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Sexual Harassment on Campus in Hong Kong

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Power and Dignity

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Abstract

This is a pioneering study of sexual harassment on a local university campus. It comprises two stages: panel discussions among single-sex undergraduate and post-graduate student groups, followed by a questionnaire survey. The study aims at drawing out the perceptions of sexual harassment held by students, their experience of the problem on campus, their reactions and responses to it, and their expectations of institutional intervention into the problem. In this study, we discover that a significant gender gap exists in the perception and experience of sexual harassment. This has arisen from the fact that sexual harassment of one form or other is a common experience among women, but not so among men. Furthermore, sexual harassment is found to be closely related to the existing structure of gender relationships. In this structure, two prominent features stand out, namely, power and dignity. Power is not only present in the institutional context, whereby a victim (student) is confronted by someone who is her or his superior (teacher). It also exists in a more subtle way, in the predominance of a male-centred culture, in which jokes about a woman's body, for example, is considered a common and harmless pastime. Male power is also crystallised in the commonly-accepted 'predator-prey' relationship in cross-gender courtship, so much so that for many of our respondents, 'courtship advances' (on the part of men) constitutes a grey area in the definition of sexual harassment. In same-sex harassment among men, power is again a major element, as such behaviour seems to contribute to the establishment of a pecking order. As a corollary, victims or potential victims see the harm as residing in the deprivation of one's dignity, both on an individual level and on behalf of one's gender group (for women). Cross-cultural comparisons are also made in this analysis, wherever possible.

Introduction

This is the first comprehensive study of sexual harassment on university campus in Hong Kong. The idea first emerged during informal discussions among members of the Gender Research

Programme of The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK).¹ A common observation was that, unlike universities in many other countries, there was no University policy (in CUHK as in other local universities and colleges) with regard to sexual harassment, and educational programmes for students and staff on the issue were virtually non-existent. Committee members therefore thought it opportune to call attention to the issue, both on the part of the administration, and also of faculty and students. However, because of the dearth of systematic studies in this area in the local context,² it was decided that the first logical step was to conduct a comprehensive and in-depth study of the issue.

From the very beginning, then, our study was initiated with a practical (some might even call polemical) objective in mind, namely, to put sexual harassment on the agenda. The aim, however, was to gain first-hand knowledge about the perceptions, nature and extent of sexual harassment on the campus. Meanwhile, it is clear that our study would inevitably result in raising awareness among students and faculty on the issue, to a greater or lesser extent.

Research Questions

Most of the discussions and studies of sexual harassment in the workplace in English-speaking societies have appeared only in the eighties, indicating that, even within the field of feminist studies, this has only recently been put on the agenda.³ As for Chinese societies, such studies are next to non-existent.⁴ Reviewing these limited studies, we realise that there are several questions which beg to be answered.

The first line of inquiry concerns the definition of sexual harassment. Notwithstanding the difficulties of legal prosecution, it seems that the more recognised sexual offenses such as rape and indecent assault have well-defined boundaries, the most clear-cut of all being the use of physical violence. While sexual harassment could be a deeply painful experience for victims, its status as a

'legitimate' problem is nevertheless questioned on the basis that very often it does not involve physical violence or even contact. Based on research findings, scholars such as MacKinnon and Brownmiller proposed a 'dominance' approach, namely, that sexual harassment involves the unwanted imposition of sexual requirements in the context of a relationship of unequal power.⁵ Power differentiation, such as that between the male executive and his female secretary, or between the male professor and his female student, is the usual institutional context in which sexual harassment takes place. This is owing to the fact that women as a group occupy largely inferior job positions and roles. Sexual harassment is then basically a result of the interactive effect of gender inequality, on the one hand, and power differentiation in the institutional context, on the other. Following this line of argument, MacKinnon defines sexual harassment as a form of sex discrimination, which, incidentally, is also precisely the legal definition adopted in the United States.⁶

Sexual harassment as conceptualised in the foregoing approach therefore involves an abuse of power by members of one gender (usually male) over those of the other (usually female). Owing to the dearth of local findings, we think it advisable to remain open-minded as to the nature and institutional context in which sexual harassment might take place in Hong Kong and, more specifically, on local university campuses. The questions we ask with regard to this aspect therefore include: the definitions held by our respondents concerning sexual harassment, the nature of such offenses as perceived and experienced by them and, lastly, whether or not they involve mostly and/or exclusively male harassers and female victims.

A second question of our study is the more descriptive one of establishing the extent of sexual harassment. In Dolecheck's study among young college-educated employees in Hong Kong in 1983, two-thirds of his respondents (male and female, N=169) acknowledged that sexual harassment occurred occasionally in their organisation, while 50% of the women (N=39) reported having encountered sexual harassment at work during the previous

three-year period.⁷ In a questionnaire survey conducted by the Coalition Against Sexual Abuse in 1992, it was found that as much as 85.9% (N=455) of their woman respondents reported having experienced some form of sexual harassment in the two years prior to the survey.⁸ Meanwhile, the percentage of women reporting such experience in the US varies from one study to another, but generally, it is quite high, ranging from around 40% to 70%, with one study of self-selected respondents even reporting 90%.⁹ One of our research questions therefore is to ask the extent to which sexual harassment exists on the local university campus.

A third question concerns the difference of perception and experience of sexual harassment between the two genders. Gutek, for example, reported wide gender discrepancy in this regard.¹⁰ It would be important to gauge this difference in the local context. The significance of gender difference in this respect extends beyond mere academic interest. It has repercussions for the very real political and legal issue of whether or not a woman's or a man's perspective should prevail in the handling of such cases, given that a woman's perspective may differ substantially from a man's owing to widely discrepant life experiences.¹¹

Apart from perceptions and experience, we investigate the likely responses of victims of sexual harassment. Western studies have found the reluctance to acknowledge the problem as well as feelings of guilt and helplessness on the part of victims.¹² It is expected that these responses would also be common in the Chinese context.

Lastly, our study aims at asking what could be done by the institution regarding this issue. In this context, we set out to examine our respondents' expectations of institutional initiative and response to sexual harassment. These expectations would be a decisive factor behind the efficacy of any institutional changes undertaken, or whether and how these should be devised in the first place.

It has often been remarked that existing gender studies and feminist perspectives manifest an overtly Anglo-Saxon bias, having been generated mostly among white, middle-class women

and, less often, men in such societies. While focusing on the topic of sexual harassment, this present study nevertheless hopes to contribute more generally to the discussion concerning the cultural specificities of gender structure and inequality.

Method and Stages of Study

As a pioneering local study, this study was designed so that prior assumptions about the definition, nature and scope of sexual harassment were kept to a minimum and that ample room was left for the emergence of observations and insights. For practical reasons, this study of sexual harassment on campus was undertaken at The Chinese University of Hong Kong, where we all worked. We believe that the findings could be generalised to other tertiary institutions in Hong Kong. Nevertheless, we hope that similar studies could be replicated in other local universities and colleges, if possible. Again for reasons of feasibility, we limited our study to undergraduate and postgraduate students, though we realise that it could be extended to the rather sizable teaching and administrative staff that comprise the university body.

The first of the two stages of our study was a series of panel discussions intended to help us explore hitherto unknown areas related to sexual harassment: how local students perceive and experience the problem, what forms sexual harassment take in the local situation, and what the various responses to sexual harassment are. These panel discussions were useful in helping us generate useful parameters and indicators for the second stage of our study, the questionnaire survey.

