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A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF TWENTY-FOUR WOMEN WHO EXPERIENCED SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN HIGH SCHOOL: WHAT HAPPENED, HOW THEY COPED, AND HOW IT AFFECTED THEM

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By
Carolyn Slotten, M.S.W., M.S.

The Ohio State University
2002

Dissertation Committee:

Professor Jerelyn Schultz, Adviser

Professor Maia Pank-Mertz

Professor Ruth Dohner

Approved by

Professor Jerelyn Schultz
Adviser

College of Human Ecology
ABSTRACT

This is a qualitative study of interviews conducted with 24 adult women who experienced sexual harassment while in high school. The research questions addressed are: What occurred to you in high school, did you report it to the school/parents/friends, how did it affect you in high school, and are there any long-term effects you attribute to your experience? Through personal interviews with 24 adult women who categorize themselves as sexual harassment survivors, this study examined their personal coping strategies and histories. The study was designed from a feminist and narrative research approach, thus accounting for its qualitative and exploratory nature. The results of this study strongly mirrored the research literature examined. The women were harassed primarily by males, either students or teachers. The harassment usually occurred in public areas of the school with other people present and often participating. Victims rarely reported the harassment to school officials or their parents. The dissertation concludes with limitations of the study and directions for future research.
Dedicated to Saasha, Daniel and Dakota,
Those who keep my dreams alive and my heart safe.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank the many people whose belief, encouragement and "harassment" forced me to be successful, despite my protests and procrastinations. First, the 24 women who had the courage and honesty to trust me with their stories. Second, the OSU gang who share with me invaluable guidance and knowledge: Barbara, Jerelyn, Maia, and Ruth. Thank you from the bottom of my heart. You are all my heroes. This doctoral journey would never have succeeded without the love and support of my husband and children; sorry for all the time I missed with you to get this done. David, Missy, Chet and Eric, you were all right, it was worth it! Judie, my number one supporter and friend extraordinaire; you will forever be in my heart for all that you have done for me. Lastly, thank you Prince for keeping me smiling and singing.
VITA

May 14, 1960............................................................Born - Madison, Wisconsin
1984.............................................................................B.A., University of Wisconsin - Madison
1987.............................................................................M.S.W., University of Cincinnati
1997.............................................................................M.S., Miami University

PUBLICATIONS


FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: Human Ecology
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Every weekday in America children go to school (whether public or private) because it is the law of our land and the primary place where our children are educated. Unfortunately, children are not only educated on academic subjects they are also educated about their lack of rights, the lack of respect they receive, and the fragility of their safety violated through the frequency and severity of sexual harassment. The professional literature and research has documented that school is not only a place for learning subject matter but it is also a place in which students may experience sexual harassment, humiliation, abuse, and intimidation. Much of the research examining sexual harassment so far has focused on two locations where harassment occurs, the workplace and universities. At both types of sites sexual harassment has been found to be a frequent problem. But the problem is hardly limited to these locations. One of the least studied environments and one not often recognized as a serious problem is high school (Loredo, Reid, & Deaux, 1995).

Sexual harassment in schools is any unwanted and unwelcome behavior of a sexual nature that interferes with the right of students to receive an equal educational opportunity (Stein, 1995). Interestingly, sexual harassment is defined by the victim: if a person finds the comments or physical contact to be unwelcome, then it is harassment (Lawton, 1993). Sexual harassment in schools happens in public places such as hallways, lunchrooms, physical education classes, on school busses, on school playgrounds, in classrooms, and at school sponsored activities (Stein, 1993). All too often harassment
gets trivialized, the victims demeaned and embarrassed. Boys become trained to be
abusers because they are given excuses for their behavior, which is ignored by those in
power and not condemned by the school society.

The silence of adults in the school community represents negligence, allowing
and sometimes even encouraging the sexual harassment to continue (Stein, 1993).
Students often become mistrustful of adults who fail to intervene, provide equal
protection, and safeguard the educational environment (Stein, 1993). As a result, sexual
harassment contaminates the whole school environment, and its impact may embrace
more than the immediate and intended target. The school environment becomes poisoned
for everyone - innocent witnesses and bystanders alike - in addition to the intended
targets of sexual harassment (Stein, 1994). Sexual harassment often operates in the full
and plain view of others. Students harass students with impunity, while many people
watch. Sexual harassment instances have become ordinary, expected, and public. It is
also a problem when bystanders will see those in charge ignore it and therefore become
afraid to get involved because they may be next and believe no one will intervene to help
them (Stein, 1995).

Sexual victimization in high school environments has been perpetrated by peers,
educators, and school staff. Such victimization is not rare and has not traditionally been
handled with alarm and/or conscientious attention. All too often “boys will be boys.”
“the girl asked for it”, and “it was just a joke” are uttered as justifications for the sexual
harassment, humiliation, intimidation, and persecution that occurs in school settings. It is
time to educate ourselves and move beyond these lame excuses, to examine the realities
of the issues, and to begin exploring how to prevent, evaluate, and prosecute such
indignities. It is time for schools to move beyond the painful education of humiliation
and degradation and find ways to allow all students, males and females, to experience
safety, pride, respect, rights, and academic education.
School is the nucleus of adolescent life: it should be a place of friend and peer interactions; it should be a place of trusted and respected adults; and it should be a place where students can explore and expand their life opportunities. A fear of safety in school teaches young women to expect and accept the behavior as an inevitable part of everyday existence. If they cannot be kept safe and protected in school, how can they expect to find it in other places? When much of a girl's day is spent avoiding or being subjected to sexual innuendoes, humiliating comments, and physical assault, how can she be expected to excel in high school? Sexual harassment is an experience that interferes with a young woman's access to an education of her choice, comfort in exploring educational options, and therefore seriously threatens her future occupation (Larkin, 1994).

Incidents of sexual harassment persist as a way of reminding girls that they are not considered equal. These incidents place girls in an ambivalent situation as they grapple with the feelings of frustration, fear, rage, and humiliation that arise from the demeaning behavior they so often experience in school, an institution that is presented as their door to the future and opportunity. Despite all the efforts directed towards equal opportunity, we know that many of the girls' self-esteem, confidence and career aspirations continue to decrease as they progress in their education (American Association of University Women, 1993). The frequency and severity of sexual harassment in high school is one possible factor.

Sexual harassment is one of many expressions of sexism, which reflects and reinforces the unequal power that exists between men and women in our patriarchal society. It is part of a pattern of male-female interaction in which men routinely express their dominance over women (Larkin, 1994). Sexual harassment has become a practice that some men use to maintain, prove, or obtain their dominant position in society (Larkin, 1994). Each experience of sexual harassment is a subtle reminder that women are infringing on male territory. When female students are ridiculed and humiliated as
they walk down the school hallway, teased as inferior in our math and science classes, and intimidated into silence during class discussions the messages are clear: this is not your space, you are not important, you are inferior. Not all males harass and not all victims are females, but the problem is so pervasive that we need to look beyond individual males to see what it is about our social structure that allows so many to do so.

This study had two objectives: first, to explore past research that has been done on adolescents, high schools and sexual harassment in education; second, to conduct a qualitative study exploring the dimensions of sexual harassment in high school environments, how students cope, and how being a victim to sexual harassment affects the educational experience of the students. The literature review on unwanted sexual attention and sexual harassment in United States secondary schools included an examination of the characteristics of adolescence, the high school culture and environment, and examples of some of the high school sexual harassment cases that have brought to the public’s knowledge (peer-to-peer and educator-to-student). In addition, a canvassing of recent sexual harassment experiences and statistics provided a look at unwanted sexual attention in high school. The review also looked at the laws that govern sexual abuse generally and in education, as well as explore feminist theory and narrative research as they pertain to this study. The terms child sexual abuse, survivorship, and coping were concretely defined in order to explicate the significance behind these issues. An examination of past research efforts support both the importance of this study and how the study adds to previous research.

The study itself explored examples of unwanted sexual attention in high school through in-depth, face-to-face interviews with 24 adults who define themselves as survivors of such an experience. The interviews focused on what happened to them, how they responded/felt, how they coped, whether they reported the incident(s) to anyone, the
nature of the response, how this experience affected their education, and how it has affected them as adults.

**Sexual Harassment as Continua**

One way the issue of sexual harassment can be placed in a societal and definitional context is to look at the ways sexual harassment fits on various continua. One such continuum would be to consider sexual harassment as one of the many ways girls are socialized into fitting into a subordinate position within the patriarchal society. Harassing behavior is part of a long, steady process of intimidation designed to pressure girls into their expected role as subordinates. Sexual harassment, most often perpetrated by males, provides young men with practice at being the “superior” sex (Larkin, 1994).

To many people, sexual intimidation and other forms of violence against women are the logical results of a culture in which women are often devalued, dismissed, intimidated, and abused. Despite the gains that have been made by many women over the past decades, the continual devaluing of women's work, the lack of women in positions of authority and decision-making, the continual resistance to women having control over their own bodies, the visual representation of women as sexual objects throughout the media, and the frequent disparaging jokes about blondes, mother-in-laws, and bimbos are just some of the ways the diminishment of women remains an integral part of our cultural attitudes, policies, and practices.

Another continuum is to view sexual harassment on a scale of violence against women. On one end are the seemingly “joking” aspects of jokes against women and sexually harassing leers and looks. On the other end of such misogynist behaviors are the maiming, rape, and murder of women. According to Walker (1994), sexual assault is learned at a young age and begins when school-age boys start calling girls cows, pigs, sluts, and other derogatory names. Such verbal abuse, when unchecked, can lead to degrading acts such as boys lifting up girls’ skirts, thrusting their hands between girls’
legs, or holding them down in mock intercourse. The tendency in the past has been to
dismiss much of this demeaning behavior as nothing more than “boys will be boys” kind
of antics. But the link between mock intercourse to actual rape is clear. Society makes
way for this progression when it tolerates the many ways males diminish females.

Sexual harassment is a part of the continuum of violence that restricts the lives,
experiences, and opportunities of girls and women. In our society—where 27% of
women are sexually assaulted at some point in their lives; where 49% of these women are
under the age of seventeen at the time of their first assault; where 65.5% of female
victims are sexually assaulted by males they know; where 60% of college-age men have
reported that under the right circumstances they would use force, rape or both in sexual
relations with women; and where the degradation and violation of women through
pornography is a billion dollar business—every incident of sexual harassment reminds
women of their potential to be abused by men (Larkin, 1994).

Women are never sure of when any one type of harassment will escalate to a more
extreme form of abuse, such as assault or rape. This is why seemingly minor incidents of
sexual intimidation can feel so threatening. If we really think about it, sexual assault
almost always begins with some type of harassment: an intimidating comment, a leering
look, an unwanted touch, an unsolicited sexual invitation. This is why the concept of a
continuum is so relevant: it allows us to see how the many forms of violence are
connected and it gives us a sense of the spectrum of violence in women’s lives on an
ongoing, if not daily basis.

Still another possible continuum context of sexual harassment is in terms of time
spans. For some females, sexual harassment may be an infrequent, even one-time
experience by strangers. On the other end of the continuum are the people who
experience harassing behaviors for years from the same person/people, as well as those
who are harassed by people they know. Within the high school setting, young women may be forced to cope with the threat of unwanted attention over several years.

The Feminist Movement and Consciousness About Sexual Harassment

Historical reflections demonstrate that sexual harassment of children, adolescents, and adult women is an age-old problem, yet widespread societal recognition and admission of its occurrence only dates back to the late 1960’s and early 1970’s. The exposure of how and why sexual harassment has become a publicly recognized experience is largely due to feminists and the women’s movement and they provide crucial background for this dissertation.

There are several reasons why this dissertation is presented from a feminist theory perspective. Feminism and feminists are largely responsible for the public awareness of sexual harassment, and by virtue of this achievement, their theoretical basis seems best suited to conduct further study. Furthermore, feminist theory is instrumental in creating grounded theory/qualitative research/narrative research as a valid, viable, and important source for allowing people (especially survivors) to gain their “voice” about their experiences and to be heard.

The feminists of the 1960’s and 1970’s movement did many things to bring about a social consciousness of many of the issues that especially affect women: spousal abuse, sexual harassment, child abuse, and unwanted pregnancy, to name a few. Feminists were fundamental in viewing such problems through a societal focus (Driver & Droisen, 1990). Traditionally, “blame” and “responsibility” have been placed on the victims themselves, who are primarily females (Driver & Droisen, 1990). These traditional views ignored the realities that males are the primary abusers and that females (children and adults) are the primary victims. Not only do they ignore the societal context of male
responsibility but they "blame the victim" and expect the victim to somehow "right the
wrong" done to them, and/or ignore or excuse the offending behavior. In addition, the
realities of the long-term effects of victimization were largely ignored. According to
Driver and Droisen (1990), the purpose of the male patriarchal view of the violence
against women and children was to create and maintain male control over females and
ensure continuation of male supremacy.

Feminists in the 1960's and 1970's reexamined how many forms of violence
against females and children were being viewed and changed the focus. Instead of
emphasizing the victimization role of the problem, the focus was directed toward the
perpetrators of the abuse. The experience was conceptualized through the experience of
the victims of an unequal power relationship permeating all aspects of society (Driver &
Droisen, 1990). Females' positions in society as powerless, undervalued victims were
used to re-evaluate child sexual abuse from the perspective of who is abused (females)
and who abuses (males).

Feminists have further expanded consciousness of child sexual abuse by looking
beyond who experiences it toward why it is perpetrated. Because of the inherent power
imbalance based on gender divisions, the male domination of virtually all aspects of
society has given males excessive privileges and superior status over women.
"Misbehaviors" involving men as perpetrators and females as victims tend to continue to
be under-reported, underpunished, and underprevented (Brickman, 1984; Rush, 1980).
The feminist focus on the societal imbalance of power has brought these realities to light,
and sexual harassment is just one of the arenas where the gender/power imbalance is
played out.

Some feminist writers have expanded the sexual victimization of primarily
females to signify more than just a power injustice. Driver and Droisen (1990) contend
that the sexual abuse of females is far more widespread than any studies have reflected,
and that it is in fact experienced by all females to varying degrees. Being a sexually victimized child/adolescent, according to them, is the beginning of "normal" training that prepares females to accept and experience the ongoing sexual exploitation they will experience as women in this society. Stein (1995) further explores the societal view of sexual harassment and the societal response (or lack of it) in her writings. She contends that girls who suffer the experience of sexual harassment as children/adolescents are "battered woman in training." Because of the way such things are handled (or ignored) in the schools and in society at large, girls learn that no one will intervene, no one cares, and no one believes them. If they speak up they are blamed. As a result they learn to adjust their own behavior in an effort to change the abuser's/batterer's/harasser's behavior. Schools may be training grounds for the cycle of domestic violence. Girls are taught that they are on their own, that adults and others around them will not believe them. In essence they are trained to accept the battering and assault (Stein, 1995).

At the same time, boys are taught they can act this way. They can objectify girls/women, perpetrate unwanted sexual attention, and authority figures and peers will excuse it or ignore it. Boys seeing this behavior may begin to think they are supposed to engage in this type of behavior (Stein, 1993). Stein (1995) further sees sexual harassment as a form of "gender violence" that usually happens in the public arena. The antecedents of harassment are found in teasing and bullying, behaviors tacitly accepted by adults (Stein, 1995). Over the years sexual harassment has become a societal norm that permeates and is accepted in all places at the expense of all people.

Due to the women's movement spotlighting the sexual victimization of women and children, a more open and public discussion of sexual harassment has emerged. A more free and frequent dialogue about the reality of unwanted sexual attention not only educates the public, but hopefully will ultimately help reduce the frequency of such abuses. From the feminist perspective, sexual harassment is merely another tool of
patriarchal socialization, and this reality is so abhorrent to feminists that they are trying to heighten societal focus on the problem.

