Sexual Harassment in Canadian Academe: Explorations of Power and Privilege

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ABSTRACT

Sexual harassment is one of the ways in which women in academe experience inequities. Knowledge about and understanding of sexual harassment is increasing, perhaps even dramatically. Empirical research on sexual harassment in Canada, and particularly in the universities, is an important contributor to increased understanding and the development of programs and policies. In a two-phase 1985 study of women students at one Canadian university, sexual harassment was found to be a common experience as well as one structured by power differentials. Findings from the study allow an exploration of ways in which sexual harassment has structural dimensions in academe, thus creating an environment in which women's opportunities are constrained, a situation that often remains institutionally unapparent.

RÉSUMÉ

Le harcèlement sexuel est un exemple des inégalités dont les femmes universitaires sont l'objet. Bien que l'on sache reconnaître et mieux comprendre le harcèlement sexuel, la recherche empirique sur ce sujet au Canada, particulièrement dans les universités, contribuerait à une meilleure compréhension et l'élaboration de programmes et de politiques. Une étude en deux parties menée en 1985 auprès d'étudiantes dans une université canadienne a démontré que le harcèlement sexuel est une expérience commune caractérisée par des écarts de pouvoir. Les conclusions de l'étude permettent d'examiner comment le harcèlement sexuel est enraciné dans les structures mêmes du milieu universitaire, créant ainsi un environnement qui limite les débouchés pour les femmes, une situation qui passe souvent inaperçue.

THE EXISTENCE OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT in academia is not surprising given that sexuality in our society is male-defined and male-determined. Despite the fact that sexual harassment is a subject of lively discussion from coffee rooms to boardrooms, and very recently in the United States Senate, surprisingly little is known in any systematic way about the organizational dimensions or the power dynamics of academic sexual harassment. Although definitions and conclusions regarding the frequency of sexual harassment vary, several studies have been undertaken which suggest that sexual harassment is a serious problem in many academic institutions (Backhouse, 1990; Benson & Thomson, 1982; Cammaert, 1985; Dzeich & Weiner, 1984; Somers, 1982). Others have gone as far as to sug-

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gest that the problem is rampant on university campuses (Dzeich & Weiner, 1985; Middleton, 1980: 4):

> The lecherous professor is a standard figure at most colleges, as much a part of the campus scene as ivy-covered brick or the statue of the founder (*Time*, 1980: 5).

> Dr. P., a professor at Yale Medical School, showed no surprise when I asked him about sexual harassment on campus, "the students call it fuck-or-fail," he explained, "I understand it is quite common" (Munich, 1978: 82).

However, empirical studies in Canada are still few, and those on Canadian university students are even less common. The objective of this paper is to examine the organizational structures and cultures which contribute to sexual harassment in academia.

What Is Known about Sexual Harassment?

Sexual harassment is not a new problem. Women who work have always been potential recipients of unwanted sexual attention by male bosses, employers and co-workers. Women who are students have been vulnerable to sexual harassment by male professors, administrators and teaching assistants. The behaviour is so pervasive that some might suggest that it has been seen as almost "natural," a part of "normal" male culture (Hornosty, 1986), an inevitable part of male-female relationships (Mazer & Percival, 1989), or what Gloria Steinem (1983) says we used to call "life." What is new is the growing societal recognition of sexual harassment as detrimental to individuals and society. This recognition can be attributed in part to recent feminist analyses which have revealed a collective consciousness about gender behaviours. All evidence to date, either anecdotal or systematic, indicates that sexual harassment is indeed a widespread phenomenon (MacKinnon, 1979; Cook & Cook, 1980; Meyer et al., 1981; Rossi & Weber-Burdin, 1983; Cammaert, 1985; Hemming, 1985; Reilly, Lott & Gallogly, 1986; Gruber, 1989; Malovich & Stake, 1990).

Sexual harassment may be seen as a form of sex discrimination, a subtle form which demoralizes as well as undermines women's attempts for equality and opportunity at work and at school. Sexual harassment, in this way, reinforces women's traditional and subordinate role in society. In these days where overt discrimination is either illegal or frowned upon, sexual harassment may remain one way men in positions of power can put women in their place, undermine their capacities, lower their self-esteem and even drive them out of male-dominated occupations. As George Simmel put it, "man's position of power does not only assure his relative superiority over the woman, but it assures that his standards become generalized human standards" (cited by MacKinnon, 1979: 3). In this way, women become complicit in their own victimization and blinded to its structural components.

For the most part, sexual harassment revolves around power inequalities between men and women. It is this gender differential in power which is the key to understanding the dynamics of sexual harassment (Rossi & Weber-Burdin, 1983). Kanter (1977) has shown how power and authority, among other structural factors, rather than biological or social sex differences, define the roles of men and women in the workplace. Kanter explicitly notes that "sex talk" among men serves to more sharply differentiate them from women workers and so serves as a prop to male power and authority. However, she does not extend this insight into an analysis of how sexual harassment is used to dominate and control women subordinates. Mackie (1990) compellingly reveals how humour is used to disadvantage women and other minorities.

