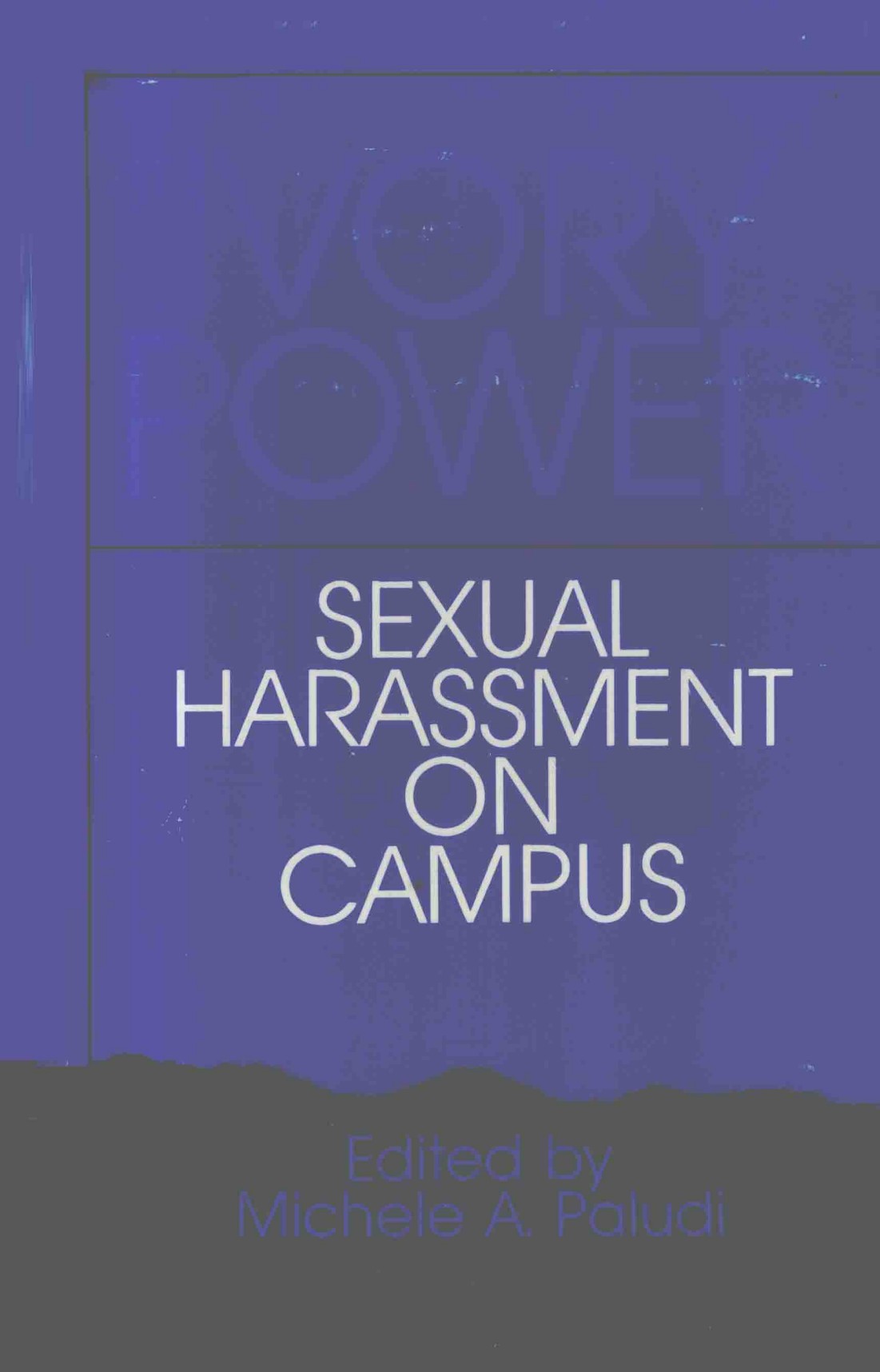

SEXUAL HARASSMENT ON CAMPUS

Edited by
Michele A. Paludi

Ivory Power

Sexual Harassment on Campus

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I dedicate this volume to my friends
who understood my need
to have this book written:

Mary P. Koss
Ron Towne
Sandy Shullman
Louise Fitzgerald
Darlene C. DeFour
Dorothy O. Helly
Sue Rosenberg Zalk
Richard Barickman

Forewords

An Ecological Perspective to Understanding Sexual Harassment

Richard Barickman, Sam Korn, Bernice Sandler, Yael Gold, Alayne Ormerod, and *Lauren M. Weitzman*

Recently a college student wrote this about her experiences with informal, collaborative methods of composing essays:

> The anxiety of writing a paper used to destroy me. (I know I'm not alone here). Writing my first draft for this class, I didn't cry, I didn't despair, I didn't consider dropping the course (nor did I think of dropping out of school altogether). I didn't conclude that I'm some sort of fake and a totally useless human being. I simply sat down and wrote and wrote and wrote. That's the idea, isn't it?

Maria's account of her anxieties is not bizarre, not even atypical—just unusually candid. Whenever students write informally, in a comfortable environment, about their experience of writing for courses, the great majority reveal similar anxieties about the self-exposure involved in writing essays and submitting them for evaluations. And almost all feel alone as well as vulnerable: "This is *my* special problem, my weakness, my shame." Simply hearing other students read similar "confessions" is a revelation and an immediate relief of tension.

Now, writing is a particularly exacting, complex, and personal process. But Maria's classmate Andrew had similar apprehensions about the prospect of studying poetry (even though he is a fiction writer, majoring in English): "I must confess that this course marks my very first course in poetry and that starting with Whitman and Dickinson terrifies me. . . ." We also know that many students get quite anxious about courses in mathematics and science, anxious when facing any sort of examination,

afraid of speaking in class, and so forth. In fact, most colleges offer special programs for overcoming or coping with such anxieties. The problem is, our knowledge often remains abstract, general, not brought to bear on the day-to-day experiences students actually live through in their courses. We are even likely to insulate ourselves from our own memories of emotions like Maria's and Andrew's, when we were panic-stricken students handing in a paper at arm's length, face turned away, gasping, "Oh, don't read it *now*!" as the professor casually flips the title page and glances at the opening paragraph.

The fact is—a fact manifest in virtually every college classroom but obscured by our academic routines and proprieties—the classroom is a place of power and vulnerability as well as a place of open inquiry and invigorating discussion. When all goes well—and it often does—the power in the classroom is shared, decentralized, truly empowering for students and teachers. It energizes a process of collaborative investigations and responses that, apart from their intellectual content, give students a sense of sharing in a cultural inheritance, connecting the privacy of the self with the great currents of common, public tradition.

To often, though, power in the classroom is abused, and the vulnerable become victims. Unfortunately, its destructive impact is likely to be directly proportional to the trust the academy encourages its students to have in an ideal of education. Whatever their ages, sexes, or backgrounds, students—through their very status as students and through the very autonomy of the classroom that we prize in college education—are in an unusual position of vulnerability. The greater the eagerness to learn, the greater the implicit trust in the college's professions of a community of shared values, the greater the shock and pain when that trust is violated. And, as our whole society should realize through our increasing awareness of the extent and nature of incest, sexual abuse of children, rape, battery of women, pornography, and prostitution, power is often most cruelly abused when it is directed against an individual's sexuality or sex.

Inevitably, if we are teachers or counselors or administrators in a college—or if we are custodians, security guards, electricians, cafeteria workers—we deal with the complexities of these power relations. For the college community exists in its corridors, offices, and cafeterias, as well as in its classrooms. Its members include all employees and all students. It is—and should be—a protected and privileged environment, where people can speak their minds without risking loss of face or job, or the often violent retaliation of the streets. It must be, if this special environment is to be a reality, a community that protects and nurtures its members. Not, perhaps, standing in *loco parentis*, but always as a *locus humanitatis*.