From the researchers perspective, feminist theory makes the most sense in understanding the issue of sexual harassment because it is one of the few theories I know that places the responsibility of sexual abuse where it belongs: on the perpetrator, and not on the victim. It is also the only theory that places responsibility on the whole patriarchal structure that sets up children/adolescents/girls (especially female children) to be “willing”, silent victims before, during, and after their victimization. Feminist theory gives women and children a voice: a forum to be heard, understood, and believed. Feminist theory empowers women and children to feel their stories are important, their experiences are real and their lives and futures deserve more than the typical patriarchal victimization patterns. It allows personal empowerment as well as empowerment for societal change. Feminism brings together women, children, and survivors to give opportunity to support each other and work together for change.

**Purpose of this study**

This is a qualitative study of the experiences of sexual harassment in high school, how students coped with it, and how it affected them educationally from a feminist perspective. Research to date has focused on the prevalence of the problem, and characteristics of the experience. These are important parts of understanding the experience of sexual harassment but a crucial part of the picture has thus far not been researched, if not ignored. This study intends to fill this void. Past research on sexual harassment survivors has focused primarily on work environments or university settings. In research on high school settings, the focus generally was on the details of the experience, largely ignoring how students coped with the experience, how it affected their education, and if it affected them long-term (as adults). It is true that most people live through the sexual victimization that is forced upon them as adolescents. Despite the
scars, despite the pain, and despite the fear, anger and frustrations. Most sexually harassed students continue to function as students and move past the high school experience, no matter how good or bad. The ability to function despite the experience does not negate the importance of people as survivors of sexual harassment. This does not in any way negate the impact sexual harassment can have on the person. As the literature review on experiences and reactions/responses to sexual harassment will show, the resulting problems can be extensive and devastating for many people.

What types of sexual harassment do high school students experience? Where does it occur, who perpetrates it, and for how long? How do students respond/react to such instances? How do schools or parents respond if they find out it has occurred? How do teenagers cope with the embarrassment and humiliation? How does it affect their education? How does it affect them as adults? Through personal interviews with adults who recognize themselves as having experienced sexual harassment in high school, this study will examine personal coping strategies, experiences, and histories. The study will be designed from a feminist and narrative research approach, which means it will be qualitative and exploratory in nature. The participants of the study will tell their stories in their own voices; as such they will largely define the study as well as its results.

Exposing the silent experiences of many students will allow me to develop strategies for educators to help eliminate the problem. I wanted to understand the various ways sexual harassment occurs in young women’s lives in high school settings. My interest began several years ago in a gender education class in which the readings frequently alluded to the problem of sexual harassment in education. I found myself wondering to what extent the experience of sexual harassment had altered the lives of girls and young women before they became adults. It seems to me that it is self-defeating to continue to encourage female students to strive academically without acknowledging the many ways they may be held back. Judging by its frequency, academic impact, and
intrusive nature, sexual harassment is a major barrier to girls’ education. I hope this study will provide new insights into the problem of sexual harassment in high schools as well as offer potential solutions to this serious problem.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORY

This dissertation contains an exploration of professional literature relevant to the study of unwanted sexual attention in high school, how students cope with it, how it affects victims educationally, and if these experiences affect them in adulthood. Initially, literature about adolescence in general and the culture of high schools will be reviewed in order to provide a background context of the adolescent period in life. The language used to describe and discuss sexual harassment will then be explored because of its impact for researching in the topic. In order to provide a comprehensive look at what is already known about sexual harassment in education, working definitions, examples of peer-to-peer and educator-to-student harassment, statistical information on harassment, as well as details of the experience such as how harassed students responded/reacted to the experience, excuses as to why sexual intimidation is allowed to continue, and school responses to the problem will be reviewed. Because this study is specifically looking at people who have survived the experience of sexual intimidation in high school and how they coped, coping literature and survivor literature also will be summarized. Because sexual harassment is illegal it is also important to present information about the laws governing sexual harassment, generally and in school environments, as well as the history of how such behaviors have become illegal and why. This section will also explore feminist theory and narrative analysis because they provide the theoretical foundation and design for this study. Lastly, in any feminist, qualitative study, it is important that who I am as a researcher is evident, even though my position will be evident throughout the
research process and the reporting of the findings. Therefore I will end this section with my personal position on and experience with sexual harassment in education.

**Adolescence**

In current industrialized societies, there is a long transitional period between childhood and adulthood known as adolescence. It spans almost a decade, from roughly 12 or 13 to early twenties, although the boundaries are individually determined. Generally it begins with puberty, the physical changes that lead to the ability to reproduce and to sexual maturity (Papalia & Olds, 1998). Adolescence is a time that includes major physical, cognitive, and psychosocial changes. Physical changes include maturation of the reproduction system, the appearance of secondary sex characteristics, height increases, and changes in body weight (Newman & Newman, 1995).

During the adolescent years, body image becomes very important to adolescents, and directly impacts their feelings of self-esteem and self-worth. Weight and body size are important foci of adolescent self-perception. Although only 5% of adolescents are obese and 15% are seriously overweight (Gans, 1990). 66% of high school girls are preoccupied with weight and dieting (Casper & Offer, 1990). Another study found that more than half of female seniors have dieted seriously (Brown, Childers, & Waszak, 1988).

Recently, two eating disorders, both physically damaging and potentially life threatening, have become increasingly common to adolescent girls: anorexia nervosa and bulimia. These two eating disorders have been found to be a direct result of distorted body image, a dysfunctional reaction to extreme societal pressure for women to be thin, and compulsion to fit into a distorted view of perfection. Anorexia is when a person, most often a female, starves herself and becomes less than 85% of normal body weight (American Psychological Association, 1994). Basically, anorexia is a form of self-
starvation, with the average onset at 17 years of age. It affects an estimated 1 percent of high school girls (APA, 1994). Bulimia encompasses the behaviors of regularly engaging in an enormous eating binge followed within a short time by self-induced vomiting, strict dieting, engaging in vigorous exercise, or taking enemas, laxatives, or diuretics in an attempt to purge the body (APA, 1994). It is estimated that 1-3% of adolescent girls regularly engage in such behaviors.

Emotional development is also an important aspect of adolescent development (Newman & Newman, 1995). Problems such as delinquency, eating disorders, and depression in adolescence result from the emotional problems some adolescents experience (Newman & Newman, 1995). Another emotional conflict that adolescents face is between wanting to be unique and individual yet placing great priority on having friends, fitting in, being accepted by peers and belonging to groups (Papalia & Olds, 1998). Another important emotional aspect of adolescent development is depression. Depression has been found to be a major problem for adolescents, especially girls. After age 15, girls are twice as likely to be depressed as teenage boys, possibly due to less assertive coping strategies, compliant nature expectations, and greater pressures in aspects such as sexuality that are common in the lives of teenagers in the United States.

Adolescence includes the years that bridge the gap between childhood and adulthood. These years are important in developing the patterns of the rest of one's life. As the literature shows, many issues are crucial concerns among adolescence including violence, eating disorders, body image, self-esteem, substance abuse, and sexually transmitted diseases. These are all concerns that set the stage for how adolescents might cope with sexual harassment in school environments.
The High School Culture/Environment

Historically in the United States (U.S.), education has been the ticket to economic and social advancement and to a successful adult life. Today, virtually all American adolescents under the age of 16 and most 16 to 17 year-olds are in school. More than half of all youth continue their education after graduating from high school by attending technical schools, colleges, or universities (Santrock, 1996). During the twentieth century, U.S. schools have assumed a prominent role in the lives of adolescents. From 1890 to 1920, virtually every state developed laws that excluded youth from work and required them to attend school.

By the middle of the twentieth century, schools had moved further toward preparing students for comprehensive roles in life, designed to train adolescents intellectually, vocationally, and socially (Santrock, 1996). In the 1970's, three independent panels agreed that high schools contributed to adolescent alienation and actually impeded the transition to adulthood (Brown, 1973; Coleman, 1974; Martin, 1976). The argument is that high schools segregate adolescents into “teenage warehouses,” isolating them in their own self-contained world with their own values away from adult society. The panels argued that schools should have more connection to community and work, to increase exposure to adult roles, and to decrease their isolation from adults.

In the last two decades a back-to-basics movement has gained momentum. It stresses that the primary aim of schools should be the rigorous training of intellectual skills through such subjects such as English, Mathematics, and Science. Supporters of the movement feel the “excessive fluff” found in most secondary school curricula do not give students adequate education. They also believe that schools should be in the business of imparting knowledge to adolescents and should not be concerned about adolescents’ social and emotional lives. They advocate more homework, more tests,
longer school years, and longer days. Much of this is a reaction against the open-
education approach that permeated high schools in the 1970's allowing adolescents to
learn at their own pace and letting students choose their own educational paths (Santrock, 1996).

Schools have a great deal of influence on students. By the time students graduate
from high school, they have accumulated more than 10,000 hours in the classroom
(Santrock, 1996). The experiences students have in this institution are likely to have a
strong influence in such areas as identity development, belief in one's competence,
images of life and career possibilities, social relationships, and standards of right and
wrong (Santrock, 1996).

Today's high schools have more opportunities available for students than ever
before in the history of education. High schools are designed to provide students with the
skills they will need for jobs and/or college (Cobb, 1995). According to Huelskamp
(1993), 85% of the population eventually obtains a high school diploma in the United
States compared to 5% of the population 100 years ago.

The design of schools in present times is based on an "academic tracking" system,
which means that schools assign students schedules into specific programs of study based
on prior achievement, stated goals, and the evaluation of school counselors (Cobb, 1995). In
some schools this is broken into two tracks, college and vocational, but many schools
have additional tracks as well (Cobb, 1995). Generally speaking, the college track
students are usually the most successful, "brightest" students who are taking more
advanced classes. The vocational track students are generally the least successful
students academically, with fewer opportunities, a slower pace of learning, and enrolled
in classes with lower performance expectations (Cobb, 1995).

One important characteristic of high schools that greatly affects the environment
and educational opportunity is the size of the school. According to Cobb (1995), smaller
high schools allow more positive interactions, have less truancy, lower drop-out rates, more flexibility, and a better sense of belonging for students. I assume this is because smaller schools have better student-to-teacher ratios and less anonymity, which results in less "falling-through-the-cracks" of students. According to Garbarino (1980), when a four-year high school has 500 students or more, it can be considered large and at risk for many of the problems associated with large schools.

Another crucial aspect of the school environment that greatly affects student success is that of school "input" variables (Bryk & Raudebush, 1988). "Input" variables refer to issues such as class size, number of books available to students in the library, computer availability, and if computers are integrated into classrooms or located in a separate area. The higher the "input" variables the more positive the climate, thereby resulting in the higher school achievement of individual students (Bryk & Raudebush, 1988).

Still another important characteristic of a high school environment is teacher attitudes and expectations (Cobb, 1995). If teachers demonstrate a positive attitude about teaching, student potentials, and have high expectations for student achievement, students are more likely to excel to live up to teacher expectations. Conversely, if teachers have bad attitudes in the classroom, do not expect much from students, and do not appear to like students, students will live up to these expectations as well and not be good students.

More important than a school's design, size, and climate, or the attitude of the teachers is whether or not the school environment is one in which students feel safe and secure (Cobb, 1995). This is an especially interesting claim given the topic of this dissertation focusing on the frequency and negative educational impact of sexual harassment in high schools. Toch (1993) studied the issue of violence in the schools and found the following information based on a study comparing the major disciplinary problems from 1940 to 1990 based on teacher perspective:
1940 1990
Talking out of turn Drug abuse
Chewing gum Alcohol abuse
Too much noise Teen pregnancy
Running in the halls Suicide
Cutting in line Rape
Dress-code violations Robbery
Littering Assault

Following in the same line of the safety of school environments in current times, the following is the result of a study by The Centers for Disease Control (1991) polling a group of 10th graders:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Males</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Been robbed at school</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Been threatened at school</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>33.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Been attacked at school</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carried a knife to school</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>23.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carried a gun to school</td>
<td>.4</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Toch (1993) in his survey of high school principals, there has been a 64% increase in violence at urban schools in the last five years, a 54% increase in violence at suburban schools in the last five years, and a 43% increase in violence at rural schools in the last five years. In conclusion, if safety and security of students is one of the main factors contributing to student success in high school, current high school environments are having major problems in this regard. A good high school has an orderly, unoppressive atmosphere; an active, energetic principal; and teachers who take part in decision making. Principals and teachers should have high expectations for
students, place greater emphasis on academics than on extracurricular activities, and closely monitor student performance (Linney & Seidman, 1989).

The peer group is an important source of status, friendship, and belonging in the school setting. The peer group also is a learning community in which social roles and standards related to later life and achievement are formed (Santrock, 1996). When students enter a school, they establish a reputation based on their interests, their behaviors, and what peers say about them. From this beginning, friends and reputations are made that often last throughout high school. Often peer groups or cliques are formed and become a focal support system through the high school years. Group identity, peer acceptance, and clique inclusion are all very important self-esteem and self-identity builders crucial in the lives of teenagers. For teenagers who are socially estranged, without social support or group belonging, alienation can be a problem for some adolescents (Newman & Newman, 1995).

According to Newman and Newman (1995), adolescents who have chronic problems integrating into peer groups in high school may develop lifelong problems in work, intimate relationship, health, and personal aspects of life. For many adolescents, the most important aspect of their lives is how they are seen by peers. To be excluded means stress, frustration, loneliness, hostility, poor mental health, and later criminal behavior and sadness. Being disliked or rejected by classmates can have damaging effects on children's psychological development (Santrock, 1996). Good peer relations are necessary for normal social development in adolescence. Social isolation or inability to fit in to social networks is linked with many different forms of problems and disturbances ranging from delinquency and problem drinking to depression (Santrock, 1996).

Along with the importance of peer opinion is the fact that the years spent in high school represent an important time for gender role socialization. During this time...
adolescents are developing critical attitudes about the nature of social relationships and the roles that apply to such interactions (Loredo, Reid, & Deaux, 1995).

Lastly, in understanding what is important about school culture it is also important to mention some of the power imbalances inherent in the school structure that greatly influence experiences with sexual harassment (the purpose of this dissertation). When examining examples of sexual harassment in education, it is not only important to mention the role patriarchy plays in setting up women to be victims in our society but also to mention the way our nation's educational system is set up in a patriarchal manner. The vast majority of the principals and superintendents (those people who are in the main places of power) are males. The majority of teachers are female but their power over decision making and policy making is very limited. There are many historical and patriarchal reasons why this has come to be and that would be a dissertation in itself. By and large, students have little recourse for handling problems, little input into the design or evaluation of school policies and procedures, and have limited power.

This sets up an environment where the victimization of students is quite possible, easily ignored, and easily undervalued. School administrators do not want attention drawn to "problems" of students and flaws with the system: they want school to be as quiet, calm, and nonpolitical as possible so as to maintain the status quo. This sets the stage for sexually harassed students to be ignored, avoided, or quieted. First, high school students have less personal mobility than other targets of sexual harassment. Teenagers do not have a voice in whether or not to attend high school or to choose which high school to attend (Loredo, Reid, & Deaux, 1995). Second, high school has a clear power structure system. The AAUW (1993) says 20% of student harassment is perpetrated by teachers or other authority figures. Teachers have the power of their school status behind them as well as the power of age (Loredo, Reid, & Deaux, 1995). In the case of students
being harassed by teachers. this information is very relevant to students who are trying to stop the harassment or get the harassing teacher to stop.

