and Okawa (1987) discovered that women who had experienced sexual harassment identified 99% of the perpetrators as male.

The majority of the respondents who reported they had experienced some form of sexual harassment identified the perpetrator as white. Seventy-eight percent of the perpetrators in the sexist comments category were white, as were 80% of the perpetrators of unwanted sexual statements, 83% of the perpetrators of unwanted personal attention, 72% of those stating unwanted sexual propositions, and 79% of the perpetrators of unwanted physical or sexual advances. At NCSU, 81% of the male faculty and staff population is white (68.6% of faculty males are white; 67.7% of staff males are white).

African-Americans were the next most frequently reported perpetrator of sexual harassment, but there were considerably fewer African-American perpetrators than white. African-Americans were said to be perpetrators by 4% of the victims of unwanted sexist comments, 4 1/2% of those making unwanted sexual statements, 13% of those giving unwanted personal attention, 28% of the perpetrators of unwanted sexual propositions, and 14% of those making physical or sexual advances. Staff respondents were the most likely of any group to report the perpetrator as an African-American. At NCSU, 14.9% of the male faculty and staff population is African-American (2.6% of faculty males are African-American; 31.1% of staff males are African-American).

Of the respondents who completed the part of the survey asking them to discuss one sexual harassment incident in detail, undergraduate students were the most likely to report that the perpetrator was their professor or instructor. Seventy percent of undergraduates who were victims of one or more forms of sexual harassment said the perpetrator was their professor or instructor. The next most common perpetrator of sexual harassment for undergraduate students was a teaching or research assistant (17% reported teaching or research assistant as perpetrator). Forty-six percent of the graduate students who suffered sexual harassment said that the perpetrator was their professor or instructor and 18% said it was their academic advisor. Faculty and staff respondents were more likely to report the perpetrator as an administrator, another academic professional, a university employee, or a colleague sharing their work space (78% of the faculty listed one or more of these as perpetrators, as did 72% of the staff respondents). Seven percent of the faculty said the perpetrator was their department head or dean. Nineteen percent of the staff respondents said the perpetrator was the supervisor of their university employment. Apparently those people with whom a student or professional woman spends the bulk of her on-campus time are the most likely to be perpetrators of sexual harassment.

Respondents describing one incident in detail were also asked to identify where

the incident occurred. The undergraduate students identified their classroom or lab as the place where the majority of the harassing behaviors took place. Seventy-seven percent of the undergraduates who experienced harassment listed classroom or lab. This is not surprising since undergraduates come in contact with their most common perpetrator (professor or instructor and graduate teaching or research assistant) in classrooms and labs, where the most commonly reported type of harassment for undergraduates (unwanted sexist statements) is most likely to occur.

Classroom or lab (listed by 46% of graduate student respondents) and faculty or staff member's office (also listed by 46% of graduate student respondents) were the most common sites of sexual harassment of graduate students. Since the most commonly reported perpetrators of sexual harassment by graduate students were professors or instructors and academic advisors, classroom and office would be the likely locations for their behaviors.

Thirty three percent of the faculty respondents and 61% of the staff respondents said that their place of campus employment was the most likely site of harassment. Next most likely for both faculty and staff was the perpetrator's office (30% of faculty and 15% of staff said their perpetrator's office). This is consistent with the types of harassment commonly experienced by faculty and staff respondents and with their relationship with the perpetrator (administrator, colleague sharing work place, supervisor, etc.). More than 26% of the faculty said that the harassing behaviors occurred during a road trip off-campus and/or at a meeting on-campus. Apparently the least serious types of harassment (sexist comments and sexual statements) occur in public settings (classes, labs, meetings) and the more serious types of sexual harassment (personal attention, sexual propositions and physical or sexual advances) take place behind closed doors (offices).

### Effects and Responses to Sexual Harassment

All four groups of respondents reporting incidents of sexual harassment identified the most common effect of harassment was strong emotions (such as anger, anxiety and depression). Sixty-six percent of the respondents said that they had experienced strong emotions as a result of the sexual harassment. Avoidance of the person or situations involving the person was also mentioned by 66% of the victims as a response to the harassment. All groups except the graduate students also reported experiencing negative feelings about themselves (15%) and impaired work performance (15%). Six percent of the respondents reported impaired academic performance and 4% identified physical problems, altered academic or career plans, and altered employment or career plans. Other research has found the effects of sexual harassment to include avoiding classes and work settings, physical symptoms, interference with performance in class or at work, disillusionment, lowered self-esteem, strong emotions, altered career plans, depression and inability to sleep (Adams, Kottke, & Padgitt, 1983; Allen & Okawa, 1987; Benson & Thompson, 1982; Fitzgerald et al, 1988; Markunas &

Joyce-Brady, 1987; Sandler et al, 1981).