What differentiates sexual harassment from other sexual encounters or "office romances" is the presumption that women workers can be pressured into complying with the harasser's wishes. This is reflected in one of the most commonly cited definitions of sexual harassment: "Sexual harassment is best described as unsolicited non-reciprocal male behaviour that asserts a woman's sex role over her function as a worker" (Farley, 1978: 14-15). Gloria Steinem stresses the crucial importance of the pow-

er relationship when she refers to sexual harassment as "the taming of the shrew syndrome." It is a reminder of powerlessness—a status reminder" (Backhouse & Cohen, 1978: 38). MacKinnon (1979: 1) also emphasizes the power component when she defines sexual harassment as an "unwanted imposition of sexual requirements in the context of a relationship of unequal power." MacKinnon (1979: 7) suggests that sexual harassment undercuts women's potential for social equality in two ways: "by using her employment position to coerce her sexually, while using her sexual position to coerce her economically." Thus, sexual harassment is a clear, if hidden, form of sexual and economic exploitation.[1]

As in other types of sexual offenses against women, such as rape, feminist analysis has pointed out the underlying power dynamic and de-emphasized the sexual component. There has been a concerted effort, however, to trivialize the power component by laughing it off as amorous and flattering, or broadening the definition to the point of absurdity. These attitudes serve only to excuse, rationalize and even support sexual harassment.

Two examples, both cited by the popular press about the academic world, illustrate this point well. In response to a court case by students at Yale claiming sexual harassment, Russell Baker, the widely read syndicated columnist, wrote in the *New York Times*, "Why are these young women taking the case to court? Their mothers always managed to flirt their way out" (Nelson, 1978: 8). Also, in a 1980 article entitled "Fighting Lechery on Campus," *Time* magazine states in a scoffing way, "Among the hundred or so complaints received by a government council monitoring sexual harassment on campus are several demands that professors be punished for 'sexist' teaching or jokes" (*Time*, 1980: 5). Similar jokes were made by journalists in Canada about the leering professor with goggles in the University of Toronto pool.

Sexual Harassment in Academe

A number of factors converge to make sexual harassment of university students commonplace. Women university students are youthful, often vulnerable in their senses of self-identity, economically dependent, and engaged in multiple activities in which they have close contact with men in positions of power over them. The unequal distribution of power in these roles, coupled with gender role attitudes and behaviours, encourages various forms of abuse and exploitation (Garrett-Gooding & Senter, 1987). Women of university age are often at their peak of culturally defined physical attractiveness. They are lively, open to new ideas and filled with exuberance for life. At the same time, professors, who remain largely male, and other men in positions of authority over these students, are aging. As one professor put it, "For us, the danger is a Pygmalion fantasy. Those of us who teach college students deal with young people when they are most physically beautiful, most open to new thought and experience. All the while we get older. It's quite a lure" (Munich, 1978: 84). Benson and Thomson (1982) situate these views of sexual harassment well:

> It is precisely the widespread confluence of authority relations, sexual interest and gender stratification which defines the problem of sexual harassment. There is in other words a nexus of power and prerogative often enjoyed by men with formal authority over women (Benson & Thomson, 1982: 238).

If the ratio of young women to older, largely male, professors is considered, we see that constant contact with large numbers of female students may render professors less sensitive to the vulnerability of students and to the existence of a power differential. "In Canada's universities less than a fifth of the full-time faculty are women.... since 1982 women have outnumbered men in undergraduate classrooms" (Lord, 1990: 3).

Additional factors such as the intellectual dependence and trust built up in the academic community between professors and students make students vulnerable to sexual coercion or exploitation. Many universities recognize the inherent vulnerability of students in a situation premised on trust and consider the problem of sexual harassment in academia particularly reprehensible because of this vulnerability of students (Brandenburg, 1982: 321; University of Michigan, 1980). This awareness has

provoked many universities to develop specific policies defining sexual harassment as an offense and to establish grievance procedures (Rossi & Weber-Burdin, 1983; Hornosty, 1986; Schulman, 1990).

Faculty have enormous power over students. They not only award marks and evaluate the student's intellectual capability and potential, but they also serve as gate-keepers to the professions. Their willingness to provide time, advice, letters of reference, and encouragement to students can heavily influence the student's entire future. This situation grants enormous discretionary power to professors.

Further, women who are considering entering traditionally male-dominated occupations may require extra help and support. In this world of increasingly fierce competition among students (for marks, the professors' time, acceptance into professional schools, or jobs), women students sometimes get little support from either male faculty members or their male student peers, both of whom have difficulty identifying with them as women, or may resent their presence in traditionally male-defined fields of study.

Male students express concern that women students use their sexuality to gain unfair advantage. According to some male students, the latitude permitted in faculty-student relationships works to the advantage of attractive women (Benson & Thomson, 1982: 239). In reality, the opposite is more often true. Although women are perceived as using their sexuality to their advantage, in practice they are hindered by their sexuality *and* their gender, while males, who are *not* perceived as sexual beings at work, display more sexual behaviour and tend to benefit from it (Gutek, 1987: 249; Mackie, 1990). All of these factors contribute to a situation where sexual harassment is likely to occur.