Inevitably, also, given the predatory and discriminatory behavior rife

in U.S. society, a great majority of women students, a very significant percentage of women staff and faculty, and—in all probability—a great many gay students, faculty, and staff will be victimized by sexual or gender harassment. The most reliable studies indicate that 30 percent of women students are sexually harassed by at least one instructor in college. When we consider gender harassment as well (the sort of sexist behavior comparable to racist treatment of non-Whites), the incidence rate is close to 70 percent. These figures—especially when we come to know the individuals whose lives are damaged by sexual harassment—should in themselves help explain why those of us who become organizers and members of college panels on sexual harassment persist in the demanding and delicate interactions they require—and why we advocate similar panels for every college in the country.

The Panel on Sexual Harassment at Hunter College of the City University of New York has, since 1982, served as a resource for students, faculty, and staff where they can find information about sexual and gender harassment, counseling, and redress for harassment they have experienced in the college community. The Panel, and others like it across the nation, necessarily deals with abuses of power within the college community; but it also has another primary role: to help the entire college community recognize the existence, nature, and extent of sexual and gender harassment so that we may work together toward eliminating these pervasive, but often hidden abuses. In my experience as a founding member and, for the past few years, co-coordinator of the Panel, a group such as this learns as it seeks to establish procedures, to investigate complaints, and to share information and insights with others. As we deal with the complexities of actual personalities and circumstances, the reality of the term "abuse" becomes apparent and this awareness, we hope, fosters the sensitivity needed to help the person who feels victimized. At the same time, we must investigate the complaint without prejudging circumstances and events. Although such panels deal with a particular issue, their methods almost necessarily intersect other approaches to the nature and problems of traditional academic structures and methodologies. Research in ethnic and racial diversity, challenges to an exclusive Eurocentric college curriculum and feminist scholarship in every field are natural allies and primary resources. The collaborative nature of our Panel, composed of faculty, staff, and students, in itself suggests ways that the classroom and college environment can be something better than a traditional hierarchy, deeply split between professor and student.

Finally, we work against the complicity of ignorance. I still hear colleagues say, with a laugh or smirk, when I tell them I'm off to a meeting of the Panel, "Oh, are you going to harass someone?" or, "Can I volunteer to

be harassed?" I suspect that if the meeting were on rape counseling, AIDS, or racism, the response would be different. We still lack public recognition that the problem of sexual harassment in the academy is a problem, one of major importance and shared responsibility. Whatever covert biases continue—as they will—public recognition is a necessary precondition for significant change. Those who have fought, with significant success, for decent treatment of the victims of rape and racial abuse know the importance of public debate.

The chapters in this collection are very important contributions to the growing, collective effort to inform the college community about the sexual harassment that affects at least a third of its members. The authors of the chapters have all been engaged in direct action to remedy the abuses caused by sexual harassment. They offer no abstract theories; they present results of practical research and experience that can serve as models for individual and collective action.

—*Richard Barickman*

* * *

In viewing this volume there are a number of separate issues that converge as the chapters unfold. My experience as the College Ombudsman at Hunter College, and as one who became a part of the Sexual Harassment Panel even before it was formalized, may shape my focus on this volume. Each reader may bring to this material a different perspective. The strength of this volume is that it provides ample opportunity, information, and guidance along a wide range of concerns in this area. Sexual harassment is a crime, and it is a shame that it has not received appropriate consideration in the work place and in the academic halls until relatively recently.

From my vantage point, the data on the relative frequency of the occurrence of sexual harassment is not a genuine concern. Frequency does not identify the importance of horrendous events. The action taken with regard to the events identifies its importance to the victims, the potential victims, *and* to those who intentionally or inadvertently engage in these practices. This is true of lynchings, restrictive covenants, racist acts, and racism and sexism in general. Again, it is not the frequency of these events that make them horrible acts, it is the very nature of the acts themselves. The measure of a civilized society is how it protects the less powerful, and how it reacts to the victimization of the less powerful.

Sexual harassment in the academic community is most often the victimization of the less powerful. It involves coercion and potential retaliation in a system in which advancement is based on subjective evaluations. The victim's helplessness is exaggerated by the dependency that is fostered by the powerful agents in the university—the teacher, the thesis sponsor, the faculty member who is expected to provide letters of recommendation, etc. The junior faculty member, like the student, is equally dependent, and is just as likely to be victimized as long as these issues are ignored. The fact that the system is based on subjective criteria—for grades, for promotion—makes the victim even more helpless.