Fifty-six percent of the victims of harassment said that they did not express their objections about the behavior to the perpetrator. Of the 44% who did express their objections to the behavior, only half said that the behavior stopped as a result of their objections. A majority of the victims of sexual harassment are apparently not translating their strong emotions into appropriately asserting themselves in response to the harassment. Avoiding the harasser or situations involving the harasser seems to be the method of choice by victims of sexual harassment. Adams, Kottke, and Padgit (1983) found that for both female and male student victims, the most common response to sexual harassment was to ignore the behavior and avoid the perpetrator.

When respondents were asked if they talked to anyone about the incident, undergraduates were most likely to say they talked with friends and family members. Graduate students listed their friends and family, but also said they talked with co-workers about the harassment. Faculty and staff also identified friends, co-workers, and family members, and faculty added they talked with other faculty as well. Overall, friends (71% of the respondents) and co-workers (35% of the respondents) were those most often chosen as confidants.

Only 29% of the faculty and 23% of the staff reported that they talked with a supervisor about the incident of sexual harassment. A few undergraduate students and faculty said they talked with a counselor, and only one person reported talking with a sexual harassment liaison, who is officially designated as a resource person within the various colleges and schools on campus. Victims of sexual harassment at NCSU are talking with people they know well about the incidents, but are largely withholding information about their experience from people who might officially take action against the perpetrator.

#### Visibility of Campus Policy and Reporting Procedures

All respondents were asked if they were aware that sexual harassment is prohibited by campus policy and by federal law. Eighty-two percent of the respondents did know that campus policy prohibits sexual harassment and 91% knew that sexual harassment is illegal under federal law. Undergraduate students were the most likely to report that they were not aware of the policy or the law, but even so, the majority of undergraduates did know of both (70% said they knew about campus policy and 87% said they knew about the federal law). However, when respondents were asked to identify any university office that is officially designated to answer their questions about sexual harassment, give them advice and take their reports, only 30% of all respondents could identify these offices as Human Resources (19%), the Affirmative Action Office (8%), the College or School Sexual Harassment Liaisons (3%) and the Office for Women Student Concerns (2%). Respondents say they know that NCSU prohibits sexual harassment, but they apparently have little knowledge of what office or person(s) are designated to help them if they become victims.

When respondents were asked to identify factors that would make them more likely to report an incident of sexual harassment to a university office or official, all four groups listed protection from retaliation as the most important factor (96% of all respondents listed protection from retaliation). Ninety-four percent said they would be more likely to report incidents if they had assurance of confidentiality. Other factors that were identified as important were having an investigation team which is independent of the department of the person involved (90%), knowing the person they report to has the authority to take some action (90%), having clear and uniform consequences for specific behaviors (90%), having certain persons designated by the campus to handle initial complaints (81%), and having the person responsible for hearing the complaint be of the same sex as the victim (74%).

Almost 30% of the respondents sampled in this survey said they had been a victim of sexual harassment in the last five years, and a large percentage of those have knowledge of campus policy and federal law. Yet they apparently have little knowledge of the campus procedures set up to protect them, and little faith that they will be protected if they report the incident. Only 5% of the respondents who reported that they were sexually harassed within the last five years at NCSU (7 out of 139 victims) made a complaint to any university official or office. Action was reportedly taken in 4 of those 7 reports, but only 2 victims said that they were satisfied with the outcome.

In an attempt to determine why victims of sexual harassment do not choose to report the incident(s), the same group of respondents were asked to identify factors that led them to their decision not to complain. The most common factor (71% of the respondents) was that the victim felt she had handled the situation adequately, even though only 7 reported the incident, and the second most common response to the incident was avoiding the perpetrator. However 61% of the victims reported that they did not report the incident because they did not think it was a problem with which the university could or would help them. Apparently victims have little faith that the institution will help them and that the risk of further exposure outweighs the potential gain in stopping the harassing behavior. These results are again quite consistent with those found by Allen & Okawa (1987).

### Conclusions

Sexual harassment is a significant problem for women students, faculty and staff at North Carolina State University. A high percentage of respondents experienced one or more forms of sexual harassment, and many of those experienced repeated incidents. Faculty and staff women experienced sexual harassment at a higher rate than women students. Sexual harassment interferes with the educational and professional climate for female students, faculty and staff at North Carolina State University.

Perpetrators of sexual harassment are almost exclusively male and most are white. They are faculty, teaching and research assistants, academic advisors, supervisors, administrators and colleagues of NCSU women. Sexual harassment is not limited to a few work units, but exists throughout the entire university.

Although women at NCSU are aware that the university has a policy prohibiting sexual harassment, a large percentage of respondents said that they did not believe the university would or could do anything to stop sexual harassment. Only a small percentage of respondents could identify any office or person designated to give information about sexual harassment reporting procedures or take reports. The most common response to sexual harassment is avoidance. Few respondents confronted the harasser or reported the incident to the proper authorities.

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