Our Interest

Our interest in this paper is two-fold: first, to assess the prevalence of sexual harassment among women students in academe; and second, to examine the structural components of sexual harassment in academia. We examine aspects of sexual harassment involving elements of power and powerlessness, both of which are highly prevalent in academia. Two theoretical models of powerlessness are examined, based on the research of Tangri, Burt and Johnson (1982). Women who are targeted for harassment, and how they respond to it, may be a reflection of sociocultural and organizational powerlessness which encompass women's lives (Gruber & Bjorn, 1988).

According to the *sociocultural model*, sexual harassment is the result of culturally legitimate power and status differentials between men and women, which work to perpetuate and maintain male dominance (Farley, 1978; MacKinnon, 1979; Tangri, Burt & Johnson, 1982; Gruber & Bjorn, 1988). This power and status imbalance characterizes as much, if not more, the structure of academia as it does the auto assembly plant researched by Gruber and Bjorn (1988). As suggested by Dzeich and Weiner (1984: 43), in referring to academics, "There are not many professionals who have such individual power and simultaneous freedom from constraint." These inequalities in societal institutions, whether educational or occupational, reflect the cultural imbalances women experience throughout society. Gruber and Bjorn (1988: 815) have argued that it is the "women who lack cultural power and status advantage" who are more often the victims of sexual harassment. These women are most often identified as young, unattached and minority (MacKinnon, 1979; Benson & Thomson, 1982). Based on this model, we hypothesize that the prevalence of sexual harassment will be higher among younger and single students.

The *organizational model*, on the other hand, argues that sexual harassment is possible because of structural power and status inequalities created by the organization's climate and hierarchy (Tangri, Burt & Johnson, 1982; Gruber & Bjorn, 1988). Universities, for example, are characterized by vertical stratification which provides a hierarchy in which professors, typically male, can exercise power over students who are more often female (the control of academic progress, for example). This

power of male professors over students creates a situation ripe for the occurrence of sexual harassment. Several studies support the view that power by men in superordinate positions over women in subordinate positions provides a situation in which sexual harassment is most likely (MacKinnon, 1979; Benson & Thomson, 1982; Gutek & Morasch, 1982; Rossi & Weber-Burdin, 1982; Hemming, 1985).

Given that female graduate students have more contact with, and potentially pose a larger threat to male faculty, we hypothesize that female graduate students will be subject to sexual harassment more than female undergraduates. We further hypothesize that, if power is defined as having control over resources, undergraduates who have less power (knowledge of recourse, system, etc.) than graduate students will respond less actively to incidents of sexual harassment.

The organizational model also takes into account male-female ratios in the authority structure of the institution, as well as the general gender composition of the organization. In the university environment, faculties which are traditionally male-dominated may have more highly visible female students who may be "token" women and, therefore, considered a threat and resented. The idea is often expressed that women are breaking into male "turf." "To many academicians, women represent at best an unwelcome intrusion and at worst a serious threat to men committed to the life of the mind" (Dzeich & Weiner, 1984: 57). There is also the hierarchical dimension in that these women may be "pioneers," hence lower in the hierarchy and more vulnerable to sexual harassment.

Here, the overlap of the sociocultural and organizational models becomes apparent. Male-dominated faculties tend to give males more power through both position and cultural stereotypes. Male students/peers then derive power from male group support. We hypothesize that female students in traditionally male-defined and male-dominated fields of study (science, engineering and math) are more likely to be subject to sexual harassment from both male superiors and peers than female students in other fields. However, given the structural characteristics of male-dominated faculties, it may be that male standards become generalized standards, so that women in male-defined faculties may more often "go along" with sexual harassment, or not see or understand its dynamics.

Dzeich and Weiner (1984: 16) point out that "students ... understand the traditional difference in sex roles and power. One of the earliest survival lessons women learn is that they must handle problems like sexual harassment. Social conditioning leads many to believe that this is the way things are." This view may be more prevalent among female students in male-dominated faculties. Hence, we hypothesize that female students in Science will not be as aware of the structural dynamics of sexual harassment as are female students in Arts.

Summary of Hypotheses

(1) The prevalence of sexual harassment will be higher among single, younger students.

(2) Graduate student women will be subject to more sexual harassment than female undergraduates.

(3) Female students in traditionally male-dominated fields of study (science, engineering and math) are more likely to be subject to sexual harassment from both male superiors and peers or student co-workers than female students in other fields of study.

(4) Undergraduates will respond less actively to incidents of sexual harassment than graduate students.

(5) Female students in Science will not be as aware of the structural dynamics of sexual harassment as female students in Arts.

Methods and Data

One of our interests, as stated earlier, is to assess the prevalence of sexual harassment among female university students. Given this goal, we

sought to survey *all* students rather than opting for a smaller sample that might be selected by some other means. Of course, this population sample, as any population survey, has its limitations; however, it also has the advantage of making possible estimates of prevalence in the population at large.

The sampling frame for our study is third-, fourth- and fifth-year women students, as well as full-time women graduate students at the University of Waterloo. Transfer students and first- and second-year students were not surveyed because of the study's focus on sexual harassment experienced while at Waterloo. In addition to being on campus for a longer period, upper-level undergraduates tend to work more closely with professors.