There were four sessions of panel discussions: an undergraduate group and a postgraduate group for female and male students respectively. These took place in a counselling room on campus on four separate days within the same week in January 1992, and the number within each group ranged from a minimum of three to a maximum of seven. The moderator for the discussion in each case was a faculty member of the same sex as the group

members. That the discussions were held not long after the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas case in the US had been widely reported in the local media meant that the awareness of the participants regarding sexual harassment had been raised. Indeed, this case was brought up several times during the discussions. Transcripts were written on the basis of tape recordings, supplemented by notes taken by the principal researcher, who observed from behind a one-way mirror throughout all four sessions.

The second stage of the study, undertaken in the month of April 1992, was a questionnaire survey of the postgraduate and undergraduate population of the University. In order to ensure broad coverage and to economize on the cost of administration at the same time, questionnaires were distributed to undergraduates through the regular assemblies of constituent Colleges, undergraduate dormitories of one College whose last assembly of the year we missed, and the Department of Nursing (which has predominantly part-time students). Graduate respondents were also recruited through the individual departments and the postgraduate dormitory. The size and distribution of the respondents relative to the whole student population is shown in Table 1. It is seen here that our sample constituted a little more than 10% and around 7% of the undergraduate and postgraduate populations, respectively. The gender balance among undergraduates was quite even, while that among postgraduates was tilted in favour of men (60.7% vs 39.3%). This approximates very closely the actual gender balance among the undergraduate and postgraduate populations.

Table 1 Background Information of Respondents

	Male	Female	Total
Undergraduate			
Total population	3,612 (49.7%)	3,655 (50.3%)	7,267 (100%)
Respondents	307 (40.1%)	458 (59.9%)	765 (100%)
% respondents out of total population	8.5%	12.5%	10.5%
Postgraduate			
Total population	752 (62.4%)	453 (37.6%)	1,205 (100%)
Respondents	51 (60.7%)	33 (39.3%)	84 (100%)
% respondents out of total population	6.8%	7.3%	7.0%

Note: Student population figures are those at 1 April, 1992.

The questionnaire consisted of seven main sections: (1) simple bio-data; (2) a scale regarding attitude towards gender equality;¹³ (3) a scale regarding attitude towards sexual harassment;¹⁴ (4) definition of sexual harassment; (5) awareness and/or experience (as victims) of certain types of behaviour, initiated by faculty members, which might constitute sexual harassment, and one's responses; (6) awareness and/or experience (as victims) of certain types of behaviour, initiated by fellow students, which might constitute sexual harassment, and one's responses; (7) expectations of response from the University administration; and (8) responses towards the questionnaire itself.

The questionnaire was basically structured as close-ended questions. Room was left for qualitative answers regarding respondents' feelings towards instances of sexual harassment as well as to the questionnaire itself. This degree of open-endedness was deemed important because of the in-depth nature and wide scope of responses we anticipated.¹⁵

In the following sections, we shall highlight the major findings of the study, based on our observations in the panel discus-

sions as well as the results of the questionnaire survey. Although the panel discussions were designed as a preparatory stage in the study, it yielded unique insights which could not have been gleaned from the survey, mainly because of their in-depth nature and the ample room allowed for elaboration on the part of the panellists. On the other hand, the group dynamics generated during the discussions meant that it was inevitable that some arguments or perspectives would prevail, while others might be suppressed. Meanwhile, the contribution of the questionnaire survey lies in the broad frame of its sample, coverage of contents, as well as the anonymity guaranteed to our respondents, all of which gave rise to a wider spectrum of observations and opinions.

Findings and Analysis

Definitions and Perceptions of Sexual Harassment

Legitimacy of the Problem

In the questionnaire survey, we set out to test the extent to which our respondents saw sexual harassment as a real problem by asking them to rate ten related statements on a 5-point scale, ranging from strong disagreement (1) to strong agreement (5). The respective means for men and women students are shown in Table 2.

From Table 2, it is clear that the perceptions of men and women differed consistently, with women tending to see sexual harassment more as a real problem. While the two gender groups disagreed most on the point about sexual harassment being exaggerated by women (women and women liberation activists), they nevertheless were much closer in opinion as regards the silence of victims (no. 8) and the clear distinction between sexual harassment and sexual behaviour (no. 9).

Table 2 Perceptions of Sexual Harassment: means of ratings by sex of respondents

	Male	Female
1. There is a chance for both men and women to be sexually harassed, but women often exaggerate the problem.	3.1	2.3
2. So-called 'sexual harassment' is nothing more than over-reaction on the part of 'victims' to male-female relationships.	2.1	1.6
3. For a person who could handle personal relationships well, the problem of so-called 'sexual harassment' would never occur.	2.0	1.7
4. The underlying source of sexual harassment is the different standards of behaviour in male-female relationships employed by the two genders.	3.2	2.7
5. So-called 'sexual harassment' is a problem invented by woman liberation activists.	2.1	1.5
6. Much of what is called 'sexual harassment' is only courtship behaviour between the two sexes.	2.1	1.8
7. Much of what is called 'sexual harassment' is nothing but manifestations of men's admiration for women.	1.9	1.4
8. The problem of sexual harassment on campus seems non-existent because most victims suffer it silently and do not make complaints.	3.1	3.2
9. Sexual harassment can be easily distinguished from courtship behaviour.	3.7	3.7
10. The occurrence of sexual harassment cannot be blamed on sexy apparel or looks on the part of women.	2.6	3.0

Note: The ratings are made on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

In order to facilitate comparison, we compare our findings with those of various studies in the past, both local and overseas, concerning the perceptions of sexual harassment.

From Table 3, one can see that where the figures are available, the women respondents at Wisconsin-Madison were the least hes-

Table 3 Cross-cultural Comparison of Perceptions of Sexual Harassment: means of ratings on related statements

	CUHK		W-M*		Hong Kong Employees#		US Employees#	
	Male	Female	Female	Male	Male and Female	Male and Female	Male and Female	
1. So-called 'sexual harassment' is nothing more than over-reaction on the part of 'victims' to male-female relationships.	2.1	1.6	1.4	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	
2. For a person who could handle personal relationships well, the problem of so-called 'sexual harassment' would never occur.	2.0	1.7	n.a.	3.6	3.4			
3. The problem of sexual harassment seems to be non-existent because most victims suffer it silently and do not make complaints.	3.1	3.2	4.2	3.2	3.7			
4. The occurrence of sexual harassment cannot be blamed on sexy apparel or looks on the part of women.	2.6	3.0	4.5	2.6	3.6			

Note: The ratings are made on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

* Figures in this column are calculated from the Report on the 1987 Sexual Harassment Survey conducted among four hundred women students and house staff of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, compiled by the Commission on Women's Issues, Center for Health Sciences, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1988.

Figures in these last two columns are calculated from the percentages given in Dolecheck (1984). The respondents in both Hong Kong and the US studies reported here were young college-educated employees with business degrees.

itant in identifying sexual harassment as a real problem, and to discount the blame laid on women victims. Meanwhile, young employees with business degrees in both Hong Kong and the US tended more than our students to emphasise the importance of good handling of personal relationships in avoiding sexual harassment. Except for this one point, however, our students were not very different from young Hong Kong employees. Both groups were significantly less ready than young American employees to see sexual harassment as a problem in its own right.

Apart from gender difference in the general perception of sexual harassment, we also did a simple correlation exercise between attitude towards gender equality, on the one hand, and readiness to see sexual harassment as a real problem, on the other. We believe that respondents' readiness to acknowledge sexual harassment as a problem would be affected, among other things, by their attitude towards gender equality. This latter variable we attempted to measure by asking them to rate the extent to which they agreed to each of twenty-two statements related to perceptions of gender equality. These statements are, in turn, drawn up on four dimensions of gender relations, namely, behavioural norms, socio-political status, family norms, and courtship. The results of the correlation are shown in Table 4.