Literature has shown that the culture of high school is very important to the self-esteem, psychological development and happiness of adolescents. Issues such as school expectations, size, safety, and resources all play major roles in how good a school is. Also important is the peer network and social environment of the school. Lastly, the power dynamics that make up the school personnel and policy play a major role in the school environment, especially when it comes to the experience and handling of sexual harassment in the school.

The Language of Sexual Harassment Research

In examining the research and sources on sexual harassment there is great latitude, and sometimes confusion, about the language of sexual harassment. In addition to being aware of the meanings of the terms sexual harassment and survivor, it is also helpful to be aware of the many terms that are used by sexual harassment victims, professionals, and researchers because these vary greatly. When I first undertook the task of exploring the dimensions of sexual harassment in education, I was confused about how to characterize “sexual harassment”. The literature provides documentation showing how frequent a problem being sexually harassed in school can be for both females and males. Once I started talking to people about my project, however, my confusion grew because people were telling me that they were never “sexually harassed” in school, but they did experience a lot of intimidation and embarrassment by peers or teachers of a sexual nature. The problem is not limited to personal perceptions. As a legal principle there is a problem with the language of sexual harassment. The term harassment hinges on terms like “unwelcome” and “pervasive”, words that can be defined in thousands of ways (Cloud, 1998).
First, let me present what the literature says about the whole language of sexual harassment and then explain how I have chosen to handle the problem in this dissertation. According to Larkin (1994), many women and girls are still reluctant to link the term “sexual harassment” to the degrading, intimidating, and demeaning behavior they so often encounter in their own lives. Larkin (1994) found that many people do not understand the term “sexual harassment.” Until they participated in the study they assumed it meant rape or sexual assault. Furthermore, researchers such as Kelly (1987) have found that most women have difficulty identifying the ordinary, everyday incidents of sexual harassment because so much of this behavior is considered to be nothing more than natural expressions of masculinity. This explains why the boundaries of normal behavior for men have come to include behavior that women experience as degrading, humiliating, and threatening and why so many women do not name behavior as sexual harassment if it is not an extreme form of physical abuse such as rape.

According to Kelly (1988), this limited scope of the use of the term sexually harassing behavior acts to protect men’s interests because women are unable to label much of their abuse. Consequently, men are not held responsible for their abusive behavior. Kelly explains the power of the label “sexual harassment” is in “making visible what was invisible, defining as unacceptable what was acceptable, and insisting what was natural is problematic”. Date rape, marital rate, and sexual harassment are not new phenomena; they have only recently been given a name.

Once I began to read how others have found a problem with the language of sexual harassment, much of my confusion waned. It is a problem in our lives and it is a problem in the lives of adolescents. I had to find a way to circumvent the confusion that has arisen out of what to call behavior that is sexual harassment but not necessarily labeled as such by the victims.
A whole store of terms are used in the literature and by victims, referring to the experiences of embarrassment, intimidation, fear, and/or discomfort due to looks, words, behaviors, or assaults of sexual natures. Interchangeable in this dissertation are the phrases sexual harassment, sexual intimidation, and unwanted sexual attention. I think they are very similar in purpose, response, and effect.

**Definition and Explanation of Unwanted Sexual Attention**

Before one can examine the issues that are important when exploring sexual misconduct in educational environments, it is first important to define the topic. There is no one working definition that was agreed upon by all in the literature. According to Stein (1993), unwanted sexual attention can range from touching, tickling, pinching, patting, or grabbing; to comments about one's body; to sexual remarks, innuendoes, and jokes that cause discomfort; to obscene gestures, staring, or leering; to assault and rape. This behavior can be peer(s)-to-peer(s) (male/female, male/male, female/male, or female/female), or perpetrated by any adult associated with the school setting (teacher, principal, custodian, etc.).

Sexual harassment is defined by the victim. If an individual finds the comments or physical contact to be unwelcome, then it is harassment. It is a continuum from leers and looks to sexual assault and abuse, and it is contextual with different behaviors being judged appropriate in different settings (Lawton, 1993). A friend making a sexual joke or giving a hug can be very different than a stranger making sexual comments or forcing a hug.

Most definitions of sexual harassment include that the behavior is unwanted and sexual in nature and many include the requirement that such behavior reflects an inappropriate use of power (Corbett, Gentry, & Pearson, 1993). Sexual harassment is something that makes you feel uncomfortable about who you are... because of the sex you
are (Larkin, 1994). It is a form of power and domination of one person over another, which can result in serious psychological consequences for the victim (Koss, 1990). Till (1980) has proposed five categories of sexual harassment, in order of severity: a) gender harassment, consisting of common sexist remarks and behavior; b) seductive behavior, characterized by inappropriate and offensive sexual advances; c) sexual bribery, defined as propositions for sexual activity or other sex-related behavior with the promise of reward; d) sexual coercion, sexual activity coerced by threat of punishment; and e) sexual imposition, which includes both sexual assault and imposition.

Wishneitsky (1991) proposed the following definition of sexual harassment in his study of 300 high school seniors and 140 superintendents. Sexual harassment includes all unwelcome sexual advance, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when a) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly as a term or condition for academic advisement; b) submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as a basis for academic decisions affecting such individuals; c) such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual’s academic performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive academic environment. This definition is guided by Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, pat 1604.11 as well as Title IX of the 1972 Education Amendments (Wishneitsky, 1991).

Some forms of sexual harassment may also be actionable as child abuse, sexual assault, rape, pornography, criminal or civil libel, slander, or defamation of character” (Stein, 1993). Stein (1993) furthermore asserts that sexual harassment in education is a form of “battered woman in training.” They learn that no one will intervene, no one will care, and no one will believe them. If they speak up they are blamed, they learn to adjust their own behavior in an effort to change the batterer’s behavior. Boys are taught they
can act this way, boys seeing this behavior may begin to think they are supposed to engage in this type of behavior.

**Cases of Peer-to-Peer Sexual Harassment**

Some instances of sexual harassment occur to students and are perpetrated by their classmates or peers. The following is just a sampling of examples found in the literature. A more extensive list will be provided in Appendix A.

-In 1990 Joan Mennone felt “humiliated, terrorized, and distraught” when in front of her teacher and classmates a male peer “grabbed her hair, legs, breasts, and buttocks nearly every day. He repeatedly made remarks about her breasts and told her he was going to rape her” (Lawton, 1993). No longer willing to put up with “high school behavior” of “boys being boys”, she filed a federal lawsuit against the school/teacher/superintendent. (Woodbridge, Connecticut) (Lawton, 1993)

-In one boys bathroom at a high school in Duluth, Minnesota, nasty graffiti targeting one young woman covered the walls of a bathroom stall. Statements like “Katy does it with farm animals”, “Katy is a slut”, “Katy gives good head”, and “Katy sucked my dog’s dick after she sucked my dog’s dick” remained up on the walls for a period of 16 months, despite repeated requests from Katy and her parents to the principal to have it removed. He said “No one reads it anyhow” and “It’ll make you a stronger person.” In addition, he claimed that his hands were tied by the custodians’ union contract which only allowed them to paint the walls once every two years and since they had just completed a painting assignment, they could not paint over the graffiti. Boys would yell out across the hallways, “Hey, Katy, I took a leak in your stall today,” and girls would wonder aloud what Katy had done to “deserve” this. She was tormented daily on the bus and as she entered the school. Finally, Katy’s brother from college erased the graffiti with sandpaper in a matter of minutes. Despite the removal of the graffiti, the taunting continued and the emotional consequences continued (Stein, 1993).

**Educator-to-Student Sexual Harassment**

McGrath (1994) presents what she calls a working definition of sexual harassment by school personnel from Florence Webb of Association of California School Administrators. Three crucial elements are included: (1) any behavior by an adult (2) directed at a student (3) that is intended to sexually arouse or titillate the adult or the child (including but not limited to touching body, exposure, verbal propositions, or conversations of a sexual nature). This definition is based on behavior that is likely to
harm children and deprive them of a sense of physical or psychological safety (it is not a legal definition).

Sexual harassment is not only a problem for the abusers and the abused. According to Stein (1993), “the school environment becomes poisoned for everyone - innocent witnesses and bystanders alike - in addition to the intended subject/victim of the harassment.” As a result of sexual misconduct in the school setting, “boys as well as girls become mistrustful of adults who fail to intervene, provide equal protection, and safeguard the educational environment” (Stein. 1993). Furthermore, “the silences of adults in the school community represent negligence, allowing and encouraging the sexual harassment to continue” (Stein. 1993).

It would be erroneous to assume that everyone views the issue of educator harassment in the one-sided, negative manner it has been presented thus far. In fact some authors are concerned with what they would call “unwarranted” negative repercussions on educators and the “wrongful” disciplinary results on educators. Pichaske (1995) acknowledges that he understands having a ban on sexual relationships between teachers and students due to the assumption that because of power imbalance even consensus is essentially non-consensual. At the same time, Pichaske argues that women students are most frequently the initiators of such relationships. Furthermore, he believes male educators are often tactful enough to not file complaints. Generally, he supports “real relationships” but is concerned when real dangers occur including trading sex for a grade, disappointment when an admired teacher is “unmasked and real in the bedroom”, students taking the relationship too seriously, and the jealously of other students. Goodhue (1988) contends that fully 80% of the cases of sexual harassment reported in 1985 were later determined to be unfounded, up from 40% five years earlier, and those accused had no benefit of legal due process in clearing their names.
On the other side of the continuum is Roland Summit (psychiatrist) (as cited in McGrath, 1994), who says that it does not matter that a child/adolescent says “yes” in the case of student/adult involvement. No child/student has equal power to say “no” to a parental figure or to anticipate the consequences of sexual involvement with a caretaker. Ethics require that the adult bear sole responsibility and any sexualized interaction between educator and student is always an abuse of power (McGrath, 1994).

Some resources are also concerned about the educational fall-out that occurs as the result of “a few bad teachers’ misconduct”. For example, Huber (1996) is concerned that “the very thing that makes a good teacher (getting close to students, accessibility, empathy, personalizing, reinforcement) can cause the teacher to be vulnerable to accusations of sex abuse.” In the same vein, Goodhue (1988) contends “it would be equally sad if fear of accusation made teachers less affectionate toward children, doubly tragic in fact, since evidence suggests that sex offenders were often starved for affection as children themselves”.

Some adult sexual harassers are pedophiles. They are adults who report being sexually attracted to children and have chosen to work in schools so they can be near their targets. Their victims are primarily students in elementary and early middle school. These students are most often vulnerable children who want and need attention and affection (Shankshaft, 1994).

Other adult abusers/harassers are called “romantic/bad judgment” abusers. They work in school just to find sex partners and describe their actions as either harmless or romantic. They call their actions “affairs” and believe what they are doing is acceptable as long as the student is a willing participant (Shankshaft, 1994). This is the most common type of adult abuser in the school systems.
Sexual misconduct in school settings is a complex, multifaceted issue whether it occurs peer-to-peer or educator-to-student. Now we will look at examples of cases that have come to public recognition in the last few years.

Examples of Educator Abuse

The following are a few of the many instances of educator-to-student sexual abuse that have been in the media in recent years. More examples can be found in Appendix A:

- Bill Walsh taught at 3 schools in 2 years molesting students at every school. In 1997, he was sentenced to 40 years in prison for sexually fondling students (Sullivan, 1997).

- A Florida teacher, James Stein, was found guilty of sexually touching and kissing students, was placed on probation and returned to the classroom because he had "tenure" (Sullivan, 1997).

- Laura Foster, 36, was found guilty for fondling and raping a 14-year-old boy at Meridian Junior High School in Kent, Wash., where she taught social studies and twice was named Teacher of the Year by her students (Graves, 1994).

Statistical Information

Many of the research sources reviewed presented in-depth information in regards to general statistical knowledge about sexual misconduct in educational settings. This section will present some of the available literature on what is known about who are victims generally, as well as specific information about victims of peer-to-peer and educator-to-peer harassment. What is known about perpetrators of sexual harassment in education (including educator and peer perpetrators), what we know about the settings and locations of sexual harassment, and lastly, what has been reported about school responses to sexual harassment problems.

What Do We Know About Victims?

Based on a survey of 458 adolescents, the Center for Research on Women at Wellesly College published a survey on sexual harassment in the September issue of Seventeen magazine. Of the 4,000 females studied in grades 2 through 12, 39% experienced harassment every day at school and 89% had been targets of sexual
comments and gestures. In addition, results show that early adolescent females hold less accepting attitudes toward sexual harassment than males (Strouse, Goodwin, & Roscoe, 1994).

In a 1995 study, "In Our Own Backyard: Sexual Harassment in Connecticut's Public High Schools", 78% of a random sample reported at least one incident of sexual harassment (308 girls and 235 boys). Also, 82% of girls and 57% of boys reported being the victim of at least one unwanted sexual contact since they started high school. For 39% of girls, sexual intimidation occurs every day (Stein, 1993).

Males are more likely to be sexually abused in elementary school than in high school. Females are equally likely to be sexually abused in elementary and high school. Female students who are victims often report living with alcoholic and sexually abusive fathers. Many are marginal students, academically and socially. Middle and high school female victims are often more physically developed than their classmates and are believed by their teachers to be sexually experienced (Shankshaft, 1994).

In a study that investigated the frequency, severity, and consequences of sexual harassment in American secondary schools, using the 1993 survey data from a nationally representative sample of 1,203 8-11th graders in 79 public schools, the researchers found that 83% of girls and 60% of boys receive unwanted sexual attention in school" (Lee, Croninger, Linn, & Chen, 1996). Furthermore, they found that social background is unrelated to either the probability or the severity of sexual harassment (Lee et al., 1996). One especially interesting result of this study was that over half the students reported both harassing and being harassed by their classmates, which leaves in question the appropriateness of the linear model of perpetrator to victim so commonly used in research studies (Lee, Croninger, Linn, & Chen, 1996).

Survivors of Educator Sexual Abuse and Misconduct Emerge: SESAME (1998), a computer network organization whose main goals are to gather information about
educator abuse, provide resources to educator abuse survivors, and disseminate information in hopes of preventing future abuse, has also gathered data on school sexual harassment survivors. Despite the fact that the information is only collected from people who log on to their net location, they still provide some interesting statistical information about survivors (sample size 100):

Of the 64% survivors who “disclosed” or “shared their secret”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Immediate, but not believed, to school</th>
<th>13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Immediately, but not believed, to friends</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immediately, but not believed, to parents</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immediately and punished by parents</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up to five years later to friends/family</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-30 years later</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reported Effects on Victims/Survivors:

**School:**

- Had to change schools | 4
- Suffered hostility from school | 3
- Kicked out of school | 2
- Academic problems | 5
- Had to drop favorite subject | 2
- Felt unsafe at school | 3
- Dropped out of school | 7
- Threatened by teacher | 3
- Suffered peer harassment | 6
- Became isolated/withdrawn | 7
Psychological Effects:

- Had to keep a secret: 4
- Self-loathing: 4
- Humiliation: 1
- Dissociation: 1
- Depression: 11
- Anxiety: 2
- PTSD: 6
- Moodiness: 1
- Guilt/shame: 3
- Guilt for not reporting: 1
- Fear: 7
- Rage: 7
- Long term therapy: 4
- Hospitalized: 4
- Suicidal thoughts: 6
- Suicidal attempts: 7
- Successful suicide: 1

The American Association of University Women developed a survey and published Hostile Hallways (1993). The four major findings include: 1) sexual harassment is very pervasive in secondary schools. 2) students consider sexual harassment unwelcome and problematic. 3) the behavior occurs in public places, and 4) students have difficulty receiving help, even though in both surveys a majority reported trying to talk to someone about the harassing behavior. AAUW (1993) reported that 65% of girls and 42% of boys were touched, grabbed, or pinched in a sexual way, that 76% of girls and 56% of boys were the target of sexual comments or looks, and that 85% of eighth to eleventh grade girls reported they were often sexually harassed. A surprisingly large percentage (75%) of boys also said they were often sexually harassed. Sexual comments, jokes, gestures, and looks were the most common forms of harassment. Students also reported other objectionable behavior, ranging from being the subject of sexual rumors to being forced to do something sexual. AAUW’s Hostile Hallways (1993) reported that among girls who reported being harassed at school, 57% had been harassed by a group of males; 18% by a male acting alone; 11% by a mixed group of males and females; and 3%
by a group of females. No students reported being harassed by a female teacher and female-to-female student harassment consisted primarily of graffiti scrawled on bathroom walls. The same study also found that of the 81% of all teenage students reported being harassed with unwanted sexual behaviors ranging from crude remarks to touching, forced kissing, and other acts. Of these, nearly one in five was harassed or abused by teachers, principals, coaches, bus drivers, or other school workers (Graves, 1994).