A random sample of eligible women students was drawn from Federation of Students' records with their local addresses. Of the 1,613 questionnaires which were mailed out in Phase I, 455 were completed and returned, a response rate of 28.2 percent. While this may seem to be a low response rate, 455 women *took* the time to share their experiences with us. We cannot be sure how many of the mailed out questionnaires reached the students, given that students, particularly students in a university with a co-operative education program combining study with work terms, tend to be a highly transient population.

Furthermore, sexual harassment is a sensitive issue, one which many women may not feel comfortable discussing or facing. We cannot be certain of the biases which may result from our response rate. It could be assumed that those who responded are more interested in the issue or have experienced sexual harassment, but we are unable to ascertain with confidence how these women differ from women who did not complete the questionnaire. Failure to return the questionnaire *cannot* be assumed to mean that these students have no sexual harassment experiences to report, nor that they are uninterested in the issue.

In developing the questionnaire, we relied heavily on similar surveys conducted at the University of Toronto, the University of Manitoba, the University of Calgary and the University of Rhode Island. This allowed comparability on most questions as well as the possibility of benefitting from the experience of previous empirical studies in academe.

The questions asked fall into six broad categories:

(1) Basic demographic information (age, marital situation, major, faculty, etc.).

(2) Experiences with four categories of sexual harassment (insult, invitation, intimidation, and assault) of at the University of Waterloo, with specific questions pertaining to the location of the harassment, the status of the harasser, and the relationship to the student. As a part of this category of questions, we also asked who the students informed of their experience(s), what their particular feelings about the experience(s) were, and what were the emotional consequences of the experience(s), if any.

(3) Knowledge of the respondent's experiences with sexual harassment.

(4) Attitudes toward sexual harassment. (We listed a set of statements about sexual harassment in an attempt to ascertain respondents' attitudes toward the problem.)

(5) Knowledge of University of Waterloo policies on sexual harassment. (We asked respondents whether or not they knew that the University had an explicit policy and if they thought it effective.)

The questionnaires were administered in two stages. Phase I was mailed out to female students only in the later part of the term, before the students were involved in mid-term exams. Phase II was administered to both male and female students in the early part of the 1985 winter term, when students who were on co-op term and off-campus during the fall term had returned,[2] and after a series of educational programs about sexual harassment on campus had occurred.

Two *sociocultural power variables*, notably age and marital status, and three *organizational power variables*, namely faculty, university status and harasser's status, are employed in this study.

All of the women who were sexually harassed were asked, "What was your response to the incident?" This was asked separately for all four forms of harassment: insult, invitation, intimidation, and assault. A content analysis of the responses revealed 23 categories of responses. Relying on Gruber and Bjorn (1988), we categorized the possible 23 responses into a three-level response variable:

(1) "passive," to include such responses as pretended not to notice, ignored the incident, walked away, did nothing, complied.

(2) "deflective," to include responses such as made a joke, laughed, discussed it with another student, avoided the person, stared, gave a dirty look.

(3) "assertive," which included asking the person to stop, reporting it, swearing, confronting the person, and trying to get revenge or justice.

Four types of sexual harassment were defined in the questionnaire, to which each woman could indicate if she had experienced this particular type of harassment. These ranged from sexual insult to sexual assault. *Sexual insult* is defined as an uninvited, sexually suggestive, obscene or offensive remark, stare or gesture. *Sexual invitation* is defined as a sexual proposition without any explicit threat or bribe by a person in a position of power or authority. *Sexual intimidation* is defined as a threat or a bribe by a person in a position of power or authority to coerce (force) sexual contact. Finally, *sexual assault* is defined as sexual contact through the use of force, threatened force or a weapon, without consent as inferred from refusal, helplessness or incapacitation.[3]

All of the women who were sexually harassed were asked, "What relationship, if any, do you, or did you, have with the person who engaged in the above defined activity?" Once again, a content analysis of the responses revealed 21 categories. These categories were then grouped into seven (no relationship, acquaintance, family/friend, peer/schoolmate, academic superior, other superior, subordinate).

Findings

Table 1 shows the background characteristics of respondents. Of the 455 female respondents, all answered the item on age. Twenty-four point four percent were between the ages of 19 and 21, 55.1 percent between 22 and 24, and 20.2 percent were 25 or over.

TABLE 1
Background Characteristics of Respondents
University of Waterloo, Ontario, 1985

CHARACTERISTICS	*PERCENT*	*N*
Age		
19 - 21 years	24.4	(110)
22 - 24 years	55.1	(248)
25 years or more	20.2	(98)
Marital Status		
Single	80.3	(359)
Non-single	19.7	(88)
University Status		
Undergraduate	74.8	(336)
Graduate	25.2	(113)
Faculty		
Arts	38.3	(174)
Environmental/Health Studies	31.2	(140)
Sciences	30.1	(95)
Co-op		
Yes	36.5	(163)
No	63.5	(283)

Four hundred and thirty-seven responded to the marital status item. A content analysis of their responses yielded six classifications (single never married, single divorced or separated, single wid-

owed, co-habitating, married, and engaged). This variable was later collapsed into two categories: single and non-single. Eighty point three percent of respondents reported being single and the rest reported being non-single.