Table 4 Correlation Coefficients between Attitudes towards Gender Equality (AGE) and Legitimacy of Sexual Harassment

Four dimensions of AGE	Legitimacy	
	Male	Female
1. Behavioural norms	0.22	0.31
2. Socio-political status	0.20	0.15
3. Family norms	0.26	0.21
4. Courtship norms	—	—

Note: Only those coefficients significant at .001 level are listed.

Table 5 Mean Ratings of Respondents in the AGE Dimensions

AGE dimensions	Mean ratings	
	Male	Female
A. Behavioural norms		
1. Swearing and obscenities are more repulsive in the speech of a woman than of a man.	4.2	3.9
2. Telling dirty jokes should be mostly a masculine prerogative.	2.5	2.2
3. Intoxication among women is harder to accept than intoxication among men.	3.3	2.9
4. A woman should not expect to go to exactly the same places or to have quite the same freedom of action as a man.	2.6	2.1
5. It is ridiculous for a woman to drive an articulated truck and for a man to knit.	2.2	2.0
6. The modern girl is entitled to the same freedom from regulation and control that is given to the modern boy.	4.0	4.4
B. Socio-political status		
1. Women should take increasing responsibility for leadership in solving the intellectual and social problems of the day.	3.2	3.5
2. There should be a strict merit system in job appointment and promotion without regard to sex.	4.3	4.7
3. Women should assume their rightful place in business and all the professions along with men.	3.4	3.9
4. Economic and social freedom is worth far more to women than acceptance of the ideal of femininity which has been set up by men.	3.3	3.9
5. Women should be given equal opportunity with men for apprenticeship in various trades.	4.1	4.6
6. Sons in a family should be given more encouragement to go to college than daughters.	1.7	1.3
7. The intellectual leadership of a community should be largely in the hands of men.	2.3	1.7

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Table 5 (Continued)

8. On the average, women should be regarded as less capable of contributing to economic production than are men.	2.9	2.3
9. There are many jobs in which men should be given preference over women in being hired or promoted.	2.6	1.8
C. Family norms		
1. Both husband and wife should be allowed the same grounds for divorce.	4.4	4.7
2. Under modern economic conditions with women being active outside the home, men should share in household tasks such as washing dishes and doing the laundry.	3.6	4.2
3. It is insulting to women to have the 'obey' clause remain in the marriage service.	3.0	3.3
4. The husband should not be favoured by law over the wife in the disposal of family property or income.	3.4	4.1
5. In general, the father should have greater authority than the mother in the bringing up of children.	2.8	2.3
6. Women should worry less about their rights and more about becoming good wives and mothers.	2.9	2.2
7. Women should be concerned with their duties of childbearing and house tending rather than with desires for professionals and business careers.	2.7	2.0
D. Courtship norms		
1. A woman should be as free as a man to propose marriage.	4.2	3.4
2. Women earning as much as their dates should bear equally the expenses when they go out together.	3.6	3.2
3. Women should be encouraged not to become sexually intimate with anyone before marriage, even their fiancés.	3.3	3.7

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Note: The possible scores for each item range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

From Table 4, one could see that attitude towards gender equality in three out of four dimensions (behavioural norms, socio-economic status and family norms) was significantly correlated with readiness to regard sexual harassment as a problem, for both men and women groups. In other words, the more one identified with gender equality, the more likely one was to acknowledge sexual harassment as a problem. The one dimension in which no such correlation existed is that concerning norms on courtship. For both men and women, attitudes within this dimension seem to be totally independent of those pertaining to the other dimensions. This discrepancy is echoed in a related observation, namely, that while our female respondents were consistently more supportive than male respondents of gender equality on all other dimensions, they were less so in precisely this dimension of courtship norms (see Table 5). Apparently, our respondents adopted a totally different frame of mind when they were confronted with courtship norms, which, presumably, concerned them in a much more immediate way.

Definition of Sexual Harassment

Apart from gauging their general attitudes towards sexual harassment, we also asked our respondents to identify specific items of behaviour which they would define as sexual harassment. In this process, a distinction was made between behaviour that took place between faculty/staff members and students, on the one hand, and that among students themselves, on the other. Table 6 shows the results of this study, compared with the 1987 Wisconsin-Madison findings.

The gender gap with regard to the readiness to see sexual harassment as a real problem is echoed here. Women respondents were generally more likely than men to have a broader-band definition of behaviour as sexual harassment, as reflected in their higher percentages as compared to those of the men down the columns. If we take a difference of around 10% as indicator of a significant gap in perception, then we see this in six items of behaviour in both faculty/staff-student and student-student in-

teraction. These include: unwanted sexually suggestive looks or gestures, unwanted display of visual materials of a sexual nature, making remarks about bodily or other features relating to one's sex, unnecessary leaning over or cornering, and unwanted intimate behaviour including: putting one's arm around another person's waist, as well as putting one's arm around another person's shoulders and taking another person's hand. The difference is also marked concerning talking or joking about one's own gender, but this is so only in case of student-student interaction. Apparently, men respondents were much more tolerant of this behaviour among students themselves than if it was initiated by faculty members. In this item as in 'unnecessary leaning over or cornering' and 'unwanted sexually suggestive looks or gestures,' the difference between men and women's perceptions was as much as 20%.

Interestingly, there are two exceptions to the generally more stringent standards adopted by women concerning what constitutes sexual harassment. While they were more inclined than men to see most items of behaviour as constituting sexual harassment, they were nevertheless slightly more tolerant on two items, namely, 'unwanted disclosure of personal or emotional matters' and 'unwanted pressure for dates.' This is consistent with an earlier paradoxical observation of women being more liberal regarding gender equality on more general levels, yet more conservative than men with regard to courtship norms, which presumably concerned them more immediately. Here again, women seem to accommodate themselves more readily to existing social expectations of their own gender: lending a sympathetic ear to people who are troubled and being passive targets instead of active initiators in the process of dating.

Table 6 Percent in Support of Behavioural Items Being Regarded as Sexual Harassment

	Male	Female	W-M (^{'87})
1. Unwanted pressure for sexual activity	94.2 (95.0)	96.5 (97.1)	100 (97)
2. Unwanted touching of sex organs	94.4 (95.0)	96.3 (97.1)	— (—)
3. Asking for sexual activity as a condition for certain benefits	88.3 (88.0)	94.5 (94.5)	100 (97)
4. Unwanted intimate behaviour: pressing or caressing your leg	87.7 (86.6)	94.3 (92.9)	99 (97)
5. Unwanted intimate behaviour: kissing	90.0 (87.2)	94.1 (93.1)	— (—)
6. Unwanted letters or phone calls which are of a sexual nature	87.7 (85.0)	93.3 (92.9)	100 (96)
7. Unwanted intimate behaviour: putting his/her arms around your waist	77.2 (68.2)	87.0 (79.4)	99 (97)
8. Unwanted leaning over or cornering	70.8 (59.9)	85.3 (79.4)	97 (91.9)
9. Unwanted sexually suggestive looks or gestures	69.1 (59.6)	84.7 (81.3)	91.9 (80.8)
10. Unwanted display of visual materials of a sexual nature, e.g. slides, photos, posters, pamphlets, etc.	71.9 (67.7)	83.5 (81.5)	63.6 (51.5)
11. Unwanted intimate behaviour: putting his/her arm around your shoulders or taking your hand	73.0 (64.6)	81.9 (72.9)	99 (97)
12. Unwanted intimate behaviour: pressing or caressing your hands	41.5 (26.7)	55.4 (40.7)	99 (97)
13. Making remarks about bodily or other features relating to your sex	34.5 (18.1)	45.0 (29.1)	82.8 (57.6)
14. Unwanted disclosure of personal or emotional matters	28.1 (13.4)	27.3 (12.2)	39.4 (26.3)
15. Talking or joking about your gender	18.1 (10.0)	23.8 (29.1)	55.6 (34.3)
16. Unwanted pressure for dates	19.2 (11.4)	17.5 (10.2)	92.9 (71.7)

Notes: In each item, the first row % concerns behaviour initiated by staff and targetted at students and the second % concerns behaviour targetted at fellow students. Also W-M (^{'87}) stands for the findings in the 1987 Wisconsin-Madison study.