In terms of severity, girls and blacks are more likely to report experiencing severe harassment than are boys and members of other ethnic groups. Severity was defined by means of an index combining frequency of harassment, number of forms of harassment, and degree of personal upset form the harassment (Bracey, 1997).

In a study recently conducted with 2,000 female students in the United States, 89% of the girls reported having experienced inappropriate sexual comments, gestures, and looks: 83% had been touched, pinched, or grabbed; and 40% said that these incidents occurred daily at school (Stein, Marshall, & Troop, 1993). Almost 2/3 of the girls being harassed in one study told their harassers to stop and over 1/3 resisted with physical force (Mona & Herndon, 1995).

**What Do We Know About Perpetrators?**

Perpetrators of sexual harassment in education can be peers or educators.

**Peer perpetrators:**

One study's results (n=561) indicate that 50% females and 37% males have been victims of sexual harassment perpetrated by their peers, even though acceptance of these behaviors by peers is quite low. They also found that the majority of harassment of males occurs by males (Roscoe, Strouse, & Goodwin, 1994).

**Educator perpetrators:**

In a study by Wishneitsky (1991), 17.7% of males and 82.2% of females reported sexual harassment by faculty or staff during their career. Furthermore, 13.5% of those
surveyed said they had engaged in sexual intercourse with a teacher.

According to Shankshaft (1994), a disproportionate number of accusations are against coaches, drama, art, music, and physical education teachers. In addition, abusers have often won outstanding teacher awards from local and state organizations. This study also found in a survey of high school graduates in North Carolina in 1991 that 17.7% of males and 82.2% of females reported sexual harassment by faculty or staff during school years; 13.5% of those surveyed had engaged in sexual intercourse with a teacher. Lastly, the same study found that 96% of education related abusers are males who define themselves as heterosexual. Nearly 75% of educator perpetrators abuse girls, 20% abuse boys and 5% abuse boys and girls (Shankshaft, 1994).

Another study by Larkin (1994) surveyed 4,200 girls who reported on their most serious incident of harassment at school, finding that 3% were harassed by their teachers. In all but one incident the harassing teacher was male. In the textbook Educator Sexual Harassment, Bithel estimates that 1 out of 20 teachers has engaged in sexual misconduct with students, ranging from obscene comments to sexual intercourse (McGrath, 1994).

Bracey (1997) reported that 16% of students said that they had been harassed by a teacher, 2% by a principal, and 44% by a staff member other than a teacher or a principal. Shankshaft (1994) has found that only about 7% of students being sexually harassed by a teacher complain to a school authority.

An important statistic in demonstrating the seriousness of educator harassment is the number of such allegations filed. In Fairfax County, VA, 111 allegations of school sexual misconduct were filed between 1988 and 1994 (56 founded, 31 unfounded, 21 conclusive). Twenty-two school employees were formally arrested in the 8-year period (Huber, 1996). In a national database of daily newspapers stories, 140 articles have been written during the first 7 months of 1994 about educators sexually abusing children (Graves, 1994). In 1994, the New York City public schools received 525 complaints
against employees, mostly teachers, accused of sexually abusing children. The district conducted 340 investigations that led to 32 arrests and 13 convictions (Graves, 1994). In 1993, 43 Washington state educators were disciplined for sexual improprieties with students or other minors (Graves, 1994). Over the past six years, the Florida Education Practices Commission has received an average of about 183 complaints per year against teachers (50 involving sexual misconduct) (Graves, 1994).

Some studies have uncovered data from the perspective of the general student population (as opposed to victims of sexual harassment). Corbett, Gentry, and Pearson (1993) found that 36% of the students in their study reported knowing someone who experienced sexual harassment from a teacher, while only 6% reported having personally experienced sexually inappropriate behavior by a high school teacher. Over a third knew of a sexual relationship between a high school student and a teacher.

Survivors of Educator Sexual Abuse and Misconduct Emerge:
SESAME (1998) is a computer network organization that specifically focuses on the experience of sexual harassment by educators. The following represents information taken from 100 survivor responses on their computer site:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educator Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male staff offenders against boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female staff offenders against boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male staff offenders against girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female staff offenders against girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male staff offenders against girls &amp; boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female staff offenders against girls &amp; boys</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

100

Where Does Sexual Harassment in Schools Occur?
From responses to the September 1992 issue of Seventeen magazine, Stein, Marshall and Troop (1995) received data from thousands of girls concerning the following two open-ended questions: What do you think schools should do to prevent sexual harassment? If you’ve been sexually harassed at school, how did it make you
feel? They found that two thirds of the respondents who were victims of sexual harassment reported that other people were present at the time of the experience. 94% had witnessed sexual intimidation in classrooms. 76% had observed sexual harassment in hallways, and 69% in parking lots or on playing fields.

A 1993 American Association of University Women study of 1,600 boys and girls in 79 schools found: 81% reported sexual harassment in school: two thirds at least once in the hall: 55% in classrooms, 43% on school grounds; 39% in gym; playing fields: or pool areas; 34% in the cafeteria; 23% in parking lots: 19% in locker rooms; and 10% in rest rooms.

What Do We Know About School Responses to Sexual Harassment?

Mona and Herndon (1995) reported that in over two thirds of the incidents of sexual harassment reported in schools, other people were present. When students specifically told a teacher or school administrator they had been harassed, the schools took action in 55% of the cases. According to Stein et al.'s (1993) study results, schools were less likely to act if the harasser was a teacher. In 77% of the cases reviewed, no action was taken.

Types of Behaviors of Sexual Harassment in High School Settings

Because the point of this dissertation is to explore sexual harassment in education, it is important to have a good grasp on types of behaviors and actions that are noted in the literature. One source notes that boys and girls have different patterns of harassing behaviors. Boys harassed males and females using a direct or in-your-face manner. whereas females used indirect or behind-the-back approaches more often. When a girl harassed a boy, it was almost always a response to his attack on her (Shankshaft. Mendel, Johnson, Sawyer, Hergenrother, & Barber, 1997).

Females encounter sexual harassment in many different forms - from sexist remarks and covert physical contact (patting, brushing against bodies) to blatant
propositions and sexual assaults (Paludi, 1992). Another example is a boy playing with himself to the point of erection in class (Stein, 1993). Other examples include snapping bras, groping girls’ bodies, pulling down shorts or flipping up skirts, circulating rumors, writing nasty graffiti on walls, telling sexualized jokes and/or taunts that mock girls’ bodies, and outright physical assault and/or rape (Stein, 1993). Sexual harassment can range from touching, tickling, pinching, patting, or grabbing; to comments about one’s body; to sexual remarks, innuendoes, and jokes that cause discomfort; to obscene gestures, staring, or leering; to assault and rape (Stein, 1993).

Who Gets Targeted for Harassment?

One study found that girls were most often targeted because of how they looked, boys for how they acted. (Shankshaft, Mendel, Johnson, Sawyer, Hergenrother, & Barber, 1997).

- Unattractive or Unstylish girls: For example, girls perceived as physically unattractive were often called fat or cows, or “mooing sounds” were commonly made targeting a girl’s weight, although larger than average boys were seldom harassed for it.

- Physically Mature girls: Girls who developed physically were at higher risk for being targets of name calling, accusations of sexual activities, and circulated rumors of their so-called exploits. Boys often confronted these girls directly, making sexual demands and comments. It was not unusual for such comments to occur in the classroom, with teachers present.

- Boys who don’t fit the Stereotypic Male Mold: Harassment took the form of homophobic insults. If boys weren’t interested in sexual banter about women, weren’t athletic, or were effeminate, they were called homosexual. The fear of being labeled a homosexual was much stronger than fear of being homosexual, and was a strong influence on male behavior.
Much of the male-to-male physical harassment came in the form of grabbing genitals or buttocks or wedgies with the underwear. These may just “be behaviors or physical interaction which occurs among early adolescent males as they explore and deal with physical changes and a new dimension of their sexuality” (Roscoe, Strouse, Goodwin, Taracks, & Henderson, 1995), although most males reported disliking the behavior when it occurred to them.

Nontraditional sexual harassment also occurs. For example, one male student noted that when a female teacher tucked in his shirt, she would touch his genital area. Another student reported a teacher standing very close to him, closer than she did with other students, often touching his chest or legs and sitting in a position that exposed herself to him. Another student reports being backed into the wall by a teacher who was trying to kiss him (Corbett, Gentry, & Pearson, 1993).

Examples of the type of behaviors that students have encountered are vast and can be found in more comprehensive detail in Appendix C at the end of this paper.

**How Sexual Harassment Makes Students Feel**

In exploring and understanding the impact of sexual harassment, it is important to understand how students feel after having been victims of unwanted sexual attention. An extensive list of student feelings can be found in Appendix B. A sample of some of the feelings noted in the literature reviewed are presented below:

- “Humiliated, terrorized, and distraught” (Lawton, 1993).
- “Being harassed makes me angry and I feel degraded. I’m always on my guard trying to prevent what may happen next” Age 13 (Stein, 1993).
- “I feel very terrible. I felt it was my fault, but it wasn’t. I didn’t tell teachers or the principal what happened. I think my problem is being scared. I’m scared they’re going to do something worse if I tell” Age 12 (Stein, 1993).
"I felt really out of place and defenseless and there was nothing I could do about it" (Stein, 1995).

-The AAUW (1993) survey found the most common reaction to sexual harassment was fear. The consequences of being harassed included "not wanting to go to school", "not wanting to talk in class", "finding it hard to pay attention in school", "staying home from school or cutting class", "making a lower grade in class", and "thinking about changing schools".

**How Students React/Respond**

Not only are the feelings of victims relevant and important but we should also consider victims’ responses and reactions to sexual harassment. An extensive list of student responses/reactions is located in Appendix B. The following is a sample of responses/reactions:

-Not wanting to go to school; not wanting to talk as much in class; making a lower grade on a test or paper; finding it hard to study; making a lower grade in a class; thinking about changing schools; doubting whether you can succeed in high school (Mona & Herndon, 1995).

-"I eventually began to regret going to school, especially to my locker, because that is where I was most often cornered and touched" (Stein, 1995).

-"It came to the point where I was skipping almost all of my classes, therefore getting kicked out of the honors program. It was very painful for me. I dreaded school each morning, I started wearing clothes that wouldn’t flatter my figure, and I kept to myself....I’d cry every night I got home, and I thought I was a total loser" (Stein, 1994).
Reasons Sexual Harassment in High School Occurs and is Tolerated

There are numerous theories as to why sexual harassment in education occurs. The following includes an examination of biological, developmental, pathological, abuse of power and cultural theories. Also included are shortcomings of each theory in explaining sexual harassment in education.

Biological Theory

The biological theory calls attention to size and hormonal differences between the sexes that tend to make males more aggressive (Bracey, 1997). According to this theory, hormonal and body size differences make males more aggressive than females. This formulation assumes males as perpetrators, and females as victims of sexual harassment. Although this theory contends males should be taught self-control, lapses must be taken in stride because “boys will be boys” and should only be expected to have so much control. Through this lens, the best preventative measures would be protection, and often confinement, of females. Although punishing male perpetrators might be useful to society as a deterrent, it would be rather ineffective in changing the behavior of individuals. Problems with this theory include instances of females sexually harassing males, and an increase in the rate of sexual harassment over time. (Lee, Croninger, Linn, & Chen, 1996)

Developmental Theory

The developmental theory contends that adolescents have strong feelings that they are unable to express appropriately because of developmental constraints, which leads to aggressive behaviors such as sexual harassment. This theory contends that since girls are more skilled at social expression than boys, they are much less likely to be harassers (Bracey, 1997).

The conceptualization of biological theory assumes that people learn to communicate feelings through social interaction. Developmentally, young people have
special difficulty communicating strong feelings about sexual attraction. An inability to express sexual feelings in socially appropriate ways leads young men to engage in sexually harassing behaviors. The theory contends that because adolescent girls are more socially skilled than boys, they engage in fewer harassing behaviors. Supporters of this theory have had some measure of success with programs that build empathy, self-awareness, and communication skills. Problems with this theory include the prevalence of harassment in the adult workforce, despite the fact that adults should have worked through the developmental impediments (Lee. Croninger. Linn. & Chen. 1996).

Pathology Theory

According to the pathology theory, sexual harassment is a severely antisocial form of behavior, on the same continuum as child sexual abuse, rape, and domestic violence. This theory contends that those who harass are doing so because they have previously experienced some type of trauma creating feelings of being victimized. As a result, such feelings cause individuals to lose the ability to empathize and they end up perpetrating similar traumatic behaviors on others. Problems with this theory are that there is a large prevalence of sexual harassment cases as well as young perpetrators who haven’t lived long enough to experience severe traumatization (Lee. Croninger. Linn. & Chen. 1996).

Abuse of power theory

In the abuse of power theory, sexual harassment is one of the many ways males gain dominance over females. According to this theory, the perpetrator’s motivation is to intimidate victims into giving up a position of privilege or to remind them of their lower status. Just as lynching served to intimidate African Americans from claiming their right, sexual harassment would serve to keep women “in their place”. A problem with this theory is the fact that sexual harassment has not decreased despite many years of
improved gender relations. This theory also falls short of explaining same sex peer harassment (Lee, Croninger, Linn, & Chen. 1996).

Cultural Theories

The cultural theories of sexual harassment focus on the culture immediately surrounding incidents of sexual harassment rather than individuals or society. In the Freudian cultural approach, there is perceived a failure of culture to repress the potentially destructive forces of Eros and Thanatos in individuals. The structural/cultural theory approach centers on school norms concerning sexuality and aggression. Poor handling of complaints, tolerance of rituals, and inappropriate hero worshipping contradict the organizations formal disapproval of sexual harassment. Lastly, cultural theory focuses on the culture of schools being akin to the violence and sexual aggression in the larger society especially manipulated by advertising and capitalist consumption (Lee, Croninger, Linn, & Chen. 1996).

School Responses/Reactions

One important aspect of how students respond to sexual harassment in school settings (victims and perpetrators) is how the school itself reacts/responds, if at all. In a study by Stein (1993), she found that the schools did not respond 45% of the time when a student reported harassing incidents to school authorities. The silence of adults in the school community represents negligence, allowing and encouraging the sexual harassment to continue.

It is all the more disturbing when reported events are trivialized, the victims demeaned and interrogated. Boys are given excuses for their behavior. The victims are further wronged when the report is ignored by those in power and the offense not condemned by their school society. Incidents of sexual harassment are often witnessed
by teachers and other adults yet many girls cannot get confirmation, support, or protection from the witnessing teachers (Stein, 1995).