Of the 446 respondents who indicated their university status, 37.6 percent were in third year, 34.4 percent were in fourth year, 2.9 percent were in fifth year, 1.3 percent indicated a special or other status, and 23.8 percent were graduate students. This variable was later aggregated into two levels: undergraduate and graduate. Seventy-six point two percent of respondents reported being undergraduate students, and the rest, graduate students.

Four hundred and nine students provided information on their faculty. Four percent of the women indicated that they were in the faculty of Engineering, 9.8 percent in Science, 11.6 percent in Environmental Studies, 16.3 percent in Math,[4] 19.6 percent in Human Kinetics and Leisure Studies (HKLS), and 38.3 percent were in the faculty of Arts. This variable was collapsed into three: Arts, Environmental and Health Studies, and "natural" Science. Our sample has 38.3 percent in Arts, 31.2 percent in Environmental/Health Studies and 30.1 percent in the "natural" Sciences.

Finally, 446 of the 455 respondents indicated whether they were enroled in the co-operative program offered at the University of Waterloo, a program which intersperses work terms with study terms. Thirty-six point five percent were enroled in this program.

Prevalence of Sexual Harassment

To ascertain the prevalence of sexual harassment, the women in our study were asked to respond to four questions: "Have you ever experienced sexual insult?" "Have you ever experienced sexual invitation?" "Have you ever experienced sexual intimidation?" and, "Have you ever experienced sexual assault?" Results are shown in Table 2.

Among the women who responded to these questions, 74.3 percent stated that they have experienced sexual insult, 28.7 percent report experiencing sexual invitation, 7.2 percent state that they have experienced sexual intimidation and 10.8 percent report having experienced sexual assault. This compares to a 1980-81 University of Calgary study which found that 2 percent of graduate and undergraduate women students had experienced sexual assault (Cammaert, 1981: 116).

TABLE 2
Percentage of Female University Students Reporting Experiences of Four Types of Sexual Harassment at University of Waterloo, 1985

TYPE OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT	*PERCENT*	*N*
Sexual Insult	74.3	332
Sexual Invitation	28.7	124
Sexual Intimidation	7.2	31
Sexual Assault	10.8	46

Given that these categories are not mutually exclusive, we constructed a gradient scale of sexual harassment experiences. Table 2a shows the results. This table reveals that 22 percent of the women in our study have never experienced sexual harassment. Roughly 43 percent have only experienced sexual insult. Twenty point four percent have experienced both insult and invitation; 4.6 percent have experienced sexual insult, invitation and intimidation; 10 percent have experienced all of the above forms, in addition to sexual assault.

Sociocultural Power Model

We hypothesized that younger, single students would experience sexual harassment more frequently. The results of our analyses do not provide support for this hypothesis. There is very little age variation (results not presented here) among those

TABLE 2a
Percentage of Female University Students Reporting Experiences of Sexual Harassment (Constructed Gradient Scale) University of Waterloo, 1985

SEXUAL HARASSMENT EXPERIENCE	*PERCENT*	*N*
Have never experienced sexual harassment	22.0	100
Have only ever experienced sexual insult	42.9	195
Have experienced sexual insult and invitation	20.4	93
Have experienced sexual insult, invitation and intimidation	4.6	21
Have experienced sexual insult, invitation, intimidation and assault	10.1	46
Total	100.0	455

women who have experienced sexual insult. Variation in age is evident for those women who have experienced sexual invitation and for those who have experienced sexual assault.[5] However, the results are opposite to those hypothesized. This may be a result of our age-limited sample. For the most part, the women in our study are young.

Our analysis finds that women who are single, married, or co-habitating are equally likely to experience sexual harassment. The one exception appears to be those women who have experienced sexual assault. Single women experience sexual assault less frequently than women who are not single. The most striking discovery here is that no clear pattern emerges—it is not necessarily younger or single women who are subject to harassment. In essence, the most significant determining factor for women in experiencing sexual harassment is gender —being a woman.

Cross-tabulations for those women who have experienced sexual invitation and sexual assault result in cell sizes too small for reliable conclusions. For this reason, the analysis of the organizational power model only includes experiences of sexual insult and sexual invitation.

Organizational Power Model

Our intent here is not only to examine the prevalence of sexual harassment in academia, but also to examine the power dynamics. The remainder of the analysis will address this.

Very little variation in experience of sexual harassment across university status emerges, as shown in Table 3. Undergraduate and graduate women experience similar levels of sexual harassment. However, undergraduate women tend to experience sexual insult more than graduate women (76.1%[6] compared to 70.8%, respectively). These results again do not support our hypothesis.

Table 3 further reveals that those women in traditionally male-dominated faculties report experiencing sexual harassment somewhat less frequently than women enroled in Arts, Environmental or Health Studies. This is true for both sexual insult and sexual invitation. For example, 70.7 percent of women in the "natural" Sciences report having experienced sexual insult. This compares to 72.7 percent of women enroled in Environmental/Health Studies and 78.4 percent of women in Arts. Twenty-two point seven percent of women in Science report having experienced sexual invitation, compared to roughly 30 percent of women in Environmental/Health Studies and Arts.