For both men and women, a more stringent attitude was adopted with regard to faculty/staff-student interaction than with regard to student-student interaction. A slight deviation occurs on two items: 'unwanted pressure for sexual activity,' and 'unwanted touching of sex organs,' though the difference is slight and might be explained by the fact that our respondents saw these items of behaviour as much more serious than the term 'sexual harassment' might warrant.

Comparing the local figures with those of the Wisconsin-Madison study, we could see that the latter respondents were much more ready to see all items except one (unwanted display of visual materials of a sexual nature) as constituting sexual harassment, and the discrepancy is striking. One could see that the Wisconsin-Madison respondents were much more insistent on one's right not to be subjected to harassment.

We have seen the great discrepancy in perception between men and women regarding the definition of certain behaviour as sexual harassment. This confirmed what we found in the panel discussions conducted in our first stage of research. Because of the ample room for elaboration during these sessions, we were able to gain further insights into this gender difference.

First of all, we found that women were much more forthcoming and ready to acknowledge the problem, mainly because harassment in various forms, such as being touched or grabbed at in public transport and receiving anonymous, threatening calls, was a commonly shared experience among them. Men, on the other hand, felt that the problem was irrelevant to their growth experience, and some even mentioned the 'psychological pressure' they were subjected to as potential targets of accusations. Hence their reluctance to talk about the issue.

Most women, and some men, mentioned the element of power differential in sexual harassment. They called attention to the fact that the victim would usually be caught in a situation where she would have no choice apart from compliance to the will of the harasser who was her superior, or total avoidance, which meant giving up a valued job or university course. Other men,

however, discounted this as exchanges of sexual favours for promotion or high grades, in which case they would see it as a form of bribery instead. The element of compulsion was somehow left out in this portrayal of the situation as 'mutual consent.'

Apart from power differential, it was mentioned in the women's sessions but not the men's that one crucial element in sexual harassment is the degradation of women as a group. For example, some women mentioned their feeling of offence when men discussed the sexual prowess or bodily features of women in their presence. One woman panellist remarked thus:

(Bodily) figures are from Nature. No-one should be held guilty for them.... Maybe showing off one's (a woman's) body has become popular recently.... You could say (these) women are cheap, but we could retort by saying women should not be made a topic of discussion. This is a matter of human rights (of women).

Interestingly, this remark about sexual harassment being an infringement of women's dignity resonates well with the legal definition employed in other countries, that sexual harassment falls within the purview of laws against sex discrimination.

In our panel discussions, men repeatedly manifested difficulty in acknowledging the legitimacy of women's perceptions regarding sexual harassment. One man actually said that it was out of 'egocentrism' of women that sexual harassment was made an issue at all. He crystallised other men's doubts about the validity of the concept, which they saw as hinging on women's perceptions and feelings *alone*. Together with some of his fellow panellists, he was of the opinion that the *furor* about sexual harassment following the Clarence Thomas case actually constituted 'reverse discrimination' of men by women. In other words, women's perceptions and definitions, which to them were inherently *not* valid, were unjustly imposed on men.

Concepts about dignity, privacy and human rights mentioned by the female panellist quoted above are universal concepts, but some of our male panellists somehow had great difficulty in acknowledging these as they applied to women. It was mentioned,

for example, that talking about women's bodies, telling sex jokes and using foul language derogatory to women were part of culture, in particular peer culture (of men). Women, therefore, should not feel offended. Moreover, women liked to attract men's attention anyway, and even men whom they did not like 'ha(d) the right to look at them.'

Another interesting illustration of men's reluctance to consider the dignity and rights of women emerged in one of the men's panel discussions. Following on the point about harassment being defined by women's perceptions and feelings alone, a panellist went further to say that peeping at a woman in the bathroom or while she was undressing would not constitute harassment *as long as* she was unaware of it. The fact that this remark was not countered in the discussion reveals that men had great difficulty in acknowledging the inherent right of women to privacy and dignity.

Notwithstanding their readiness to acknowledge the problem, female discussants did mention ambiguities in the concept of sexual harassment. One source of ambiguity was their realisation that men and women might hold different perceptions regarding certain items of behaviour, and we have seen this being confirmed in the survey findings. Another problem, which was also mentioned by some male panellists, concerns the grey area between courtship 'advances' (employed by men) and sexual harassment. One woman mentioned that if a male lecturer who made certain advances to a woman student happened to be single, then it would be more difficult to judge whether this constituted sexual harassment. Another man accused women of employing 'double standards' when they presumably enjoyed leering made by handsome men, but accused less good-looking men of harassment if the latter did the same. Although all female panellists were convinced (see also item the mean score of responses to no. 9 in Table 2) that they could definitely identify certain behaviour as sexual harassment, the existence of a grey area between this and courtship nevertheless raises a very real problem and should be examined more closely. We shall do this in a later section when we try

to relate sexual harassment to the existing structure of gender relationships.

Extent of the Problem on CU Campus

Awareness of Incidents of Sexual Harassment

In the questionnaire survey, we asked our respondents whether or not they had heard about incidents of offensive behaviour taking place between faculty/staff members and students, as well as among students themselves. It is understood that these figures should not be taken to reflect actual frequencies, because information about one single incident might be passed on to a number of people, so that the figures here might well be overestimated. The results are shown in Table 7 (a, b) below.

Table 7a Awareness of Incidents of Sexual Harassment Initiated by Faculty/Staff Members and Targetted at Students

	Male (n=358)		Female (n=491)	
1. Unwanted pressure for sexual activity	3	(0.8)	5	(1.0)
2. Unwanted touching of sex organs	6	(1.7)	12	(2.4)
3. Asking for sexual activity as a condition for certain benefits	11	(3.1)	14	(2.9)
4. Unwanted intimate behaviour: pressing or caressing your leg	14	(3.9)	28	(5.7)
5. Unwanted intimate behaviour: kissing	5	(1.4)	15	(3.1)
6. Unwanted letters or phone calls which are of a sexual nature	12	(3.3)	12	(2.4)
7. Unwanted intimate behaviour: putting his/her arms around your waist	46	(12.8)	54	(11.0)
8. Unwanted leaning over or cornering	82	(22.8)	139	(28.3)
9. Unwanted sexually suggestive looks or gestures	55	(15.3)	76	(15.5)
10. Unwanted display of visual materials of a sexual nature, e.g. slides, photos, posters, pamphlets, etc.	19	(5.3)	15	(3.1)
11. Unwanted intimate behaviour: putting his/her arm around your shoulders or taking your hand	46	(12.8)	53	(10.8)
12. Unwanted intimate behaviour: pressing or caressing your hands	83	(23.1)	137	(27.9)
13. Making remarks about bodily or other features relating to your sex	66	(18.4)	128	(26.1)
14. Unwanted disclosure of personal or emotional matters	29	(8.1)	44	(3.1)
15. Talking or joking about your gender	95	(26.5)	158	(32.2)
16. Unwanted pressure for dates	40	(12.5)	84	(17.1)

Note: The figure without parentheses is the actual number, while the one within parentheses is the percentage.