Sometimes the school does respond, but with inappropriate responses that only add to a student’s feelings of humiliation and embarrassment. Stein (1995) reported that a student got in trouble for hitting a boy after a group of boys groped her in class. The boys lied and got out of it, yet she was punished. In another case presented by Stein (1995), a principal talked with two boys after an incident and the boys came out laughing and making fun of the girl because they got no punishment. In still another example, “teachers acted as if I had done something to deserve it.” The guidance counselor “made me feel like a whore when she asked me questions like do you like it or what did you do to make them do it?” (Stein, 1995). Other examples include:

-“Of the times I was sexually harassed at school, one of them made me feel really bad. I was in class and the teacher was looking right at me when this guy grabbed my butt. The teacher saw it happen. I slapped the guy and told him not to do that. My teacher didn’t say anything and looked away and went on with the lesson like nothing out of the ordinary had happened” (Stein. 1995).
-“Sometimes the teachers were right there when it was going on. They did nothing.” (Stein. 1994).

Some studies have found that adults in schools almost always discouraged students from further reports, which didn’t curb harassment and left the victims feeling as if they had no support or help. Very often the students who reported felt uncomfortable and responsible for the harassment. In many cases the staff and other students penalized them for going public. They were doubly violated, first by the harasser, then by the treatment of adults and other students (Shankshaft, Mendel, Johnson, Sawyer, Hergenrother, & Barber, 1997). This type of poor response to harassment is the main reason only 5% of students report the abuse to an authority. The rest do not tell anyone or just tell a friend. Adults who take no reports, indicate that there is no problem, or respond to reports by saying “you’re overreacting”. “that’s the way life is”. or “what do
you expect when you wear clothes like that?” make most students feel that administrators do not care or do not believe them (Shankshaft, Mendel, Johnson, Sawyer, Hergenrother, & Barber, 1997).

**Survivor Definitions**

Because I consider unwanted sexual attention and sexual harassment along a continuum of violence against women (including sexual harassment, rape, and other traumatic experiences), I think it is appropriate to refer to students who have experienced sexual humiliation in high school as survivors. “Survivor” is a term commonly used in literature, therapy, and conversations to signify that the person is alive and has lived through some type of trauma. In its broadest sense, Funk and Wagnalls (1989) define survival as remaining alive or existent, to outlast or outlive.

The Penguin Dictionary of Psychology (1985) takes the term survivor a step farther by explaining what they call “survivor syndrome”. Survivor syndrome is characterized by frequently seen symptoms such as chronic anxiety, numbness, withdrawal or loss of interest in life, recurring dreams of the traumatic event, and severe guilt. Those individuals who experience survivor syndrome, according to the Penguin Dictionary of Psychology (1985), are individuals who have lived through some terrible ordeal such as an earthquake or flood, but this does not exclude sexual intimidation experiences as traumatic. Other common uses of the term include various contexts such as concentration camp survivors, survivors of war, rape survivors, survivors of spousal violence, and sexual harassment survivors.

Kramarae and Treichler (1985) provide a general definition of survivor as one who recovers from male sexual and/or physical abuse. As stated before, I consider sexual intimidation to be a form of sexual abuse. As has been shown, known perpetrators are almost always males and this reality is reflected in this definition. This definition allows the victim to be male or female but does not allow the possibility of females to be
perpetrators. Despite the minority numbers of this possibility, I believe the possibility should not be entirely ignored. One is still a survivor if the perpetrator of abuse is a female.

In this study, the term survivor will be defined, examined, and explained through literature with specific emphasis on adult women who have survived sexual victimization in their childhood. As will be shown, the term “survivor” of child sexual abuse (harassment in schools can be seen as one form) is frequently used but with varying intention and definition. Although none of the sources negate the importance and achievement of being a survivor, there is clearly variation in its intended meaning. Being a survivor, in and of itself, reflects some triumph over the experience. For the purposes of this dissertation, “survivor” will be used as a term that identifies someone who has lived through the experience of unwanted sexual intimidation or harassment in a high school environment. In a similar vein, sometimes the word victim is used for someone who has been victimized or harmed through no fault of their own. Victim is also an appropriate term because it places responsibility for the abuse on the perpetrator and not on the person being harassed. I think you can be a victim yet still be a survivor at the same time.

The History of Sexual Harassment and Its Laws

The term “to harass” came into English centuries ago from Old High German and Old French (Stein, 1993). According to Toobin (1988) and Cloud (1998) modern sexual harassment law was invented by accident during the debate over the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Representative Howard W. Smith filed a last minute amendment to try and kill the bill banning racial discrimination in employment. In a snide, sarcastic attempt to ridicule the bill, he rose in the house to propose the act ban discrimination based on sex as well as race. The southern legislators thought that if they put “sex” in the bill, it would drag the whole bill down. They thought it was a joke. Southern members of Congress tacked
sex" onto the list of protections in the pending Civil Rights Act, not because they cared but because they thought that it would kill the whole bill (Cloud. 1998). They didn’t think there was any discrimination against women that mattered. The southerners were laughing down on the floor as they were talking about it. Several women who had seats in Congress decided to back the bill and “following a brief but passionate debate, the Smith amendment came up for a vote and it passed 168 to 133” (Toobin. 1998). The last thing Smith wanted to do was give any rights to women.

It was not until the 1970’s that the courts paid any attention to the laws pertaining to sexual harassment. Women were beginning to use the courts “to fight an ancient form of oppression” (Toobin, 1998). Unfortunately the original claims filed were regarded by the courts as personal problems, not legal concerns (Toobin, 1998). Although it was in the 1970’s that the courts started taking anti-discrimination provisions on sex seriously, it wasn’t until 1977 that a federal court of any stature, the U. S. Court of Appeals, said that quid pro quo violated the act (Cloud, 1998). The differentiation in the types of sexual harassment forms will be described shortly.

The term *sexual harassment* “did not enter the lexicon until the 1970’s, when feminist activists sought a way to address the unwanted sexual attention that women faced in the workforce” (Lee, Croninger, Linn. & Chen. 1996). From the beginning, in women’s minds, the concept included a wide range of offensive behaviors, from sexual innuendo to rape to that which women said impeded their job performance and made them vulnerable to retaliation (Lee, Croninger, Linn. & Chen, 1996).

The first use of the precise term “sexual harassment” was in a 1975 conference at Cornell when a group of feminists based in Ithaca held a “Speak Out on Sexual Harassment” (Toobin, 1998). Catherine MacKinnon (1979) first used the term in writing in a 1979 text which said “sexual harassment, the experience, is becoming sexual
harassment the legal claim". Prior to this time, sexual harassment actions were called “discrimination based on sex”.

In 1980, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) came out with the first formal definition of sexual harassment as “unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature.” In 1980, they also issued the first comprehensive guidelines on gender-based harassment. The EEOC developed a legal definition of sexual harassment that elaborated two main types (1) the more coercive quid pro quo (pressure for sexual favors as a condition for employment) and (2) the more common hostile environment, which could be verbal or physical in nature. Defined as a form of sex discrimination, sexual harassment was therefore illegal (Lee, Croninger, Linn, & Chen, 1996).

In 1986, the Supreme court threw a whole new area into the law, when it ruled that speech or conduct can create a “hostile environment”, alleging that such behaviors violate the Civil Rights Act. Unwelcome verbal or physical behavior is enough, if “severe or pervasive” even when there is no quid pro quo (Cloud, 1998).

Even though some legal battles were being heard in the court system, the reality was that most sexual harassment law continued with little publicity until the Clarence Thomas-Anita Hill hearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee in 1991. The issue of sexual harassment was propelled into the national consciousness and interest in the aftermath of the Clarence Thomas/Anita Hill hearing. Thomas’ extremely publicized Supreme Court nomination raised the country’s consciousness about the existence of sexual harassment and moved this formerly secret social problem out beyond the privacy of the school/workplace (Stein, 1993).

The most recent legal changes in sexual harassment law took place in 1994. In 1994, President Clinton signed into effect the Violence Against Women Act restricting
the kinds of digging defendants can do into the past of sexual-harassment plaintiffs, and specifically allowed such evidence against harassers (Cloud, 1998).

Just 25 years ago, sexual harassment was considered a radical-fringe by-product of feminist theory (Cloud, 1998). Since 1991, juries have returned well over 500 verdicts on sexual harassment -- decisions that often contradict one another and send mixed signals about how we should behave (Cloud, 1998). Annually, 15,500 cases are filed, 60 cases each working day, compared to 6,900 filings in 1991 (Cloud, 1998).

General Sexual Harassment and the Law

Sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination, and is illegal as defined by Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972. Title VII of the Civil Rights Act (1964 amended 1972) the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution, and numerous state criminal and civil statues (Stein, 1993). Both students and employees are legally protected against sexual harassment, regardless of whether the perpetrator is an employee, a student, or an individual who is connected to the school district only by means of being part of an organization with which the school has a contractual agreement (Stein, 1993). Not only are the actions of sexual harassment illegal as forms of sexual discrimination but some forms of sexual harassment may also be actionable as child abuse, sexual assault, rape, pornography, criminal or civil libel, slander, or defamation of character (Stein, 1993), depending on the ages of the harassment victims and the physical activity involved in the offense (Stein, 1993).

There are two types of sexual harassment under the law based on the 1964 Civil Rights Act. The first, called Quid pro quo, is the requirement for exchange of sexual favors in return for a benefit such as a raise or promotion. Historically, these are the hardest to prove and often thought of as "personal" matters by many courts (Cloud, 1998). Quid pro quo cases are very difficult to prove since those being sued can easily say the retribution results from poor performance (Cloud, 1998).
The second type of illegal sexual harassment is referred to as hostile environment, meaning the existence of an unbearable environment (Toobin, 1998). According to the Supreme Court in 1986, to prove hostile environment the victim has to prove that the actions of the harasser went so far as to “alter the conditions of the employment and create an abusive working environment” (Toobin, 1998). The majority of cases that come to trial and win are based on the principle of “hostile environment”. Given the broad terminology that exists, just about anything can count as a hostile environment, depending on who is defining the terms (Cloud, 1998). Judges have ruled that a single incident of harassment can be considered enough to create a hostile environment but most judges agree that a single incident must be especially outrageous to justify charges (Cloud, 1998). Yet at the same time, some cases have been denied when the behavior, though offensive, is viewed as “commonplace and routine” (Cloud, 1998). Cases are most likely to win if the complainant can present “a pattern and practice” (Cloud, 1998).

Laws Specific to Education

There are several federal laws in the United States that are particularly relevant when examining the prohibition or handling of sexual misconduct in educational settings. Stein (1993) asserts that sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination, and is illegal as defined by Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act (1964 amended 1972), the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution, and numerous state criminal and civil statutes.


No person in the United States shall on the basis of sex be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.

Sexual Harassment:

Harassment on the basis of sex is a violation of Sec. 703 of Title VII. Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when (1) submission to or rejection of such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual’s employment (2) submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis of an employment decision affecting such individual, or (3) such conduct had the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual’s work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment (p.746)

Lastly, Stein (1993) presents another legal governing document that includes sexual harassment in education in its domain, the Civil Rights Act of 1871. 42 U. S. C. Section 1983:

Every person, who, under any statute, ordinance, regulation, custom, usage, or any state or territory, subjects or causes to be subjected, any citizen of the United States or any person within the jurisdiction thereof to the deprivation of any rights, privileges, or immunities secured by the Constitution and laws, shall be liable to the party injured in an action at law, suit in equity, or other proper proceeding for redress.

Both students and employees are legally protected against sexual harassment, regardless of whether the perpetrator is an employee, a student, or an individual who is connected to the school district only by means of being part of an organization with which the school has a contractual agreement. Some forms of sexual harassment may also be actionable as child abuse, sexual assault, rape, pornography, criminal or civil libel, slander, defamation of character (Stein, 1993). As a legal issue, the reporting of sexual harassment is not required by the victim to initiate legal action. Victims, as well as educators, community members, or parents acting on the victim’s behalf, may file sexual harassment complaints (Stein 1993)
Since 1992 a Supreme Court ruling has been in effect allowing students to seek monetary damages against school employees where peer-to-peer or adult-to student sexual harassment occurs. The United States Dept. of Education’s Office of Civil Rights reports a 400% increase in sexual harassment complaints under Title IX from 1991-1992 to 1992-1993 (Shankshaft. 1994).

Not all legal coverage of the issue is federal. In fact most states have individual guidelines above and beyond the federal mandates. New York law, for example, now requires that schools and day care centers fingerprint all employees, to see if they have criminal records, and to check their names against the state’s “registry of known abusers”. The main problem with this as a preventative measure is that it assumes sex abuse in education is perpetrated by pedophiles and sex offenders with previous state records (Goodhue. 1988) and ignores the frequency of peer-to-peer abuse as also being a problem that is against the law.

Still another relevant law governing sexual harassment/abuse in education is the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act of 1973. With the passage of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act in 1973, federal regulations were developed mandating each state to develop policies and procedures that required school personnel to report suspected sexual harassment of a physical nature to the appropriate state child protection agency (Huber. 1996).

As far as educational issues go, “the unequal institutional power inherent in this relationship heightens the vulnerability of the student and the potential for coercion at the same time,” according to Toobin (1998). “For better or worse, teachers have been sleeping with their students since the days of Plato”.

Coping: General Definitions and its Application in Sexual Harassment Studies

The purpose of this research dissertation is to examine the coping strategies/experiences of adult women who are self-defined survivors of childhood sexual
harassment. In order to understand their experiences, we must also understand what it means to cope, as well as what the literature and research says on the topic. The following is a review of coping literature, first focusing on coping from the general term/perspective, and then looking at what the literature says about coping, specifically with unwanted sexual attention.

**General Coping Information**

Humans possess the adaptability and capacity to overcome adversity and life challenges; they can "cope". According to Kleinke (1991), coping is "the efforts we make to manage situations we have appraised as potentially harmful or stressful". It can be "problem-focused", which means it involves the attempt to understand and define a problem and to work out possible solutions. Coping can also be "emotion-focused" which means it is oriented toward managing emotional distress, including physical exercise, meditation, expressed feelings, and seeking support.

Weisman (1984) expands our information on coping by explaining "coping is a choice, just as living or dying is a choice, not a requirement". In addition, coping is seen as a strategic effort to master a problem, overcome an obstacle, answer a question, dissipate a dilemma, handle anything that impedes our progress. Common coping strategies used by people include:

1) Seek information; get guidance.
2) Share concern; find consolation.
3) Laugh it off; change emotional tone.
4) Forget it happened; put it out of your mind.
5) Keep busy; distract yourself.
6) Confront the issue; act accordingly.
7) Redefine; take a more sanguine (optimistic, cheerful) view.
8) Redesign yourself; make the best of what can't be changed.
9) Do something, anything, perhaps exceeding good judgment.
10) Review alternatives; examine consequences.
11) Get away from it all; find an escape, somehow.
12) Conform, comply; do whatever is expected or advised.
13) Blame or shame someone, something.
14) Give vent; feel emotional release.
15) Deny as much as possible.

Metheny, Aycock, Pugh, Curlette and Silva-Cannella (1986) defined coping skills as what we use to combat or prevent stress. "Any effort, healthy or unhealthy, conscious or unconscious, to prevent, eliminate, or weaken stressors, or to tolerate their effects in the least hurtful manner" (p. 509). Furthermore, they stated that the most important personal resources for coping efforts appear to be self-esteem, self-denigration, perception of control, and self-efficacy. They define "coping efficacy" as a self-referent belief that one can control events or cope with stressful demands. The four coping efforts that showed the strongest effect on coping outcome in their research are tension reduction, cognitive restructuring, problem solving, and social skills.