In addition to questions about their experiences of sexual harassment, the women in our study were also asked to identify their relationship with the harasser. Since a central focus of our research is the power dynamics of sexual harassment in academia, we focus on the power relationships most evi-

TABLE 3
Organizational Power Variables by Type and Frequency of Sexual Harassment Incidents University of Waterloo, 1985

ORGANIZATIONAL POWER VARIABLES	*SEXUAL INSULT*		*SEXUAL INVITATION*	
	%	*N*	*%*	*N*
TOTAL	74.3	332	28.7	124
University Status				
Undergraduate	76.1	243	27.3	58
Graduate	70.8	75	28.7	29
Faculty				
Arts	78.4	134	31.0	52
Environmental/Health Studies	72.7	101	31.3	42
Sciences	70.7	94	22.7	29
Harasser's Status				
Peer/Schoolmate	11.8	38	12.2	15
Academic Superior	15.2	49	37.4	46

TABLE 4
Organizational Power Variables by Type and Frequency of Sexual Harassment Incidents for Women Reporting Incident Occurring While Attending University of Waterloo Only University of Waterloo, 1985

ORGANIZATIONAL POWER VARIABLES	*SEXUAL INSULT*		*SEXUAL INVITATION*	
	%	*N*	*%*	*N*
TOTAL	60.4	197	48.8	59
University Status				
Undergraduate	62.9	156	47.3	112
Graduate	53.3	40	47.8	32
Faculty				
Arts	60.0	81	51.2	65
Environmental/Health Studies	62.6	62	45.1	41
Sciences	60.4	55	45.5	40
Harasser's Status				
Peer/Schoolmate	9.5	30	12.1	7
Academic Superior	17.5	55	25.9	15

dent in a university setting. As shown in Table 3, academic superiors are more frequently the harassers than are student peers.

Along with questions about the type of sexual harassment, we also asked if these experiences occurred while they were attending the University of Waterloo and if they occurred on campus. Table 4 focuses on the experiences of women while attending the University of Waterloo. Of those women reporting sexual insult, 60.4 percent state that this occurred while at the University of Waterloo. Of the 121 women who report sexual invitation, 48.8 percent state that this occurred while they were attending the University.

Table 4 reveals that graduate students do not experience sexual harassment more frequently than undergraduates. As in other studies, academic superiors are more likely to harass students than other students are likely to do so.

Table 5 delves more deeply into experiences of sexual harassment at the University of Waterloo. Women who experienced sexual harassment were asked whether this occurred on campus. Approximately 47 percent of women who have experienced sexual insult and 37 percent of women who have experienced sexual invitation state that it occurred on campus. The pattern which emerges in terms of the organizational power model is similar to that reported earlier.

TABLE 5
Organizational Power Variables by Type and Frequency of Sexual Harassment Incident for Women Reporting Incident Occurring on University Campus Only
University of Waterloo, 1985

ORGANIZATIONAL POWER VARIABLES	*SEXUAL INSULT*		*SEXUAL INVITATION*	
	%	*N*	*%*	*N*
TOTAL	47.2	145	37.3	41
University Status				
Undergraduate	50.6	44	36.3	29
Graduate	45.2	14	38.5	10
Faculty				
Arts	50.0	25	35.6	16
Environmental/Health Studies	51.2	21	40.5	15
Sciences	48.3	14	38.5	10
Harasser's Status				
Peer/Schoolmate	9.2	13	12.2	5
Academic Superior	18.4	26	29.3	12

Table 6 compares the students' relationship with the perpetrator for incidents of sexual insult. For women who have experienced sexual insult, 15.5 percent report that the insult came from an academic superior, compared to 11.7 percent who report that it came from a peer. Of the women who have experienced sexual invitation, 38.8 percent report that the perpetrator was an academic superior and 12.9 percent state that the harasser was a peer, as shown in Table 7. Sexual harassment is most frequently perpetrated by an academic superior.

These findings are similar to those of other studies. Wilson and Kraus (1981) report that over 20 percent of women students indicate having been verbally harassed by an academic superior. Benson and Thomson (1982) report that 20 percent of women in their study report having been harassed by a male instructor. Similarly, Reilly et al. (1986) report that over 24 percent of women in their study have experienced sexual insult from male faculty, and a further 15 percent from male graduate assistants.

Although students in different faculties are equally likely to have experienced sexual insult (Table 3), students in Science are more likely to experience sexual insult from both academic superiors and peers. Thus, the hypothesis that women

TABLE 6
Experiences of Sexual Insult by Harasser's Status
University of Waterloo, 1985

CHARACTERISTICS	PEER/ SCHOOLMATE		ACADEMIC SUPERIOR	
	%	N	%	N
TOTAL	11.7	37	15.5	49
University Status				
Undergraduate	11.2	27	13.6	33
Graduate	12.5	9	22.2	16
Faculty				
Arts	7.6	10	19.8	26
Environmental/Health Studies	10.9	10	8.7	8
Sciences	17.6	16	16.5	15
Incident Occurred While attending U. of Waterloo	9.5	18	17.5	33
Incident Occurred On University Campus	9.2	13	18.4	26