Table 7b Awareness of Incidents of Sexual Harassment between Students

	Male (n=358)		Female (n=491)	
1. Unwanted pressure for sexual activity	8	(2.2)	16	(3.3)
2. Unwanted touching of sex organs	24	(6.7)	28	(5.7)
3. Asking for sexual activity as a condition for certain benefits	10	(2.8)	16	(3.3)
4. Unwanted intimate behaviour: pressing or caressing your leg	53	(14.8)	63	(12.8)
5. Unwanted intimate behaviour: kissing	47	(13.1)	64	(13.0)
6. Unwanted letters or phone calls which are of a sexual nature	37	(10.3)	41	(8.4)
7. Unwanted intimate behaviour: putting his/her arms around your waist	104	(29.0)	135	(27.5)
8. Unwanted leaning over or cornering	149	(41.5)	212	(43.2)
9. Unwanted sexually suggestive looks or gestures	132	(36.8)	146	(29.7)
10. Unwanted display of visual materials of a sexual nature, e.g. slides, photos, posters, pamphlets, etc.	51	(14.2)	34	(6.9)
11. Unwanted intimate behaviour: putting his/her arm around your shoulders or taking your hand	100	(27.9)	117	(23.8)
12. Unwanted intimate behaviour: pressing or caressing your hands	144	(40.1)	213	(43.4)
13. Making remarks about bodily or other features relating to your sex	228	(63.5)	292	(59.5)
14. Unwanted disclosure of personal or emotional matters	79	(22.0)	139	(28.3)
15. Talking or joking about your gender	216	(60.2)	282	(57.4)
16. Unwanted pressure for dates	148	(41.2)	253	(51.5)

Note: The figure without parentheses is the actual number, while the one within parentheses is the percentage.

From the above set of tables, we can see that such behaviour targetted at fellow students were much more frequently reported than that between faculty/staff members and students. This is not surprising because students enter into more frequent interaction among themselves than with members of the faculty. Moreover, norms prohibiting such behaviour are much stricter when applied to interaction between faculty/staff members and students.

Report of Victimization

We asked our respondents to report if they had been victims of offensive behaviour initiated by faculty/staff members as well as by fellow students. These figures can be taken to reflect more accurately the actual frequencies because each incident, if it had occurred, would only be reported once by the victim her/himself. The results are shown in Table 8 (a,b) below:

Comparing Table 8a with 8b, one could see that for both men and women, victimisation was much more frequent among students themselves than between faculty members and students. This is congruent with the figures regarding reports of awareness of incidents of sexual harassment.

While men and women did not differ significantly in their respective frequencies of reports, the discrepancy between them was noticeable when one comes to victimisation. In the case of harassment by faculty/staff members, there were self-reported victims for each and every item of behaviour for women, including even the more serious ones such as unwanted pressure for sexual activity (1 case), asking for sexual activity as a condition for certain benefits (2 cases), unwanted touching of sex organs (1 case) and so on. The percentages of reported victims went up even higher in less serious forms of harassment. If we take a 10% reporting as indicating significant prevalence, then three items stood out prominently. These are: unwanted intimate behaviour: pressing or holding your hand (11.0% or 54 cases), unwanted disclosure of personal or emotional matters (11.0% or 54 cases), and unwanted sexually suggestive looks or gestures (10.4% or 51 cases). Meanwhile, there was no report of victimisation for eight

items of harassment for men. For the remaining eight items, the percentages were below 4, the highest being 3.9% (14 cases).

Table 8a Report of Victimization by Faculty/Staff Members

	Male (n=358)		Female (n=491)	
1. Unwanted pressure for sexual activity	—	—	1	(0.2)
2. Unwanted touching of sex organs	—	—	1	(0.2)
3. Asking for sexual activity as a condition for certain benefits	—	—	2	(0.4)
4. Unwanted intimate behaviour: pressing or caressing your leg	—	—	3	(0.6)
5. Unwanted intimate behaviour: kissing	—	—	8	(1.6)
6. Unwanted letters or phone calls which are of a sexual nature	—	—	4	(0.8)
7. Unwanted intimate behaviour: putting his/her arms around your waist	—	—	5	(1.0)
8. Unwanted leaning over or cornering	8	(2.2)	23	(4.7)
9. Unwanted sexually suggestive looks or gestures	4	(1.1)	51	(10.4)
10. Unwanted display of visual materials of a sexual nature, e.g. slides, photos, posters, pamphlets, etc.	14	(1.1)	12	(2.4)
11. Unwanted intimate behaviour: putting his/her arm around your shoulders or taking your hand	—	—	18	(3.7)
12. Unwanted intimate behaviour: pressing or caressing your hands	5	(1.4)	54	(11.0)
13. Making remarks about bodily or other features relating to your sex	10	(2.8)	25	(5.1)
14. Unwanted disclosure of personal or emotional matters	14	(3.9)	54	(11.0)
15. Talking or joking about your gender	4	(1.1)	19	(3.9)
16. Unwanted pressure for dates	2	(0.6)	21	(4.3)

Note: The figure without parentheses is the actual number, while the one within parentheses is the percentage.

Table 8b Report of Victimization by Fellow Students

	Male (n=358)		Female (n=491)	
1. Unwanted pressure for sexual activity	4	(1.1)	3	(0.6)
2. Unwanted touching of sex organs	1	(0.3)	3	(0.6)
3. Asking for sexual activity as a condition for certain benefits	1	(0.3)	4	(0.8)
4. Unwanted intimate behaviour: pressing or caressing your leg	2	(0.6)	7	(1.4)
5. Unwanted intimate behaviour: kissing	7	(1.9)	13	(2.6)
6. Unwanted letters or phone calls which are of a sexual nature	1	(0.3)	7	(1.4)
7. Unwanted intimate behaviour: putting his/her arms around your waist	5	(1.4)	8	(1.6)
8. Unwanted leaning over or cornering	16	(4.5)	75	(15.3)
9. Unwanted sexually suggestive looks or gestures	20	(5.6)	117	(23.8)
10. Unwanted display of visual materials of a sexual nature, e.g. slides, photos, posters, pamphlets, etc.	9	(2.5)	32	(6.5)
11. Unwanted intimate behaviour: putting his/her arm around your shoulders or taking your hand	9	(2.5)	38	(7.7)
12. Unwanted intimate behaviour: pressing or caressing your hands	16	(4.5)	119	(24.2)
13. Making remarks about bodily or other features relating to your sex	42	(11.7)	88	(17.9)
14. Unwanted disclosure of personal or emotional matters	40	(11.1)	108	(22.0)
15. Talking or joking about your gender	7	(1.9)	43	(8.8)
16. Unwanted pressure for dates	6	(1.7)	65	(13.2)

Note: The figure without parentheses is the actual number, while the one within parentheses is the percentage.

In the case of harassment by students, self-reported victimisation was much higher than that initiated by faculty/staff members. Here again, women were much more frequently subjected to harassment on all items except one (unwanted pressure for sexual activity, on which one more case was reported by men). Again, if we take a 10% reporting as a significant indicator of prevalence, then six items stood out prominently. These are: unwanted sexually suggestive looks or gestures (23.8% or 117 cases), making remarks about bodily or other features relating to your sex (17.9% or 88 cases), unwanted pressure for dates (13.2% or 65 cases), unnecessary leaning over or cornering (15.3% or 75 cases), unwanted intimate behaviour: pressing or caressing your hand (24.2% or 119 cases), and unwanted disclosure of personal or emotional matters (22.0% or 108 cases). For each of the last three items, the frequency went up to more than 20%.