In research conducted by Methany et al. (1986), positive diversion (or attention diversion), filling time constructively to divert attention from painful or distressing thoughts, has been found to be a healthy and important coping strategy. Another healthy coping effort is self-disclosure (being open and able to share thoughts and feelings) and catharsis (release or purification of emotions). Still another important coping skill is seeking information that will reduce uncertainty and the stress that goes with it. Lastly, healthy coping, according to Methany et al. (1986), includes assertive behavior that prevents the festering of stress inside you and also a cycle of lower self-esteem.

But, of course, not all coping is positive and healthy. Methany et al. (1986) also provide some relevant information about the types of negative coping:

**Avoidance or withdrawal:** Used to protect against unwanted emotions. It is not reality oriented and can interfere with effective management. Excessive avoidance can lead to negative self-esteem and negative self-efficacy causing additional stress.
**Denial and suppression:** These control procedures usually seek to eliminate unpleasant emotions. Denial ignores a stressor and suppression pushes the event even deeper into the unconscious in a refusal to accept objective reality for what it is.

**Intellectualization:** The process of translating feelings into a thought process. It blocks out feelings we don’t want to deal with. Filtering all feelings through a rational net can lead to problems expressing emotions.

**Self-medicating:** Addictions, using drugs or alcohol to reduce arousal or blunt the effect of stress. Although one may feel personally successful, the long-term effects are generally self-defeating, and entail risks and health hazards.

**Coping and Sexual Abuse/Harassment Survivors**

Judith Herman (1992) has focused on the issues of trauma and recovery, and has insights relevant to the coping issues surrounding sexual abuse/harassment survivors. According to Herman, repeated trauma in abuse victimhood forms and deforms the personality. An abuse victim trapped in an abusive environment is faced with difficult tasks of adaptation. She/he must find a way to preserve a sense of trust in people who are untrustworthy, safety must be found in a situation that is unsafe, control is sought in a situation that is terrifyingly unpredictable, power is sought in a situation of helplessness. Avoiding and placating the harasser/abuser are common tools for coping, which include runaway attempts or trying to be as inconspicuous as possible to avoid attracting attention.

Victims often conclude that their imagined “innate badness” is the cause of the abuse. The abuse victimseizes upon this explanation early and clings to it fiercely, for it enables her to preserve a sense of meaning, hope, and power. If she is bad, then her harassers (peers and/or educators) are still good and can be interacted with. If the victim feels she is bad, she feels that she has some hope of saving herself by becoming good. If the victim believes she has brought the fate of abuse on herself, then she has the power to
change it. Self-blame, feelings of rage, and murderous revenge fantasies also are normal responses to abusive treatment (Herman, 1992).

Bass and Davis (1988) present and explore the following primary coping strategies in their child abuse textbook:

- Minimizing: pretending whatever happened really wasn’t that bad.
- Rationalizing: inventing reasons that excuse the abuser.
- Denying: turning your head the other way and pretending whatever is happening isn’t happening, or what has happened didn’t happen.
- Forgetting: forgetting about the abuse or the way the abuse feels.
- Control: going to great lengths to keep their lives in order. This can be positive such as organization skills, or negative such as a lack of flexibility and difficulty in compromising. Control is also sometimes maintained by creating chaos. If your behavior is out of control, you force the people around you to drop everything and respond to you. This can be a tool used to keep an individual from experiencing disturbing feelings.
- Spacing out: to feel as if not present. This can be done by staring at an object in the room. This cuts the individual off from the pain as well as the richness of life and feeling.
- Being super alert: tuning into every nuance of your environment. This can be an asset although everyone needs to relax sometimes.
- Humor: a tough sense of humor, bitter wit or sense of cynicism. As long as people are laughing, you maintain a certain protective distance from yourself. The goal is using humor effectively, without hiding behind it.
- Busyness: staying busy is a way to avoid being in the present moment, to avoid feelings.
- Escape: running away, escaping through a book, sleep, or television in order to create fantasies that explore ones desire for power in a powerless situation.
Adolescent Coping

For the purpose of this paper, it is important not only to understand coping from the perspective of general definitions and behaviors, and for survivors of abuse and harassment but also to examine it from the specific focus on what coping behaviors are to adolescents. It has been speculated that adolescent girls have less assertive ways of coping with changes and challenges because of societal pressure for women to be compliant and passive. Adolescent females who are battling depression have been found to look for reasons for their depressions within themselves, often causing obsessive focusing and self-deprecating responses. In contrast, adolescent males typically distract themselves until their mood lifts (Peterson, Kennedy, & Sullivan, 1991).

Significant research on adolescent girls’ coping strategies has been done by Gilligan. Gilligan conducted extensive interviews with girls from 6 to 18 years of age (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan, 1990; Gilligan, Brown, & Rogers, 1990). According to Gilligan, girls believe that girls experience life differently than boys do: in Gilligan’s words, girls have a “different voice”. Gilligan also states that girls come to a critical junction in their development when they reach adolescence. In early adolescence (usually around 11 to 12 years of age), girls become aware that their intense interest in intimacy is not prized by the male-dominated culture, even though society values women as caring and altruistic. The dilemma is that girls are presented with a choice that makes them appear either selfish (if they become independent and self-sufficient) or selfless (if they remain responsive to others.) Gilligan states that as young adolescent girls experience this dilemma, they increasingly “silence” their “different voice”. They become less confident and more tentative in offering their opinions, which often persists into adulthood. Gilligan believes that adolescence may be an especially critical time in female development because it poses a problem of connection that is not easily resolved.
Girls grow up in a culture that has a tradition in which being human for the most part has meant being male.

The information about adolescent coping is relevant to the topic of sexual harassment in education for several reasons. What we know about adolescent girls’ coping strategies is understandable because when girls become victims of unwanted sexual attention, they are often confused by the experience and unsure how to respond and whether or not to trust their own response. They may feel embarrassed or humiliated in a world where they have been made to feel that such attention is “normal” or even amusing, their personal responses often make them feel even more uncomfortable, doubting themselves. Furthermore, in a world that has thus far taught them that their power and importance is limited, they are further silenced in their fear of not getting a response from those who should protect them. This is all the more complicated when the perpetrator is someone who should be one of the adult protectors, a teacher. Needless to say, coping with sexual harassment can be a very complex and traumatic experience for teenagers.

Coping Conclusion

When examining what it means to cope and how people cope, it is important to note that coping actions vary greatly among individuals as well as across individual situations. These actions can yield negative and/or positive results and are individually defined. For example, avoidance can be healthy or a facet of hiding from reality.

Clearly, professionals engaged in intensive group work and/or therapy with survivors recognize the creative and positive strategies that survivors have used to cope with abuse and its aftermath (see Herman, 1992).

It is also important to keep in mind that coping can be positive or negative. Due to the probability that sexual harassment is unwanted, embarrassing, and intimidating, it
is likely that the coping strategies found in the subjects of my research may be more negative (such as the latter part of my research review) than the former (which focused more positive or neutral forms of coping).

**Feminist Theory and Research**

This project is grounded in feminist theoretical and methodological perspectives. This section of the dissertation provides an overview of the feminist underpinning of the study, as well as the utility of narrative research as a feminist inspired methodology. The major theoretical perspective of this paper is general feminist theory for several reasons. Feminism, feminist theory, and feminist research designs have been very influential and instrumental in the examination, explanation, and increased public awareness of the experiences of females and women as victims/survivors. This is true for victims/survivors of abuse, victim sexual harassment as well as victims/survivors of many other “intimate” violences.

Feminism and feminists are largely responsible for the public awareness of sexual harassment, and by virtue of this achievement, their theoretical basis seems best suited to conduct further study. Feminist theory and feminists are also primarily responsible for many of the public support networks, therapeutic responses, and acceptance of the realities of abuse victimhood and sexual harassment survivorship. Furthermore, feminist theory is instrumental in recreating qualitative research/narrative research as a valid, viable, and important source for allowing women (especially survivors) to gain their “voices” about their experiences and be heard. Feminist scholars are putting greater emphasis on women’s life experiences and development, including girls and women as authorities about their own experiences. Harvard psychologist Carol Gilligan (1990) advocates listening to women’s voices; women’s ways of knowing (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarute, 1986); the abuse of women and rape (McBride, 1990; Russo.
1990). Not only is female perception an important dimension of the feminist perspective on gender, but also important is the effort to reduce and eventually end prejudice and discrimination against all people (Paludi, 1992; Yentsch & Snidermann, 1992).

Feminist theory makes the most "sense" in understanding the issues of sexual harassment survivors' experiences because it is one of the rare theories that places the responsibility for sexual harassment where it belongs: on the perpetrator and not on the victim or the victim's mother. It is also the only theory that places responsibility on the whole patriarchal structure that sets up abuse victims (especially female abuse victim) to be "willing", silent victims before, during, and after their victimization. Feminist theory gives women and abuse victims a voice: a forum to be heard, understood, and believed. Feminist theory empowers women and abuse victims to feel their stories are important, their experiences are real, and their lives and futures deserve more than the typical patriarchal victimization patterns. It allows personal empowerment as well as empowerment for societal change. Feminism brings together women, abuse victims, and survivors to give them opportunities to support each other and work together for change.

In some ways it is difficult to separate feminism (actions and beliefs), feminist theory (supporting assumptions and motivations), and feminist research (academic use of feminist beliefs and assumptions) because they are often used together in context and process. They are so interrelated that they are best used together as a whole. It is also important to note at this time that feminism and feminist theory have numerous variations depending on purpose of the definition and the personal beliefs of the defining persons. For the purpose of this paper I am using these terms in a general form, not a specific subdivision of feminist ideology.

Ideology of Feminist Theory and Research

Feminist theory and research are sub-categories of critical theory. To understand feminist scholarship, it is first useful to understand the broader concept of critical theory.
Critical theory and its basic assumptions are expertly presented by Kincheloe and McLaren (1994). Intriguingly, they present critical theory as a research style that "produces undeniably dangerous knowledge, the kind of information and insight that upsets institutions and threatens to overturn sovereign regimes of truth" (p. 138). Their claim is backed up by their explanation of what critical theory researchers do and the basic assumptions behind their research. This type of researcher does research as a form of cultural and/or social criticism. Their basic assumptions are as follows:

1) All thought is mediated by socially and historically mediated power relations.
2) Facts can never be isolated from values or ideologies.
3) Relationships are never fixed but instead mediated by capitalistic drives.
4) Language is central to subjectivity.
5) Privileged groups are present in society and oppression is most acute when subordinates accept their status as inevitable.
6) Oppression has many forms and focusing on one ignores the interconnectedness between them that is crucial for their continuance.
7) Mainstream research practices generally support the continuation of the systems of class, race, and gender oppression.

Although there are many "levels" of feminist values and awareness, a general feminist theory perspective espouses all the assumptions of critical theory with the added assumptions that their research will/should expose the reality of the social injustices experienced by women (Olesen, 1994). The aims of feminist theory and research are liberation for women, transformation of patriarchy, and the emancipation and empowerment of women (Fonow & Cook, 1991).

Numerous aspects of feminist theory and the research done from its perspective give it its strengths and unique style. Feminist researchers not only acknowledge but build in and appreciate the affective component of research actions (Fonow & Cook, 1991). To feminists, part of gaining and developing knowledge comes from insight into feelings. Feminists acknowledge the value of commitment to the welfare of their research subjects and that there is a therapeutic value for both of them through
participating in the research process (Fonow & Cook, 1991). In fact, feminist researchers consider their research a collaborative process between themselves and their subjects (Fonow & Cook, 1991; Olesen, 1994). Subjectivity is not only a goal but also is acknowledged as a human inevitability.

Feminist research, as it is defined in today’s society, was born out of the second wave of feminism (Fonow & Cook, 1991; Olesen, 1994). Topics that have emerged and are still strong foci in today’s research by feminists include subjectivity and interpersonal relationships, women’s relationships to each other, their control by men, social and historical movements, understanding and making policy, ethical concerns, and research inter-subjectivity (Olesen, 1994). The differences between feminist research that is based on feminist theory and other types of research are vast, including differences in what is studied, for what purpose something is studied, how it is studied, and how it is analyzed (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). Although feminist scholarship is not exclusively a qualitative process, it leans heavily towards the utilization of the qualitative methods of in-depth-interviews, life-stories, and individual perspectives.

The major reasons feminism, feminist theory, and feminist research are the most appropriate perspectives to use in attempting to understand the scope of, the cause of, the result of, and the prevention of abuse victim sexual harassment are as follows: These perspectives not only place responsibility on the society that serves to teach and condone such behavior but they place responsibility for the act on the people responsible for the act. They also give direction for change and a call for action instead of passively explaining the problem without indicating how to change the problem or “repair the damage”. Feminism, feminist theory, and feminist research have created a spotlight on the problems directly related to gender inequality and have actively worked to keep the spotlight with increased wattage shining over several decades.
Disadvantages to Using Feminist Theory on Sexual Harassment

Despite the many strengths and my strong belief in feminism as "the best" theory for examining the issue of abuse victim sexual harassment, there are some obvious disadvantages that should at be mentioned. The macro focus of placing responsibility on society and patriarchy may be too broad. We can't go out and create a new, changed society tomorrow. It is important to realize the pervasive forces that create and sustain sexual harassment and other violence against women. There is a growing recognition that women abuse: women abuse men, women rape men, women harass, women abuse women. The prevalence and incidence rates of such behavior are very infrequently researched. One might argue they are irrelevant because they are so rare but any occurrences are relevant to the victims/survivors.

Can we "blame" patriarchy for teaching women to abuse? It sounds too convenient and simple to me. Also, most men do not abuse women or harass women to a "serious" degree, although it could be argued all men benefit from the patriarchal rule. Are contextual information, intent, and frequency relevant? To me they are a piece to the puzzle. What about boys/males who are victims? The prevalence of this is just becoming apparent, and feminists often downplay the relevance of this issue. These disadvantages are not pervasive enough to change my research preferences.

Narrative Research

The qualitative research methodology of narrative analysis can be accomplished in many forms. In its most popular form it involves the direct (usually one-on-one) dialogue/interview where one person (the researcher) facilitates the direction and topic to be explored and the other person (researched/participant) relays her "story" (information about their past and/or present experiences) that has been mutually predefined as the research focus. Narrative analysis can also occur through the examination of historical documents, the experience of focus groups, observational procedures, etc.
According to Miller (1996), interview-based research is the most popular form of narrative/qualitative research because it allows people the opportunity to explore their lives and themselves, to increase their awareness, to find meaning in their lives, to be understood by another person, and to be understood within the context of a relationship. Miller also contends that a strength of narrative analysis is that it is a process of mutual self-exploration for both the researcher and the research participant because of the unique opportunity for both people to be heard, to interact on a mutually interesting topic, and to explore perspectives and “truth”. People want to be listened to, to have the chance to tell their story, and to have their story understood by another. According to Josselson (1996), this form of research allows people to explore the complexity of their lives and its meaning to other’s lives while still maintaining a uniqueness that comes from individual experience and interpretation.

Many people appreciate the way narrative analysis allows people to step out of pre-determined categories (often dichotomous categories) and define their own complex experience in the way they view it, not the way it appears to someone who hasn’t experienced it. Because of the personal and interpersonal nature of this methodology, it is important to remember that narratives are not records of facts, but are instead shared perceptions and experiences that are contextually, culturally, and dialogically determined.