The problems of encouraging reports or complaints of sexual harassment are further exacerbated by the fact that the victims may not suspect that harassment actually occured, or may even feel guilty that they may have been at least partially responsible for the harassment. The victims blaming themselves! Thus the problem of encouraging and investigating complaints of sexual harassment become very difficult. Following the initial act of harassment to its final impact requires very careful examination of the information provided. The review of the complaint must be very sensitively handled. This is well outlined in this volume.

Anyone who has tried to adjudicate complaints of sexual harassment finds this particularly troublesome. It is most often a private event. The victim is often left hurt and confused, and the victimizer has denial immediately available as a defense. The investigation of such complaints is very demanding—the fragile rights of both the accused and the accusor must be carefully protected.

Prevention of sexual harassment is our most important goal. Even if retaliation is prevented, even if justice finally triumphs, the personal impact of sexual harassment cannot be undone for the victims. The history of the event persists and the victims need help beyond simple adjudication. A very troubling matter indeed.

What are we left to do? We must put everyone in the community—the university—on guard. We must sensitize potential victims and warn potential victimizers by raising the awareness of the kinds of behavior that fall within the category of sexual harassment. We have to make clear the sources of help for the victims of sexual harassment—how to report the incident, where to go for help, and what protections are available. We have to emphasize the victims' responsibilities to their peers and to the institution to report sexual harassment whenever it occurs. In order to provide "power equality" judicial review must be thorough and swift. We must have sanctions that are commensurate with the degree of harassment and damage done, and we must have sanctions that will be imposed. The responsible administrative officers must demonstrate their readiness to

impose penalties that reflect the seriousness of the violation involved. Without the latter, the whole matter falls like a house of cards.

As the chapters of this volume unfold, we see that these issues, and other related matters, are given the thorough attention that they merit.

—*Sam Korn*

* * *

Our Project on the Status and Education of Women at the Association of American Colleges wrote the first nationally distributed report on sexual harassment in 1979. Pandora's box opened in 1977 when 5 students, claiming sexual harassment by faculty, sued Yale University under Title IX, which prohibits sexual discrimination in institutions receiving federal assistance. Subsequently, in the early 1980s, many institutions developed policies and educational programs to deal with sexual harassment. These institutions are now reevaluating those policies and programs in light of their experiences over the last few years. Other institutions are just developing their policies and making critical decisions as to just what that policy ought to be. Clearly this book comes at a good time.

Although a lot has been written about sexual harassment on campus, less has been written about policies and policy implementation. Often each institution has had to reinvent its own wheel as it shaped and implemented its policy because there has been no place to get information about what options to consider and what other institutions have found successful.

Sexual harassment on campus is not a rare occurrence. Between 20 to 30 percent of all female undergraduates experience some form of sexual harassment behaviors such as leering, sexual innuendos and comments, obscene gestures, humor and jokes about sex or women in general, unwanted touching or other physical contact, and direct or indirect threats or bribes for unwanted sexual activity.

About two percent of undergraduate women report that they have received specific threats, coercion or offers of bribes for unwanted sexual activity. Two percent may sound like a small number but it represents over 130,000 women students. Using the lower figure of 20 percent as an estimate for all forms of sexual harassment—subtle and overt—by faculty and staff means that over 1,300,000 women students experience harassment. For graduate women, the percentage is higher, somewhere between

30 and 40 percent experience sexual harassment. Additionally, between 70 and 90 percent of women students report having been harassed by their fellow male students; indeed, a new campus issue is student peer harassment.

A small percentage of cases—perhaps three or five percent—involve male students being harassed by either men or women faculty or staff. Only a few studies have examined harassment of faculty and staff. These figures vary more widely than those of student harassment and in most incidences are higher; one study suggests that as many as 50 percent of untenured women faculty may experience some form of harassment. For staff the figures may even be higher. It is increasingly clear that for a large number of students, faculty, and staff the college environment is not one of learning and support but one of stress and exploitation. Most men are not harassers. Usually it is a small number of men who are harassing a larger number of women, either sequentially or simultaneously or both. It is quite rare for a person to harass only once; it is typically a pattern of behavior that is repeated again and again.