One rather unexpected finding involving the touching of sex organs by one's fellow students emerged from the qualitative answers we obtained from our questionnaires. Several men gave an essentially similar elaboration of this kind of behaviour, namely, that this took place in all-male gatherings on campus and was usually done in jest. This, together with the relatively high self-reported victimisation by men on the items of 'making remarks about bodily or other features relating to your sex,' and 'talking or joking about your gender' brings one's attention to same-sex harassment among men on campus. There was no similar report of same-sex harassment by women, however. One plausible interpretation is that same-sex harassment among men, which centred on men's sex organs, bodily features (of men) and derogatory comments about a certain gender (men), are essentially attempts to establish a pecking order based on presumed physical manifestations of masculinity. If so, it is not different in kind from that of cross-sex harassment, in that both are attempts to establish or confirm (in the case of male harasser and female victim) a power relationship between harasser and victims.

There were several types of harassment on campus which had not been anticipated but which emerged both in panel discussions

and in answers to open-ended questions in the survey. These include: peeping in women's dormitory, clandestine delivery of nude male photos to women's rooms in dormitories, obscene phone-calls and brushing against women's bodies on campus buses. In these incidents, it was difficult to point to a particular harasser, nor were they directed specifically at individual victims. Yet, women did not feel any less threatened.

Response to Sexual Harassment

We asked students to comment on their experience (direct or indirect) of sexual harassment initiated by faculty/staff members, in case they had any. We obtained 108 responses from male respondents and 201 from female ones. The much higher response on the part of women indicated that they manifested greater awareness of harassment and that they were more exposed to victimisation on campus, as in the society at large. The most common feelings of victims and sometimes of women who had heard about incidents of harassment ranged from embarrassment, unhappiness, surprise and disappointment, to shock, contempt, humiliation (both felt personally and on behalf of women as a whole), fear, pain, helplessness, shame, and psychological stress. There was mention of resistance and the wish to make complaints or to see the harasser punished. The usual strategy, however, seemed to be passive acceptance and avoidance, because it was generally believed that victims had no channel of redress. Women who had heard reports of harassment usually felt injustice or anger for the sake of the victims and, at the same time, would become more vigilant. There was a small minority who said they accepted the situation because it was so common, and the situation was the same outside the University. An even smaller minority felt that victims should shoulder part of the blame.

Men's responses to the same question were more varied, essentially because while some were responding as victims, many more were responding to reports about harassment in which victims were of the opposite gender. This latter position added a

noticeable feeling of remoteness to their response, which was absent from the women's answers. They reported, for example, sympathy for woman victims and a strong feeling that victims should make complaints or that harassers should be punished. A number of respondents mentioned curiosity being aroused about other people's private life on hearing such reports, with one actually saying that he had a wish to try harassing others. There was also a suspicion that victims might be exaggerating, over-reacting, or that so-called harassment might only be manifestations of admiration or a result of the victim's attraction. Nevertheless, there were reactions which men shared with women, and these included: contempt for the harasser, shock, fear, anger, and helplessness. A recurrent feeling common to both men's and women's responses was that teachers who harassed students had betrayed the respect vested in them. One man even went further to indicate his revulsion against the degradation of women in the act of harassment.

For the open-ended question asking for elaboration of feelings towards having heard about or experienced offensive behaviour initiated by students themselves, we obtained 85 responses from men and 154 from women. Women's responses were essentially similar to those they gave regarding faculty/staff harassment: from the feeling of embarrassment, disappointment (with the campus situation), displeasure, to shock, revulsion, anger, sadness, and a prevalent feeling of helplessness. One even mentioned being deeply hurt and had a feeling of having been raped. This was echoed by others who had heard about reports of presumably serious harassment and who suggested that the victims needed counselling. A few mentioned fear and a feeling of vulnerability being a boarder on campus, and more said that they had become much more vigilant either generally or when dealing with male counterparts.

In comparison with faculty/staff harassment, there seemed to be slightly greater confidence in taking control of the situation. Though there was mention of self-doubt, avoidance and helplessness, there were nevertheless a few who mentioned standing up

against the harassers. One victim said that she definitely knew how to react if she were harassed a second time, which showed that she had most probably been taken by surprise the first time and that she had learned through this unpleasant experience. Similar to the response regarding faculty/staff harassment, a minority maintained that some women might have exaggerated or misunderstood the situation and that others might have condoned the harasser's behaviour. On the other hand, other women said they felt strongly about the insult, injustice, humiliation and discrimination against women in such incidents. A few linked them to existing gender relationships and suggested that there should be improvement in this area in terms of education and research.

Though more limited in number, some men, among them victims of same-sex harassment, reported similar feelings as those of women: discomfort, embarrassment, surprise, contempt, regret, anger, harm and helplessness. Some said that such acts were totally incomprehensible to them and that they were revolted by the perversion of the act. Others reported avoidance and pretence that it had not happened, while some said they did confront the harasser. A considerably greater number of men than women said that the incidents were only meant as jokes and there might be misunderstandings on both sides. On the other hand, one or two insisted that both male faculty/staff members and students should be educated about this problem, so that they would have greater awareness of this in future.

Both men and women mentioned their disappointment with their fellow students who were harassers, because these latter had failed to live up to their level of education. The Chinese notion that education ought to elevate one's moral standards is clearly at work here.

A minority of both men and women manifested confusion between sexual harassment, on the one hand, and courtship as it is conventionally defined, on the other. One woman said, for example, that she would feel proud if the act of harassment was not too serious, but she would have the feeling of having been raped if it

went too far. Working very much within a similar framework, a man said that if the act of harassment was initiated by a woman to a man, then it would be 'cheap.' Whereas if it were initiated by a man to a woman, it would show that he was incapable (*shui-pei*), presumably of pursuing a woman in a more tactful and effective manner. For these two respondents, then, it was proper for men to make certain advances to woman, and this explained why courtship could shade off to harassment. Meanwhile, this should definitely not work the other way round, i.e., for women to take the initiative.

We were able to go into greater depths regarding responses to harassment during our panel discussions. Our female panellists mentioned the great hesitation they experienced in defining an act committed against themselves as harassment, owing to the incongruence between seeing someone as friend or even teacher initially and then having to acknowledge that this same person was a harasser. In the case of faculty harassment, this was even more difficult, as they had learned to respect the person in the first place. Then, there was the fear of bringing even more shame onto oneself when one made a formal complaint, thus letting the act 'go public.' This is essentially the same additional trauma, in the form of public shame, suffered by victims of rape and indecent assault in our society. Lastly, our panellists were inhibited from making formal complaints because they felt that, in doing so, they would have harmed the career of the harasser, especially in the case of a young faculty member. Such findings concerning self-doubt, reluctance to go against an authority figure and to hurt the harasser's career were very much similar to findings of studies in the west.¹⁶

We included within our questionnaire one last open-ended question inviting our respondents to comment on what they thought of the study itself, hoping thereby to solicit their general views about the problem and about putting it on the agenda as we had done. The discrepancy between the number of answers from our male (102) and female (181) respondents again showed that

the problem of sexual harassment touched the latter group to a much greater extent.

Sixty-two women expressed support for the study, saying that it was worthwhile, that it had raised their awareness of the issue, that it showed that the University (or at least someone in the teaching staff) cared about the problem. For nine of them, they were gratified to see the study being done, because it seemed to vindicate the damage they had suffered as a result of being harassed. One urged the results to be publicised, and that something concrete be done by way of improving the situation, such as educating students about it, and building formal channels of complaint. Seven women, however, said that they did not feel it necessary to do such a survey because this problem did not really exist.