TABLE 7
Experiences of Sexual Invitation by Harasser's Status
University of Waterloo, 1985

CHARACTERISTICS	PEER/ SCHOOLMATE		ACADEMIC SUPERIOR	
	%	N	%	N
TOTAL	12.9	15	38.8	45
University Status				
Undergraduate	12.2	10	32.9	27
Graduate	12.9	4	54.8	17
Faculty				
Arts	16.0	8	40.0	20
Environmental/Health Studies	10.8	4	32.4	12
Sciences	11.1	3	44.4	12
Incident Occurred While Attending U. of Waterloo	12.1	7	25.9	15
Incident Occurred On University Campus	12.2	5	29.3	12

in male-dominated fields of study experience sexual harassment more frequently is supported by the results in Table 6. Although more women in Arts report sexual insults from an academic superior than women in Science, the difference is minimal. What is noteworthy is that 17.6 percent of women in Science experience sexual insult from an academic peer and 16.5 percent from an academic superior, compared to 7.6 percent and 19.8 percent respectively for women in Arts. When we examine incidents of sexual invitation, in Table 7, academic superiors are much more often the perpetrators, in both Arts and Science.[7]

Tables 8 and 9 compare the responses about incidents of sexual insult and incidents of sexual invitation. In general, women respond in a deflective manner to sexual insults (Table 8) and assertively to incidents of sexual invitation (Table 9). This is particularly apparent for graduate students. Undergraduate women more often respond deflectively in both instances, thus supporting our hypothesis that undergraduates tend to respond less actively to incidents of sexual harassment. Our results suggest that women who have less "seniority" or status are less likely to respond actively to incidents of sexual harassment. This was also found in the study of auto-workers by Gruber and Bjorn (1988). In Table 9, little difference is found in responses to incidents of sexual harassment across faculties. What is interesting in Table 9 is the high proportion of women who responded assertively to incidents of sexual invitation perpetrated by an academic superior.

Attitudes which Reflect the Power Dimension of Sexual Harassment

Table 10 presents tabulations of five attitude statements about sexual harassment which reflect a power dynamic. The higher the score, the greater the disagreement with the statement.[8]

In general the mean scores displayed in Table 10 suggest that the women in our study neither agree nor disagree with the statements, "A person in a position of power is more likely to sexually harass a woman than is a co-worker" and, "Women in positions of power are just as likely as men in such positions to sexually bother people." However, graduate students are more likely than undergraduates to disagree with the statement that "Women in positions of power are just as likely as men to sexually harass" (3.54 compared to 3.19, respectively).

Acts of sexual harassment were not regarded as a means of "keeping women in their place." In general the women students tend to disagree with this view (mean scores range from 3.71 to 4.32). Women who have experienced more varied incidents of sexual harassment tend to disagree less. However, the between-group difference is only significant for the attitude statement, "Sexual harassment is society's way of keeping women in their place" ($p < .03$).

Graduate students are less likely than undergraduates to disagree with the statements, "Sexual harassment is society's way of keeping women in their place" and, "Uninvited sexual attention by men to women students or employees helps to keep women in their place." For both these statements the relationships are significant ($p < .001$).

We further note that there are no significant differences across faculties. We hypothesized that women in Arts might be more sensitive to the power issues involved in sexual harassment, but the data do not support this. Mean scores range from 3.96 to 4.24.

Women who have and have not experienced sexual harassment tend to agree that sexual harassment encompasses a power dimension. Women who have experienced sexual insult, invitation and intimidation are more likely to agree with the statement, "Those who sexually bother others are usually seeking power over those they bother" (mean score of 2.28). Graduate students show greater agreement with this statement (2.39 compared to 2.59, respectively, $p < .05$).

Although the differences apparent in Table 10 are not large, the patterns across the attitude variables suggest that graduate women and women in Arts are more sensitive to power issues involved in sexual harassment.

TABLE 8
Organizational Power Variables by Experience of Sexual Insult, Frequency and Response to Incident
University of Waterloo, 1985

ORGANIZATIONAL POWER VARIABLES	RESPONSE TO INCIDENT			
	Passive	Deflec-tive	Asser-tive	N
TOTAL	30.9	46.2	22.9	314
University Status				
Undergraduate	29.7	58.1	22.2	239
Graduate	34.3	38.6	27.1	70
Faculty				
Arts	26.9	50.8	22.3	130
Environmental/Health Studies	33.7	38.0	28.3	89
Sciences	34.8	46.1	19.1	92
Harasser's Status				
Peer/Schoolmate	36.1	41.7	22.2	36
Academic Superior	26.5	46.9	26.5	49

TABLE 9
Organizational Power Variables by Experience of Sexual Invitation, Frequency and Response to Incident
University of Waterloo, 1985

ORGANIZATIONAL POWER VARIABLES	RESPONSE TO INCIDENT			
	Passive	Deflec-tive	Asser-tive	N
TOTAL	16.4	38.3	44.8	116
University Status				
Undergraduate	18.8	43.5	37.6	85
Graduate	10.7	28.6	60.7	28
Faculty				
Arts	10.4	45.8	43.8	48
Environmental/Health Studies	15.0	37.5	47.5	40
Sciences	29.6	45.8	40.7	27
Harasser's Status				
Peer/Schoolmate	0.0	57.1	42.9	14
Academic Superior	26.2	28.6	45.2	42