Sexual harassment continues to be a troublesome issue on campus. Certainly more research is needed to analyze the causes, extent and efficacy of remedies. The problem will not go away, nor are there easy answers. The issues are complex and not readily resolved. This book is a step in the right direction and will provide institutions with much of the help they need to provide a climate where men and women can learn and work in an environment that is free of harassment.

—Bernice Sandler

* * *

Writing the foreword to this volume on sexual harassment in academia has given us the opportunity to look at our individual and collective commitment to feminism and our expressions of this commitment through our research. We have each come to recognize that it is important to actively express our dedication to issues affecting women. As a result, we have chosen to combine personal aspirations with this commitment and to develop a career that seeks to contribute substantively to women's empowerment.

As graduate students, we were interested in obtaining hands-on research experience; as feminists, we were fascinated with the topic of

sexual harassment. These combined interests prompted us to individually approach Louise Fitzgerald with the desire to participate in her project examining sexual harassment in academia. Through our inclusion in Louise's work, we have evolved into a strong collaborative feminist research team that has been active in presenting and publishing for the last three years.

It has been professionally satisfying and personally exciting to be involved in this research group. We have also experienced a dual role conflict given the area that we investigate, and our status as graduate students. Our research has increased our awareness by sensitizing us to the range of sexual harassment behaviors that often exist in the university environment (*e.g.*, sexist innuendos and comments, a general sexist atmosphere, and offensive behaviors). This increased awareness has allowed us to empathize with the experience of our research subjects, and has resulted in an increased motivation to address issues of sexual harassment in our empirical work. It has also presented us with the dilemma of how to resolve or address harassment that we may notice or experience as students. We are placed in the position of needing to assess the benefits and repercussions that any possible action would have on our academic careers. This can at times cause us to remain silent when we feel outrage, or to question our very involvement in this sometimes unpopular, and always controversial, area.

In studying sexual harassment, we have discovered that its origin and many of its expressions stem from the sexism that persists in our society. We are reminded of the feminist slogan that "the personal is political," and we have come to view our research efforts as our vehicle for social change. One obvious drawback in using research to achieve this goal is that the effectiveness of the research is not always immediately visible. There is often a substantial time lag between the discovery of new information and the use of it. The process of doing research can be abstract and necessarily removes the investigator's subjective feelings from the area under investigation, so that the phenomena may be examined in an unbiased manner.

The positive aspects in doing this type of research are many. If an idea is substantiated, it can lead to reliable and accurate information that can be used for positive changes that benefit women students. Our own knowledge of harassment and its effects has increased. Our identities and abilities as professionals have been greatly enhanced by our empirical experience, as well as by our exposure to collegial relationships with other professionals. In learning the process of research, we gain a tool for channeling idealism and outrage into knowledge that can be used for creating an educational system beneficial to all.

In looking forward to the future we anticipate the day when one group

will not dominate another and sexual harassment will no longer be an issue. We believe that any real change must begin with increased awareness at all levels. A majority of students and faculty must recognize that sexual harassment is an imposition inflicted by a person in a position of power over a person with lower status. Development of workshops for students and faculty, panel discussions related to this topic, support for victims, and sound institutional guidelines for dealing with sexual harassment are possible concerete actions toward obtaining this goal. We hope that both the subtle forms of sexual harassment and its more blatant manifestations will disappear. The university environment is one where all persons have the right to seek education in a harassment-free setting, and is one that can set guidelines for social change. This volume is an important step in this process. We hope that other students and professionals, women and men, will follow their passions and hopes for a more equitable world and seek to realize this in their personal and professional lives.

—*Yael Gold, Alayne Ormerod,* and *Lauren M. Weitzman*

Preface

The career psychology of women continues to be an active area of research and theory, as evidenced by the recent textbook in this area by Nancy Betz and Louise Fitzgerald (1987). In an attempt to understand why women do not attain levels of success frequently attained by men, why traditional measures of achievement motivation and behavior are unrelated for women, and how to motivate women to enter previously all-male occupations and careers, research has focused on the following socio-psychological factors: child rearing and socialization patterns (Horner, 1968), women's attributions for success and failure (Deaux and Emswiller, 1974), as well as how women define success (Stein and Bailey, 1973).