Such a feeling was shared among a small minority of male respondents. Four men were of the opinion that the whole study was worthless and that the questionnaire was value-laden and biased in favour of women. A few others expressed a less vehement argument but nevertheless felt that the study was not directed towards them but towards women instead. Sexual harassment clearly did not mean anything to them as men. However, there were other men who reminded the researchers that they should not neglect same-sex harassment, echoing some of the findings presented above.

Both men and women expressed confusion about the definition of sexual harassment as well as the exact definitions of some of the phrases used in the questionnaire to describe certain offensive behaviour, such as 'unwanted.' This indicates that some respondents had real difficulty in comprehending what sexual harassment meant and identifying it when it occurred.

Expected Institutional Response to the Problem

In the questionnaire survey, we solicited our respondents' expectations of University initiatives in handling sexual harassment. The results, presented in Table 9, generally confirmed what we discovered during the panel discussions at an earlier stage. We

have also included in our analysis a statistic from the Wisconsin-Madison survey for comparison.

Table 9 Percentage in Support of Statements Regarding the University's Role in Sexual Harassment

	Male	Female
1. Sexual harassment is a personal matter; the university should not intervene	22.3	14.9
2. University should hold talks and discussion sessions to increase attention	66.3	74.1
3. University should hold discussion sessions to let students of both sexes exchange viewpoints and feelings	81.9	77.2
4. University should hold talks in order to publicize methods of avoiding or dealing with sexual harassment	77.4	80.0
5. University should set up an independent body to handle sexual harassment complaints. The function of such a body should be:	57.1	68.8
a. Investigation	51.5	60.9
b. Arbitration	29.5	29.3
c. Counselling	51.3	61.9
d. Punishment	35.7	49.1

The general opinion tends to support University intervention in this area, though this was slightly more prevalent among women (85.1%) than among men (77.7%). This of course is not surprising, given our finding all along that sexual harassment was a more pertinent issue for women. As compared to the Wisconsin-Madison study which registered a 77.8% support,¹⁷ the support given by our female respondents was quite high.

As for the forms of intervention, there were consistently more women in support of all the listed forms (organise discussions or talks, set up an independent body to receive complaints) *except* for organising discussions in which men and women could ex-

change views and feelings. On this last item, there was a slightly lower support from women (77.2% vs 81.9% from men). We have already noted, in our panel discussions, this reluctance on the part of women to share their views in the presence of men, perhaps due to a feeling of vulnerability to the opposite gender with regard to this or related issues. In these discussions, some women even expressed their reluctance not only of being in the presence of men in such discussions but of being publicly *seen* to have taken an interest in related topics. The shame conventionally metered out to women as victims of sex-related harassment or assaults seemed to extend even to women who might *take an interest* in such topics. This reluctance on the part of women may also be due to embarrassment arising from open discussion of sexual matters in the presence of the opposite gender. Whatever its cause, this reticence on the part of our women students must be taken into account if educational campaigns on related issues are organised.

Our respondents' support dropped significantly with regard to the setting up of an independent body to deal with complaints about sexual harassment — 68.8% among women and 57.1% among men, though this still accounted for more than half of the respondents for both genders. For those who indicated support for such a body, the functions which most of them favoured were those of investigation and counselling. A smaller percentage supported the function of punishment (49.1% of women and 35.7% of men supported this), and even less for the function of arbitration (29.3% of women and 29.5% of men). Our respondents' opinions therefore were divided over the punitive function of this hypothetical body, but they were much less inclined to see such a body taking up only an arbitration role. Judging from what the panellists had said about their mistrust of the University Establishment in handling students' complaints fairly (not only with regard to sexual harassment), it is likely that arbitration was perceived by students to be conducted to their disadvantage.

Discussion

In this section, we intend to highlight a few crucial but controversial points related to the issue of sexual harassment. We believe that one must confront these controversies and try to resolve them before one can hope to deal with sexual harassment in an effective and just manner.

The Gender Gap and the Legitimacy of Women's Perceptions

The first controversy concerns the discrepancy of views between the two genders. We have seen a significant difference in the readiness to acknowledge sexual harassment as a problem, its exact definition and, most important of all, the different degrees to which it is seen as pertinent for the two genders. This gender gap leads to a serious practical and ultimately legal problem, i.e., when a complaint about sexual harassment arises, which view is to be privileged? On this point, an observation made in a 1991 US report on sexual harassment is pertinent:

A 1991 landmark ruling by the Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit in California held that 'the appropriate perspective for judging a hostile (work) environment claim is that of the "reasonable woman" and recognised that a woman's perspective may differ substantially from a man's.'¹⁸

The contribution of this landmark ruling lies in giving formal and legal recognition to the fact that all along it has been the male perspective which has prevailed in law courts as in wider society. As a result, the standard of a hypothetical so-called 'reasonable man' has been used as a yardstick against which the offensiveness of a certain remark or situation is measured. The 1991 ruling called attention to the fact that women, owing to their very different experience of being exposed to sexual assault and harassment, have an entirely different view of the situation altogether. The whole question therefore boils down to whether or not our society and its law courts are willing to accept the legitimacy of the

woman's perspective, as Judge Robert Beezer, the person who presided over the 1991 Court of Appeals mentioned above, had done.

We have already noted, in our panel discussions, that the gender-specific experience of growing up with the very real fear of sexual assault has predisposed women to a greater readiness to acknowledge the problem of sexual harassment. More importantly, we have discovered that, in incidents of harassment which do not involve physical touch and which are therefore most controversial, women have repeatedly pointed out that the harm lies in the insult or humiliation directed at their gender as a whole. Meanwhile, this point was rarely raised among our male respondents, indicating that most of them shared society's failure to relate universal concepts such as rights and dignity to women. As a result, we obtained remarks such as 'women are over-sensitive,' 'it's only done in jest, no offence meant,' or that 'sharing sex jokes is part of culture, why can't women take them in good humour?' and so on, both from our panellists and our survey respondents.

Furthermore, this failure to relate rights and dignity to women and to acknowledge the legitimacy of women's feelings also led to some women admitting that they themselves had got used to sex remarks or jokes made by their male counterparts, so much so that they did not feel that this constituted harassment. This same perceptual gap too was reflected in the comments made *about* our questionnaire itself, mostly by men: that some of its questions and phrases are 'biased.' To them, these biases are embedded in phrases such as: 'have you been *victims* of the items of behaviour below.' Such comments arose because the items of behaviour were *not* seen as derogatory in the first place, and so there was no way that one could speak of 'victims.'

Sexual Harassment and Existing Gender Relationships

We have pointed out earlier the confusion manifested by some of our respondents (both men and women) between sexual harassment and courtship. Some acts of infringement of privacy or dig-

nity, for example, unwanted touching or repeated pressure for dates, were seen as borderline cases and therefore presenting difficulty of judgement. Our interpretation of this confusion is that it is deeply rooted in the way gender relations are structured in our society, namely, that men and women are involved in a predator-prey relationship in a courtship situation. The incongruence between this given relationship, on the one hand, and the claim for equal rights (of both genders) to privacy and dignity carried in the definition of sexual harassment, on the other, presents a very real problem in the conceptualisation and social recognition of the latter. This is the ultimate root of the controversy surrounding the legitimacy of sexual harassment as a problem. Put in another way, the emergence of sexual harassment as a problem has arisen from new perspectives regarding the structure of gender relationships. These are ones which challenge the existing relative status and roles of men and women in society: men as predator, women as prey; men as initiators of sexual advances, women as sex objects, etc.