All forms of narrative share the fundamental interest in making sense of experience, the interest in constructing and communicating meaning (Josselson, 1996). The ultimate goal of narrative investigation of human existence is the interpretation of experience and perception. Through narrative study, researchers come in contact with participants as people engaged in the process of interpreting themselves. We, as researchers, work with what is said and what is not said. We learn from personal accounts the ways individuals make sense of their lives, their choices, their experiences. As human beings, much of our identity depends on how others see us. “Telling our
story” (as narratives are often referred to) validates our self worth. We all have a need to remember and be remembered.

In contrast to the more experimental, prescribed methods of research that have become traditional and highly valued in many fields, narrative analysis allows the opportunity of presenting a richness of data and information that is missing in the more distant, variable-based research. Narrative researchers have come to the conclusion that it is more important to listen to people talk in their own terms about what had been significant in their lives and it is far more valuable data than is uncovered through preconceived scales or contrived experiments (Josselson, 1996).

The question used in narrative analysis:

Actual interview questions designed to facilitate narrative interviews often focus on how people come about their viewpoint. Who or what influenced their perspectives? Why do they consider their stories important? How have they worked at understanding their lives, its influences, and their perceptions? How do they define their experience? How have their experiences and perceptions affected their lives? It is important to elicit the significance of the experience and its meaning to the individuals involved in it. It is important to ask for a description of experiences as well as the participant’s perceptions. Often it helps to ask how they learned what they know and what it means to them. One objective for interviewers is to listen for gaps, silences, contradictions, and to reiterate the invitation to encourage fuller narration.

What are the issues, both positive and negative, that arise when using narrative analysis? Positive issues that arise include:

- Narratives often pick up on life details that other research may miss because we don’t know it is there.
- Narratives can reveal fascinating details about life that most people take for granted.
Research participants are treated as equals, as persons as capable (if not more) than the researchers when it comes to analyzing the experiences that have shaped their lives.

McRae (1994) relates that the act of telling one's story is itself a healing thing to do. Viewed in this light, personal narrative is a source of empowerment because in shaping it, one is able to acknowledge one's own reality and to benefit from a defined sense of identity.

Narrative research most often focuses on empowering subjects, not on personal impairment or dysfunction.

Negative concerns that are issues include:

- How much depth is appropriate when asking about personal issues?
- How much emphasis should be placed on the dilemma of recollection inaccuracies?
- How can you tell when someone is telling the truth, especially about a touchy subject?
- Never deny the reality that despite the hope that we are doing narrative research for some benefit for the participants and the future readers of the study, we are also engaging in the research for our own betterment as professionals.
- Confidentiality is important to respect and adhere to but as researchers we are also mandated by law to report abusive situations that may come up in the interview process.
- Lincoln and Guba (1985) caution researchers in naturalistic settings (as narrative analysis often is) to be aware of the difficulty in predicting risk since the design is emergent in the process.
- The role of researcher in interpreting, integrating and synthesizing information gathered does not have proven guidelines and is often individually designed.
My Use of Narrative Analysis

This study focuses on coping issues/strategies of adult survivors of high school sexual harassment. There are numerous reasons why narrative analysis is a good methodology to for this study. My interest is in understanding how/why people survive the potential trauma and what are the after effects of their abuse. It would be very interesting for me and other survivors to understand what motivated their survival, despite the potential negative long-term effects that may or may not be present. This dissertation is reminiscent of narrative analysis in its positive, self-affirming approach, its emphasis on having participants define their own stories and realities, its dialogic engagement, its dual purpose of empowering both participants and the researcher (it's a joint venture), and its emergent design and its lack of predetermined direction. I am not trying to prove anything. Instead I am trying to explore through interactive dialogue some of the personal meanings and experiences of unwanted sexual attention in order to gain some understanding of the experiences of abuse victimhood, sexual harassment, and its aftermath of survival/coping.

Reliability and Validity

Because this study was conducted with a convenience sample of Ohio State University students willing to share their personal experiences with sexual harassment as they remember them from high school, this research is very vulnerable to replication difficulties. Nevertheless, I did attempt to enhance the external and internal reliability of the data. One of the most common threats to external reliability that has been discovered is researcher status (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). My position as a graduate assistant and academic adviser were well known by everyone involved in this study, as were my interests in the topic. Triangulation of data was attempted by offering all participants copies of interview transcripts and/or copies of the finished document to see if they were...
accurately being portrayed but no study participant showed any interest in reviewing the materials offered.

Another external validity concern that is specifically relevant to this study is the reality that the participants are self-selected, and although their responses were very similar to what has been found in the research literature, they are unique individuals only speaking about their own experiences. They are not to be viewed as representative of other survivors of sexual harassment in high school. I have presented their individuality by describing them as concisely as possible, and utilized their exact words, as much as possible, in order to provide their truths without risking exposing their identity.

Internal reliability, as defined as whether or not multiple observers would agree with the conclusion drawn from the data is not possible in this study due to the reality that the study was conducted solely between the researcher and participant. Transcripts of the interviews have been read by outside sources in aiding the analysis, but the final analysis is the sole responsibility of me. Since the interview occurred on a one time basis, in my university office, focusing on experiences that occurred in the past in different locations, no corroborating data is available. The existence of using mechanically recorded data collection techniques was used for 100% of the data collection, this is the strongest support available that the information was presented as accurately as possible.

In terms of validity, I believe that both the participants and myself fully understood what we were talking about, what we were looking for, and what was to be done with it. I believe that the participants responded fully and honestly, and I have no reason to doubt their sincerity.

Reliability and validity are concerns of this study. I attempted to control for them but the design and implementation of this study left room for problems.
My Personal Position and Experience

In following with the feminist tradition of research and typical narrative studies, as author of this dissertation and as primary researcher of the study, it is important that I spend time introducing myself in relation to the topic and the study. As I noted, feminist research frequently differentiates itself from most other styles by humanizing the researcher as an integral and influential part of the research. Hopefully, by acknowledging my own positions and perspectives, it can then be obvious why I have chosen to research this topic in this manner, and my biases will be up front. Similar to feminist research is the concept in narrative research and analysis that acknowledges the presence, perspectives, and persona of the narrative researcher as relevant juxtapositions to the involvement and analysis of the research subject’s information. The researcher and participants make a whole by working together toward a common goal. In this case, it is exploring the topic of sexual intimidation in education, exploring the effects of that intimidation, and presenting the exploration in the form of a Ph.D. dissertation.

As it has probably become obvious through the paper thus far, I feel strongly and passionately about the topic and about the experiences of female sexual harassment survivors. Having experienced this numerous times myself, I have been disappointed about how much of the literature I have encountered has primarily focused on adult workplace situations or college student/professor harassment. In reading the research that has been done on elementary school and high school experiences, it has become clear that there is a major problem with sexual intimidation, harassment and abuse in educational settings and in the lives of children as well.

It is not surprising that reacting to sexual intimidation as an adult is so difficult and so confusing for adult women since it is quite likely they have silently suffered some form of this behavior throughout their lifetime. Being intimidated, objectified, and humiliated as a female doesn’t happen in a vacuum or overnight -- it is a lifelong
experience, in one way or another. It is also apparent to me that adult men feel so comfortable and content with objectifying and harassing women in the workplace, on public streets, and other arenas because they have been allowed, if not taught and encouraged to do so, since they were young abuse perpetrators in schools. Despite the pain and negative effects, we victims of harassment are surviving, living relatively normal lives in the world-at-large. Somehow, despite all the possible educational, sexual, psychological, behavioral and cognitive problems that could result by having been an abuse victim/adolescent who was sexually harassed, we have “accepted” the problem into our lives and we have coped. But our survival should not be interpreted into the assumption that our experiences did not have negative effects on our lives, our educations, our personalities, our sense of trust, etc. This is what fuels my desire to do this dissertation. I want to bring to light the recognition that this is still a problem in our lives and in our educational institutions, and that it shouldn’t be allowed to be a stumbling block to our maturation. Surviving doesn’t negate the importance of the problem of sexual harassment, it is a testament to girls’/women’s resiliency and coping strengths.

This dissertation is designed to aid myself and others in exploring and examining the following questions: What are the forms of sexual intimidation that girls experience in the high school environments of our society? How have girls coped with those experiences? How has this affected their educational experiences? According to their own reports, what happened, how did these survivors survive, and what effects resulted? Maybe through our survival stories, others will be aided in their life survivals as well.

Uneducated Lessons: My School Experiences

Not so long ago (30 years or so) in a place kind of far away (Madison, Wis.) in the land of cheese, mosquitoes and snow, I was a trusting little girl who naively started school hoping to take part in fascinating new experiences and new knowledge. I got

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experience and knowledge, but not just the traditional kind. I also learned that school isn't necessarily a safe and secure place, especially for girls. In kindergarten I felt humiliated by a teacher who was angered when I experienced my first innocent kiss from a classmate. We were yelled at and made to spend time in the corner. Lesson learned: Good little girls don't kiss or get kissed in public! Adults will humiliate you if they feel you are behaving inappropriately.

As I progressed through grade school, I learned that I was unattractive: too tall, big feet, talked too much, and hair too short. These lessons were re-enforced frequently. The girls with the long, flowing blond hair and petite bodies got to go through the cafeteria lines first because they were the favorite of the teacher lunch monitors. Instead of watching the lunch room, one male teacher/lunch monitor always stood by the “pretty” girls, stroking their hair, laughing, and joking. Lesson learned: I would never be a pretty or “favored one” to adults because my family couldn’t afford pretty dresses, I was never going to be petite (I had Norwegian big-bones), and my mother kept my hair chopped short so I was never going to be “beautiful”. My third grade teacher told me I “would never get a man because when I walked I took too big of steps”. Lessons learned: No one will ever want a “girl” who walks like a man! I was destined to be different, unwanted, and unattractive.

Not all the lessons learned happened directly to me yet they affected me nonetheless. I adored the elementary school principal but he was fired for having “sex” with girls in the elementary school bathrooms while I was in third or fourth grade. Lesson learned: Adults engage in sex with young children. At the same time I learned adults are not to be held accountable or blamed when they are sexually involved with abuse victims. I heard many adults say it was unfair to fire him, he was a “good” principal, married and with kids, and besides those young girls were just tramps who seduced the man!
In gym class, one young neighborhood girl, Loraine, who wasn’t too smart and talked a little too much, was frequently subjected to having her mouth taped shut and instructed that it must stay that way until she reached home. She would spend the day going to classes with tape on her mouth, she would walk home silently, and I never saw my friend ever take the tape off until she got home. I also never saw any teacher say the tape was wrong. They kept the taped abuse victim in class as if she was invisible. By virtue of our friendship, I began to feel powerless and invisible because I too was talkative and it seemed safer not to talk and not risk being taped shut for the day and be humiliated! Lessons learned: When girls speak their mind, their mouths are taped until they get home! Teachers and parents don’t care that this happens to you. You just have to silently suffer public humiliation.

Elementary education closed with a big bang for me. In fifth grade I had to stay after school with a boy because we had been “disruptive” in class. By the way, my disruption consisted of talking back to the boy who had spent weeks whispering nasty names to me and days grabbing me and touching me whenever no one was looking. I told him to shut up and leave me alone. The immediate result was that I had to stay after school in detention. After school, the teacher left us alone in the room saying he would be “right back” and the rude boy continued to ridicule me and physically assault me. Out of desperation, I ran from the room scared and humiliated, only to be in trouble when I got home because the teacher had returned in my absence. My fleeing cost me recess privileges for a month. I went to school to learn and experience new, wonderful things, but I had already learned, that no one cared about who I was or what I felt so I never told anyone why I left the classroom. Nobody ever asked either. Lessons learned: Adults don’t care to listen. It is too embarrassing to try and tell when peers sexually harass you.

In middle school there was a gorgeous male teacher who reportedly was a “wizard” who was “gifted” in doing séances and contacting the dead. Girls would go to
his house a few blocks from school over lunch hour to “participate”. I know of several girls who went, but I didn’t know them well enough to ask what happened and I suspect that more than “séances” occurred. On several occasions he asked me to come home with him. He was a shameless flirt but I never would agree to meet him. I was “afraid” of him and didn’t trust him, but worshipped him nonetheless.

My education continued, both good and bad. To make a long story a bit shorter, in middle school there was the janitor who granted the privilege of running around in the tunnels under the school to those little girls who let him put his hands down their pants and in their shirts.

In high school, there was a hall monitor who never turned you in for roaming the halls as long as you let him rub against your breasts. There was the group of boys who called my best friend and I dykes, lesbians, or gay, whenever they saw us together. They would chase us down the hall and trap us in the stairs, spitting their words in our faces. I didn’t know these boys. They didn’t know me. I never even knew any of their names. The list goes on and on, but the lessons remained the same. Girls are valued primarily for their bodies. It is the expected norm that girls will use their bodies to get special privileges. Lastly, no one cares if it humiliates or degrades the girl. Welcome to the world of my early sexual education.
CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

My dissertation research was a qualitative (in-depth, open-ended interviews) study of unwanted sexual attention experiences of high-school girls, how they coped with it, and what impact it had on their education. For this study I interviewed adult women volunteers who classified themselves as having experienced unwanted sexual attention (also commonly called sexual harassment or sexual intimidation) in their high school. My purpose was to gain insight and academic knowledge about what range of sexual intimidation occurs to females in high school institutions in our country, how survivors have coped with the after-effects of their victimization, and how harassment impacted their educational experiences and attainment based on their “voices” and perceptions. This will not only add knowledge to the field of sexual abuse research, educational research, and research on sexism and violence against women, but will also provide empowerment to survivors of such experiences by allowing them to voice their own issues, concerns, and views.

Subject Population

Twenty-four women (at the time over age 18) volunteered and participated in the project. Each was self-defined as a survivor of unwanted sexual attention in high school. There was no maximum age or focal age expected; it was thought that in fact more variation in age might lead to more diversity in results.

Recruitment and Selection of Subjects

All the women who participated in this project were included after hearing about what I wanted to do. Participants were fully self-selected, and interested in a chance to
tell their stories and explore their pasts in the manner in which I chose for conducting my dissertation research. Potential subjects found out about the study through convenience sampling: they either found out through friends that I am studying this population, or were in university classes to which I presented my project, or were members of one of the many world wide web sites that deal with sexual abuse or sexual abuse in educational settings, or were acquaintances who volunteered after finding out my dissertation topic interest.

It was made clear that subjects were free to stop their participation in the research at any point in the process if they had desired. This project was entirely voluntary: there was no pressure to elicit their initial involvement or continued involvement.

**Research Procedures**

The nature of activities in which the subjects were engaged was that of one-on-one open-ended-question interviews between the primary researcher (me) and the subjects. They were not be given a copy of the questions in advance or at the time of the interview, in order to allow the information they gave me to flow freely and to share the depth of unguarded information. I felt that giving the subjects the questions would put too much of a controlling direction on the interviews. The questions were meant to help facilitate (not define) the interviews. Each subject read and signed the consent form, which informed them of their rights and asked their permission to be audio-taped (see Appendix D for the form). They were told that interviews would likely last 30 to 60 minutes. Each participant was offered the option to review their interviews and make any addenda prior to the completion of the dissertation. Each was offered the option of providing input on the finished project as well. Based on their comfort levels, each participant was allowed to select their choice of a reasonable location at which to be interviewed.
The questions that were used to initiate the interview conversation follow: They consisted of a few open-ended questions designed to help 'guide' the interview process. All conversations were audio-taped for transcription ease. The study’s participants were free to choose their own exploration and information direction if there was information beyond the guide questions they wanted to add.

After each meeting, the interview was transcribed and each study participant was allowed the option to read the transcript in order to make any additions or changes they felt were relevant. This process was important in order that I could obtain the most complete, honest, and thoughtful responses from the women in this study. In addition, study participants were offered the choice of reading and responding to the finished project prior to final submission.