In recent years, research on the career psychology of women has included structural or institutional factors involved, including performance evaluation and discrimination against women. Recently, a considerable amount of evaluation and controversy has been devoted to the operation of mentors on women's career development. Arguments in favor of mentors (preferably female) for women have stressed the importance of women's identification with female models, the importance of the information provided by the mentor's behavior, and the positive incentive through illustrative success. Women have been advised to find a female mentor and to be one to other women. This appeal is most likely a response to the numerous research findings that suggest that women do not receive as much mentoring as do men. Explanations for this finding have concerned the paucity of women who are in positions of power to serve as mentors.

Thus, several researchers have commented on the crucial part played by mentors in promoting their protégés' professional growth (Gilbert, Gallessich, and Evans, 1983; Rawles, 1980; Wallston, Cheronis, Czirr, Edwards, and Russo, 1978). Research has typically indicated that mentoring influences are related to individuals' level of career development (Farylo, Jerome, Hicks, and Paludi, 1985; Farylo and Paludi, 1985; McNeer, Haynes, and Paludi, 1983). Undergraduate women appear to benefit from having the opportunity to observe a female professor. Professional women, on the other hand, are more interested in determining how to pursue their career goals. Furthermore, the sex of the mentor relates to women's self-assessment of competency, aspirations, and self-worth

(Farylo and Paludi, 1985; Gilbert, Gallessich, and Evans, 1983).

For the last several years I have been conducting research into the sociopsychological and structural factors affecting women's achievement and the career pathways they follow. Key sociopsychological factors I have investigated included fear of success, achievement orientation, causal attributions for success and failure, and gender-role identity. Structural factors have included the influence of social policy on achievement potential, performance evaluation, employed mothers and the family context, and attitudes and attributions about women's abilities and roles. In 1982 I began conducting research on another structural factor, the availability of role models and mentors on women's career development. With the assistance of several graduate and undergraduate students in my women's career development research collective at Kent State University and Hunter College, I have investigated the impact of mentors on women's perceptions of competency, aspirations, and self-worth. These studies were done using several cohorts: undergraduate women, graduate women, women faculty and administrators. A great deal of information was obtained from these studies that failed to support the enthusiasm of a woman having a mentor that other authors were suggesting. Instead of the positive influences being discussed, women in our studies were telling us about the drawbacks of having a mentor—especially if the mentor was a man. My research collective and I learned from these women that they were typically perceived by their male mentors as needing assistance, as requiring help with their studies or work. The male mentors from whom we obtained responses described their male protégés as having a long-term commitment to their careers. The same mentors described their female protégés as needing their help to get through school or their job. Similar results were being reported around the same time by Marianne LaFrance (1987), who commented on the paradox of mentoring for women: As women continue to get the mentoring they need, they will be seen as needing the mentoring they get.

And Phyllis Bronstein and her colleagues (1986) found that male mentors, in their letters of recommendations of female protégés for faculty positions, described the woman's family responsibilities as a burden. For men, a family life was presented as an asset. None of the female protegés mentioned lifestyle/family status in their vitae; male mentors, however, mentioned it. Furthermore, Marilyn Haring-Hildore and Linda Brooks (1986) reported that approximately half of the protégés they studied reported having problems with their mentors. Thus, data was beginning to accumulate that suggested that having a mentor did not ensure a successful mentoring relationship in which the protégé receives the sponsorship, coaching, encouragement, and criticism that enables them to accomplish their career goals.

In addition, the women in our research described their experiences with being trivialized, ignored, and omitted from important meetings that would further their careers. They described their battles with being called "girl" in class and on the job; their being touched, patted, looked at, and propositioned backed by the threat of a lowered grade or failure to get a promotion. Our research on mentoring and being mentored thus led us to investigate another structural factor involved in women's achievement: sexual harassment.