TABLE 10
Attitudes Toward Sexual Harassment as Power Dynamic
By Sexual Harassment Experience, University Status and Faculty

	MEAN SCORES AND (N)				
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Sexual Harassment Experience					
None	2.92 (98)	3.30 (98)	4.15 (98)	4.23 (98)	2.46 (98)
Insult and Invitation	3.02 (91)	3.27 (91)	4.32 (91)	4.23 (91)	2.61 (91)
Insult, Invitation, Intidimation and Assault	2.69 (46)	3.32 (46)	+3.76 (46)	3.88 (46)	2.60 (46)
University Status					
Undergraduate	2.94 (336)	3.19 (336)	4.20 (335)	4.29 (327)	2.59 (330)
Graduate	3.00 (107)	++3.54 (107)	**3.78 (104)	++3.80 (103)	*2.39 (103)
Faculty					
Arts	2.85 (172)	3.23 (172)	3.96 (171)	4.13 (166)	3.96 (171)
Environmental/Health Studies	3.10 (140)	3.25 (140)	4.21 (139)	4.24 (135)	4.21 (139)
Science	2.92 (135)	3.33 (135)	4.20 (133)	4.19 (133)	4.20 (133)

*Significance Levels: + = .03; * = .05; ** = .001; ++ = .000*
Respondents answered on a 5-point scale—"strongly agree" = 1; "strongly disagree" = 5.

Attitude Statements

1. *A person in a position of power is more likely to sexually harass a woman than a co-worker.*
2. *Women in positions of power are just as likely as men in such positions to sexually bother people.*
3. *Sexual harassment is society's way of keeping women in their place.*
4. *Uninvited sexual attention by men to women students or employees helps to keep women in their place.*
5. *Those who sexually bother others are usually seeking power over those they bother.*

Discussion and Conclusion

The picture that emerges from our study of female university students is that sexual harassment in Canadian academia is prevalent and widespread. The problem of sexual insult appears to be an almost universal experience for women students. If these reports are based on actual incidents and are accurately remembered and reported, there would seem to be a sizeable proportion of faculty, staff, and those who have contact with students as academic superiors, who are sexual harassers of some type.

In examining sociocultural power variables, our intent was to examine whether men target women with less power for sexual harassment. This does not appear to be the case. The sociocultural variables of age and marital status do not emerge as factors. Our results suggest that gender plays the key role.

We argued that women in male-dominated faculties would be subject to sexual harassment more commonly. The relationship between harassment and gender heterogeneity was the opposite of what we expected. Harassment was reported to be *more* frequent in Arts. At the same time, when women in Science are subject to sexual harassment, they respond less actively. A probable explanation is that women in more male-dominant faculties may be less likely to identify or report sexual harassment because they become part of the male-dominated culture and adopt male-dominant attitudes which excuse and rationalize sexual harassment. This is not to suggest, in any way, that women are at fault for an environment of sexual harassment; there is no evidence to suggest that, by acting assertively, the harassment would cease. It could very well be that, because of their low visibility and low status, women acting assertively as individuals in male-dominant environments might actually increase or create new problems.

For the most part, women students in 1985 were not aware or not sensitized to sexual harassment as a way for men to undermine women. This might well have changed since. Our findings regarding attitudes toward sexual harassment as a power dynamic suggest that the number of years in university and being in a more homogeneous faculty work to sensitize women to sexual harassment as power. However, past experiences of sexual harassment do not necessarily sensitize women to the power dimension of sexual harassment.

Our findings suggest that there was minimal awareness by women university students of the power dynamics involved in sexual harassment. This lack of awareness occurred despite the fact that the majority of women in our study had experienced some type of sexual harassment, which they themselves saw as harassment. This leads us to suggest that future research might well consider incorporating specific elements of organizational power dynamics into studies of sexual harassment.

Students need to be informed of the power dynamics operating in academia, while at the same time they need to be informed that sexual harassment as a result of these power dynamics does not need to be endured, nor does it need to occur. Sexual harassment does not have to be, nor should it be an inevitable part of a woman's post-secondary education (Reilly et al., 1986). With most Canadian universities now having in place sexual harassment policies, some with sexual harassment officers, it might well be that the future will be different for women university students.

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NOTES

1. Canadian courts have recognized that sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination (British Columbia, 1980).
2. Only the results of Phase I are analyzed in this paper.
3. Adopted from Lott, B., Reilly, M.E., & Dale R. Howard (1982).
4. Math is a separate faculty at the University of Waterloo.
5. Analyses of experiences of sexual intimidation result in cell sizes too small for reliable estimates.
6. While direct comparisons are not possible, a study conducted at the University of Calgary in 1980–81 found that 78 percent of undergraduate women students had experienced sexual insults (Cammaert, 1981).
7. Caution should be exercised in interpreting these results due to small cell sizes.
8. Respondents answered a five-point scale ranging from "strongly agree" (1) to "strongly disagree" (5).

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