Existing gender relationships are also power relationships. It is only within this framework that we could begin to understand the 'normalisation' of various forms of harassment thought to be unharmed, such as the making of sex jokes and remarks and displaying visual materials relating to sex. Through the normalisation of such processes, the power differential between men and women as separate and unequal groups (predator-prey, subject-object) is constantly being reinforced and reproduced. Within this framework of power differential too, we could also understand the meaning of same-sex harassment within the male group. Same-sex harassment among men, is, as we have observed above, a means to establish a pecking order in terms of presumed manifest masculinity.

The Chinese Context

We are interested in comparing our findings pertaining to a Chinese society to those of other studies. We have found out that, in

many ways, local women's response to experienced or potential harassment were similar to those found in Western societies. These include: avoidance, initial reluctance to acknowledge the problem, self-doubt and guilt, the feeling of shame, and the consideration of the harasser's career or welfare, all of which work to inhibit the victims from actively seeking to solve the problem or making formal complaints.

One recurrent remark we got from our respondents, very often from men, was that women in the West might be more 'open' in their sexual mores and so would be more ready to accept advances in the form of sex jokes and touching, etc. For some men at least, sexual harassment is seen as a problem only by those who are too 'prudent' or not 'open-minded' enough. When we compare our results with those of the Wisconsin-Madison study, however, we see picture which is exactly the opposite. Instead of being more accepting of sexual harassment among respondents of the latter study, we find instead a much more stringent standard of cross-sex behaviour and a greater insistence on institutional intervention into infringements. Thus, what is involved in sexual harassment seems *not* to lie in the degree of permissiveness with regard to sexual mores, as is commonly believed locally, but in the degree of insistence on individual rights, including those pertaining to the privacy and dignity of being member to a particular gender group.

Recommendations

Institutional Response to the Problem

Our study shows that sexual harassment constitutes a real problem in the local campus, and a clear and definite institutional response is necessary. Unfortunately, there has been to date not even an official acknowledgement that the problem exists.

If, at some point in time, official acknowledgement of the problem is made, it is essential that efforts are made to raise the

awareness of faculty members, staff and students about it, so that it could be prevented as much as possible. In particular, members of the institution should be made aware of one's rights to be free of harassment in an educational context or workplace. In this regard, it is important to dispel existing myths about harassment, such as victims being responsible for their plight, or that it is a harmless element of (male) culture. In designing educational materials and programmes, it would be useful to take into account gender differences in perception and attitudes, which we have revealed in our study.

Above all, it is important for the institution to make a clear statement of its standpoint towards sexual harassment. A definitive and well-publicised policy regarding all forms of sexual harassment will, we believe, go a long way towards prevention. Members will be made aware of their rights and duties in social interaction, and ambiguities of perceptions and actions will be considerably reduced. In drawing up a policy regarding sexual harassment, local universities and colleges will by no means be entering unknown terrain. On the contrary, they would do well to refer to similar developments on campuses in the eighties in countries such as the US, Canada, Australia, Britain, and New Zealand.

Apart from a clear policy statement regarding sexual harassment, universities and colleges will greatly benefit from institutionalised networks for providing support and handling complaints made by victims. Again, working on the experience of many overseas universities and colleges, such networks should aim first and foremost at reducing the damage done to victims, restoring their sense of control, and putting a stop to the action which has caused harm in the first instance. Judging from responses arising from our panel discussions and questionnaires, this also seems to be what most of our students want, emphasising, as they did, investigation and counselling rather than punishment. Such networks should, of course, work in the strictest confidentiality and, with all due regard to the best interests of the victim, as well as full justice done to the alleged harasser.

Further Research

We have discovered ambiguities about sexual harassment, especially with regard to the grey area between actions seen to be harassment on the one hand, and 'acceptable' courtship advances on the other. If harassment is to be interpreted as abuse of power with harmful effects to the victim's dignity, and harassment could and does occur between peers of opposite genders (or the same, male gender), then one is presented with the problem of gender (and male) relationships in the context of differential power. This, we believe, is an area of gender studies in which more research could be fruitfully done.

With regard to the problem of sexual harassment itself, we believe that it would be useful if a more systematic classification of such actions could be drawn up, based on further studies of the range and types of behaviour that could be defined as harassment.

Lastly, we believe that more research into the problem of sexual harassment in other tertiary institutions, schools at lower levels, and other work contexts would be useful in gaining greater understanding both about the problem itself and about gender relationships at large.

Notes

1. For details of this Programme, see Choy (1991).
2. See Dolecheck (1984:23-27) for a study of young college-educated employees in Hong Kong in 1983.
3. One of the earliest studies is Farley (1978). Others which appear in the eighties include: Gutek (1985) and Dziech and Weiner (1984).
4. See note 2 for an exception. In Taiwan, heated discussion on the topic was aroused when sexual harassment cases in the National Ching Hua University in 1992 were made public. A counter-sexual harassment campaign was pursued, which resulted in considerable public attention.
5. See MacKinnon (1979) and Brownmiller (1975).

6. In 1980, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission of the United States federal government explicitly defined sexual harassment under Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act prohibiting sex discrimination in the workplace as a form of 'unlawful, sex-based discrimination.' These guidelines were expanded in 1984 to include educational institutions.
7. See Dolecheck (1984:24).
8. See Coalition Against Sexual Abuse (1992:4).
9. See National Council for Research on Women (1991:9).
10. Gutek, *op cit*.
11. See National Council for Research on Women (1991:4-5).
12. See Gruber (1989:3-7).
13. Adapted for local use from "A Short Version of the Attitudes Towards Women Scale (AWS)" published in *Bulletin of Psychonomic Society*, 1973, vol.2(4).
14. Adapted for local use from the 1987 Sexual Harassment Survey conducted among undergraduates, graduates and fellows of the Medical School programs of the University of Wisconsin-Madison. See the report compiled by the Commission on Women's Issues, Center for Health Sciences. University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1988.
15. Thanks are due to Ms Helen Siebers, who generously gave us a copy of the report on the 1987 sexual harassment survey conducted by the Commission on Women's Issues, University of Wisconsin-Madison. This turned out to be a useful reference for the designing of our questionnaire as well as for comparative analysis.
16. See, for example, Dziech and Weiner (1984:chap.4).
17. See Commission on Women's Issues (1987:11).
18. See National Council for Research on Women (1991:4-5).

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權力與尊嚴： 香港校園性騷擾研究

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(中文摘要)

這是個有關本地大學校園性騷擾問題的首次研究，研究分兩個階段進行：首先開展本科生和研究生分男女組別進行的小組討論，接着是問卷調查，研究目的包括：了解學生對性騷擾問題的看法、學生在這方面直接或間接的體驗、他們對這些體驗的反應、和他們期望大學當局如何處理等。研究發現兩性對性騷擾的看法和體驗有着明顯的差距，而差距實源於兩性在這方面迥異的成長經歷。再者，性騷擾與現存的兩性結構有密切關係，這結構有兩個突出的因素：權力與尊嚴。在機構裡面，性騷擾往往發生於兩個有明顯權力差距的人身上，例如教師與學生之間。不過，權力差距也隱晦地體現在以男性為中心的文化內，因此，以女性身體為主題的笑話普遍地被認為是無傷大雅的，縱使它們往往令女性感到不快。另外，男性權力也體現在異性求偶中常見的“獵人一獵物”關係上。這解釋為何在受訪者中，有不少表示“追求手段”（男性主導的）與性騷擾之間似乎界限不清。至於研究中發現的男性同性間的性騷擾，也明顯地有着建立權力層序的功能。相對來說，受害者所感到的，主要是性騷擾對個人或對自己所屬性別尊嚴的損害。此外，報告亦於適當地地方作出跨文化的比較。