At about the same time two colleagues, Louise Fitzgerald and Sandy Shullman, obtained a research grant from the U.S. Department of Education to develop an instrument that would enable them to get a national profile of the incidence of sexual harassment in undergraduate, graduate, faculty, administrative, and staff women. Furthermore, it was also at this time that Mary Koss and I were involved in sex discrimination cases ourselves. We thus found ourselves totally immersed in research on women's victimization (Mary's research is on date rape; mine on mentoring and harassment), as well as immersed in the struggle to understand emotionally as well as intellectually what was happening to us in our own professional lives. The women participants in our research and in the studies being conducted by Louise Fitzgerald and Sandy Shullman were most helpful to us in this process. As feminist education suggests, we entered into dialogues with individual colleagues, family, friends, students, and research participants about the experience of harassment on women's professional careers, health, relationships, self-esteem, and sense of trust. This volume is one of the outgrowths of these dialogues.

A great many individuals deserve recognition for their participation in these dialogues. I would like to express my appreciation to them in this book: Paul Koss, John Koss, and Paul S. Koss, Ron Towne, Linda Guran, Virginia Harvey, Laurel Wilcox, Jan Litwack, MaryAnn Kinney, Sandy Shullman, Louise Fitzgerald, Margaret Richards, Nancy Bailey, Pat Louka, Janet Dix, Cathy Kane, Debbie Plummer, Barb Watts, Nancy Betz, Louise Douse, Marilee Niehoff, William Dember, Richard Melton, John Allensworth, Sandy Christman, and John Marino.

The participants in our Hunter College Women's Career Development Research Collective also deserve recognition for their willingness to research harassment and for their wonderful ability to share the information on harassment with women and men in a variety of disciplines: Carole Ann Scott, Joni Kindermann, Marc Grossman, Susan Matula, Judi Dovan, Lisa Goldstein, Pam Schneider, Don Grimm, Lorraine McKenney, Meryl Zacker, Dolly Soto, and Elizabeth Wilson-Ansley.

The Sexual Harassment Panel at Hunter College also deserves my appreciation for inviting me to share the research and personal expertise with them. Dorothy O. Helly and Richard Barickman have been most

supportive and encouraging and I have learned a great deal by working with them. Sam Korn, Jean Rieper, Ruth Smallberg, Vernell Daniels, Marc Grossman, Carole Ann Scott, Mary Lefkarities, Kathy Katzman, Michael Carrera, Carolyn Somerville, Sally Polakoff, and Sue Rosenberg Zalk also deserve my thanks.

And I thank Jacquelynne Eccles, Virginia O'Leary, Dona Alpert, Hannah Lerman, and Lenore Walker for inviting me to speak to them in Washington at the Division of the Psychology of Women's Executive Committee Meeting in 1986. As a result of this discussion, the Task Force on Sexism and Ethics was formed. I also thank Lenore Walker, Hannah Lerman, and Ellen Kimmel for inviting me to co-chair this Task Force with Hannah Lerman.

Anthony Mazzella and his staff at the Employee Assistance Program at Hunter College made it possible for me to offer workshops on sexual and gender harassment for faculty and staff.

And, I thank Sue Rosenberg Zalk for inviting me to apply for a position as Visiting Associate Professor of Women's Studies at Hunter College in 1986. It was at Hunter College I completed this volume, met many of its contributors, made dear friends, and understood myself once again. Sue's invitation led me to meet and work with Florence Denmark, Florence Howe, Donna Shalala, Dorothy O. Helly, Joan Tronto, Darlene DeFour, Fina Bathrick, Nancy Dean, Mary Lefkarities, Marcia Darling, Rosalind Petchesky, Mary Brown Parlee, Sue Riemer Sacks, Sarah Pomeroy, Susan Lees, and K.C. Wagner.

I especially thank Richard Barickman, with whom I am co-coordinating the Sexual Harassment Panel at Hunter College. Richard's generosity, caring, and support have been gifts to cherish.

I finally thank the person whose name appears first on the dedication page, Mary P. Koss. We both knew the struggle was worth it all along. We both knew we would be survivors. We got to be close friends—something many male colleagues of ours never wanted to happen. We really did win, Mary.

—Michele A. Paludi
Manhattan, January, 1990

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