As the principal investigator, I conducted all the interviews and contacted each participant myself. I am/was a Masters degreed social worker with a license to practice in Ohio, with extensive work experience as a social worker/facilitator. In addition, I had experience conducting qualitative, interview research as a part of my thesis for my Masters degree in Child and Family Studies from Miami University.

Potential Risks and Discomforts

There were no physical, social, or legal risks anticipated or encountered. It was conceivable that some of the participants would experience some psychological discomfort during the discussion of their high school abuse. However, the participants were voluntarily choosing to participate, and were made fully aware of what was to be explored. They were free (in fact encouraged) to quit the study if at any time they became too uncomfortable. I had a list of local therapeutic resources available to all participants should the interviews result in a participant’s desire to pursue the topic in a professional capacity. All participants were self-defined with their identity as survivors.
of unwanted sexual attention in high school and their willingness to explore their past experiences.

**Potential Benefits**

Potential benefits to the subjects included their chance to verbally explore their thoughts and experiences with a person who was/is truly interested in hearing and understanding their stories. In a world where unpleasant topics are often ignored or avoided, this was a chance for these women to be empowered and validated in a non-judgmental, encouraging environment. In being part of the analysis process, the women also may have benefited from gaining insight into the experiences of other women with similar backgrounds. Lastly, there was the potential benefit of being part of the research process, of gathering information, and presenting it in a manner to inform others.

Knowledge about sexual intimidation in educational settings and about its victims from their own views and voices is a benefit, academically and educationally. The traditional research world is where research has routinely fit people into pre-designed categories, whereas my research let the participants express their own life experiences. It had the potential of unearthing some new and different perspectives not previously explored in past studies. High school sexual intimidation (or sexual harassment) of females, how the survivors survived their educational abuse experience, and how it has impacted their education, have been sparsely studied thus far. I hope this study will provide valuable information in understanding the scope of the issue, treatment, and handling of perpetrators and victims of such experiences and prevention measures that could curtail such occurrences. That is what I wanted to understand: what happened to them, how they coped, and how it affected their education.
Safeguarding Confidentiality

Confidentiality was maintained in several ways. First, each woman was asked to give herself an alias or identifier to be referred to in the interviews and in the completed dissertation. No distinguishing information was collected which could later identify the women, and their contact was all with me (principal investigator) only, so no one else will ever know their real identities.

Resulting transcripts, tapes, notes, consent forms, etc. have been kept in one locked location: my desk at home. No one else has access or keys to this location. I am the only person who will have any access to the identity of the participants. Consent forms will be kept in a locked file cabinet separate from the data. Lastly, the tapes will be kept only until transcribed them into hard copy dialogue form and the thesis process completed, at which point the tapes will be destroyed. The data was analyzed and presented in the dissertation using the alias each participant chose for herself.

Instrumentation

The primary instrumentation for this dissertation was the following set of open-ended questions that were asked in person by me at the one-on-one interviews.

Opening script:

Before we start, I want to go over a few things to make sure we are in agreement about who I am, what I am doing, the purpose of the study, the procedure of the study, and your rights as a study participant. I am Carolyn Slotten, currently working on a doctorate dissertation in the department of Human Development and Family Science at The Ohio State University. My dissertation topic is an exploration of females' experiences with unwanted sexual attention in high school, how they coped with it, and if it affected them educationally. You have volunteered to participate under the assurance that your identity will only be known by me, and identifying information will not be included in the dissertation. You have signed a consent form, and I want to reiterate your
right to discontinue the interview at any time, for whatever reason. Feel free to answer any of my questions in as much or as little depth as you are comfortable with, and feel free to add any other relevant information that you think will be helpful to my study. My questions are meant to guide the interview, not dictate, the process.

Age:

Year Graduated High School:

Any other information about who you are:

1. Tell me about your high school so I can get an idea of its environment. (example: size, racial make-up, rural/inner city/suburban, etc.) What grades did you attend? How do you describe your overall experience there? Your overall feelings about it?

2. Tell me about your experience(s) with unwanted sexual attention. Where did it/they occur? Who was present? What were the circumstances surrounding it?

3. What were your initial reactions/feelings resulting from the experience(s)?

4. Were there any actions or reactions that you did as a result? Why or why not?

5. Did you report the incident/problem to anyone associated with the high school? Why or why not? What was the result?

6. Did you tell or discuss the incident(s) with anyone in high school? Friends, parents, etc.? If yes, what was the result?

7. What did you do in high school to “cope” with the effects of the unwanted sexual attention? What coping methods were most helpful? What about those coping methods made them helpful or hurtful to you?

8. How do you feel the experience(s) affected your high school experience and your educational experience? For example, did it affect your educational choices, grades, school activity level, comfort level, friend network, student interactions, etc.?

9. Do you think sexual harassment was a problem in your school for people other than you? Did you hear other students complain about it?

10. Looking back, was there anything you would or could or wish you had done differently in regards to the experience(s)?
11. Do you feel that this experience in high school has in any way impacted your adult life? How and why?

12. What do you think could be changed in society, schools, etc. that could impact the experience of unwanted sexual intimidation in education?

Data Reduction/Analysis

The collected data was maintained with no name or identifying information being kept with the transcripts. The transcripts were typed by myself from the tapes recorded during interviews, and all tapes and resulting data were maintained by me. Transcripts were read and reviewed by myself and my dissertation adviser.

Data “analysis” and presentation were done through a case study design format highlighting some of the results of each individual female participant and some indication of similarities and differences in their interview information. Information is presented about the women’s experiences, reactions/responses, coping responses/strategies, educational impacts, and possible adult impacts. Information presented is compared among each of the women, as well as compared with the research literature previously reviewed. What I searched for was the unique individual stories of the women as well as common and uncommon themes and how they are or are not reflected in the literature. Once I had all the interviews completed, I charted all the identifying information, the harassment examples, the long-term and education effects, the telling school/friends/parents data, and the suggestion for school changes responses on a chart, categorized by individual women. This enabled me to arrange and analyze the interview data.

In addition, Dr. Schultz was a collaborative second reader of all interview transcripts, in order to achieve a more complete analysis of the data.
CHAPTER 4
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Personal Backgrounds

"Allison"

Allison (age 22, Caucasian) attended a four-year high school of mixed racial make-up in Cleveland, Ohio. Her school population was about 1100 students. She reported enjoying her high school experience, especially her extra-curricular activity of choir. She was interviewed on May 6, 1998 and her interview lasted 23 minutes. As an interviewee, Allison was very verbal, and appeared very much at ease.

"Amanda"

Amanda (age 22, Caucasian) attended one of the two high schools in an Ohio middle-sized town, outside of Dayton, for four years. It was primarily "white" with "a handful of African-American and Hispanic" students. She described her school as "middle-class", with about 380 students in her graduating class. She reported "hating" school when she was there and still does looking back. She felt students were "cliquey", "back-stabbing", and "phony". Amanda's interview on May 6, 1998 lasted for 14 minutes. Her responses were often short and to the point but she presented herself as comfortable and relaxed.

"Amy"

Amy (age 21, Caucasian) attended a large, four-year high school (2000 student population) in Westerville, Ohio. The racial make-up of the school was primarily White.
but with some minority population. She described her experience as inadequately preparing her for college and "cliquish", but she generally had a "positive experience". She was interviewed on May 4, 1998 and the interview lasted 18 minutes. Amy generally got right to the point in her answers, answering with short sentences but occasionally her answers were very detailed and long. She presented her self as a person who is very comfortable and self-assured.

"Ann"

Ann (age 32, African-American) attended a four-year high school in a majority white population, with a class size of about 250, in the Toledo, Ohio area. She reported her high school experience as being fun and "loved it". Ann was interviewed on May 13, 1998 and the interview lasted 8 minutes. Ann responded to the interview in short, matter-of-fact answers, with little explanations. She appeared a bit uncomfortable taking about her experiences despite her volunteering to do so.

"Elizabeth"

Elizabeth (age 22, Caucasian) attended a four-year, large high school in the Cleveland, Ohio area. Her school had a population of over 2,000 students and was "really mixed" racially. She described her experience as "mostly it was good but some was really bad so it is hard to say." She felt she was too mature in high school and did not feel respected by the teachers. Elizabeth's interview took place on May 4, 1998 and lasted 22 minutes. While explaining her experiences, Elizabeth became clearly angry about what she had endured and the responses of the administrators and her friends. She was fairly verbal and lengthy in her responses despite her clear emotional reaction.
"Heather"

Heather (age 21, Caucasian) attended a racially white (two Black students, all white faculty), four-year high school in upper Northwest Ohio. It was a rural school in a predominately German area with 1,000 students in its population, joining from three smaller elementary schools. She reported liking school but not liking the males in her school. Heather spent her summer months in Wilmington, North Carolina and felt her classmates were poorly behaved in comparison to the people she met "down south". Heather was interviewed on April 22, 1998, and her interview lasted 18 minutes. Heather was obviously uncomfortable during the interview and required a lot of prompting to respond. She was clearly embarrassed about talking about her high school experiences.

"J"

J (age 21, Caucasian) attended a four-year high school in Long Island, New York. Her graduating class was 475 students. Her school was predominantly white, with a large Jewish population. She felt it was a very "cliquey" environment where people generally kept separate from each other in their groups. She reported that she did not remember much of her experiences, just "bits and pieces" and that she feels it was not a very significant time in her life. She mostly remembered her senior year but none of her freshman year although she only graduated three years ago. J was interviewed on May 6, 1998 and the interview lasted 20 minutes. She spoke easily about her experiences despite her earlier response of not remembering much.

"Jamie"

Jamie (age 21, Caucasian) attended a small, four-year school in Long Island, New York. Her graduating class was 150 students. It was a public school with a reputation of being "one of the best school districts" with primarily white students from "middle-class" families. As far as Jamie's feelings about high school she related. "I think I like it better
now than I did then. I look back and say I loved high school. But when I was in it, it was like, hard." Jamie's interview occurred on May 12, 1998 and lasted 16 minutes. Jamie's responses were short but she demonstrated no visible discomfort in being interviewed.

"Jodi"

Jodi (age 21, Caucasian) attended a four-year high school in Oceanside, New York. It was a small, public school with a "middle-class" population of 400 students, primarily white racially with two Blacks and a few Hispanics. She described her high school experience as "fine" but she was glad she was past it and in college. Jodi's interview responses were short and quick, with very little elaboration. She didn't respond with many "emotional" answers, but in fact responded very matter-of-fact. Her interview occurred on May 6, 1998 and lasted 9 minutes.

"Joy"

Joy (age 20, Caucasian) attended a "specialized magnet school" in Seattle, Washington, that specialized in medical/health careers. Racially, her school's population was mixed: 40% Black, 25% Hispanic, 20% Asian, and 15% white. It was a large school with 700 students in attendance. Joy experienced a series of very lengthy, devastating experiences throughout middle school and high school and recalls very little positive about her education. Joy's interview was unique because it occurred via e-mail. She was referred to me through a national organization focusing on school sexual harassment that I was interacting with called SESAME (Survivors of Educator Sexual Abuse and Misconduct Emerge). Her "interview" occurred over three days, with three e-mails: May 14, 15, 16, 1998. Joy was very eager to have her experiences included in this dissertation.
"Kerri"

Kerri (age 25, married, Caucasian) attended a four-year high school in Cape Coral, Florida. Her school was brand new the year before she began there and had a student population of 1500. The racial make-up of her school was primarily white but some black students were bussed in from Fort Myers, Florida. Kerri's recollection of her high school experience was that she felt "safe" and she enjoyed her activities in band but would not want to "do it again." Kerri's interview occurred on May 5, 1998 and its duration was 18 minutes. Her responses were often short and to the point but she seemed comfortable being interviewed.

"Kim"

Kim (age 22, Caucasian) attended a small, four-year high school in a suburb of Cleveland. Its racial make-up was primarily white (with 5-10 Blacks), and her graduating class had 200 students. She related that she went to school with "high ability" and "honors" students and has generally favorable memories about her high school years. Her major complaint about her high school was the favoritism given to the male sports figures in the school. Kim's interview occurred on May 19, 1998 and lasted 12 minutes. Kim was a somewhat reluctant interviewee, responding with short, quick answers, and little detail.

"Kimberly"

Kimberly (age 22, Caucasian) attended two different high schools, one for grade nine and another for grades ten through twelve. Her schools were in Columbus, Ohio. She reported her ninth grade class as having over a thousand students, and even after the students were split to a new school for her later years, she still had a class of over 500. The student population of her schools was primarily white, middle to upper middle class, with very few minorities. Kimberly's feelings about her high school experience were
generally good: "good times", "good feelings". The interview with Kimberly occurred on May 28, 1998 and was 19 minutes in duration. Kimberly was very verbal, open, and easy to interview. She showed no visible discomfort while talking about her past.

"Lisa"

Lisa (age 25, Caucasian) attended high school grades ten through twelve in Miami, Florida. The racial characteristics of her school were Black, Hispanic and White roughly a third of the population for each. She reported that she was very bored in high school, partially because of her intelligence and partially because her value systems included feminist views, abstaining from make-up, drugs, and sex, which placed her in the position of being an outsider. Her main high school interest included going to "beach protests." Lisa was interviewed on April 28, 1998 and her interview lasted 23 minutes. She was very verbal in her responses but occasionally embarrassed by her answers and sometimes angry about her remembrances. She stated that she wanted to be involved with the interviews because "its honorable to talk, to put meaning to my madness."

"Mindy"

Mindy (age 26, Caucasian) attended a large four-year high school in a suburb of Cleveland. She attended all four years and estimated her graduating class to be approximately 800 students. She further described it as racially diverse (55% - 60% African American, 40% - 45% Caucasian). Overall, she described her high school experience as "really good" to the point that she wished she could go back and do it again. The school had a "stigma" of being a rough/dangerous place to attend. She recalled several incidents with firearms and the entrances had security guards and detectors. She reported that she "never felt scared or threatened". As an interviewee, Mindy answered inquiries quickly and briefly, with little extra information. Her
interview was one of the shortest, lasting under 10 minutes and it took place May 13, 1998.

"Monica"

Monica (age 19, Caucasian) attended a small, northern Ohio school for grades nine through eleven and attended Ohio State University Mansfield her senior year. There were about 60 students in her grade and no minority students in her school while she was there. She "hated school" because she felt she was not popular, she was treated as if she was "nothing, nobody". She is glad she does not have to go back, does not care if she sees anyone from that time in her life again. Furthermore, she reported it as a "horrible" experience where she was teased and very shy. Monica was interviewed on April 22, 1998 and her interview lasted 20 minutes. Monica appeared comfortable talking with me but exhibited a lot of anger and disgust over her high school experience and her classmates.

"Nancy"

Nancy (age 53, Caucasian) attended a small town high school for four years. Her hometown was located in South Eastern Ohio, and the educators and their families were all part of the community. She described it as an "everyone knows everyone's business" type of environment. She grew up part of a strict family, and generally enjoyed her education experience, enough so to become a high school teacher. As an interview subject, she was very eager to share, very verbal, and had a lengthy interview lasted almost 45 minutes. She was interviewed on April 22, 1998.

"Nikki"

Nikki (age 21, African-American) attended a small high school (500 students) for four years in a suburb of Philadelphia. The racial make-up was fairly mixed, it was
located in a "rough neighborhood" and the student population was from mostly "middle to upper class" families. She recounted her high school experience as "very good" and she "loved it" but was glad to be out. Nikki was interviewed on May 12, 1998 and the interview lasted 20 minutes. Her answers appeared to come easily and she presented herself as being comfortable talking about her experiences.

"Renee"

Renee (age 24, Caucasian, married) reported attending a large, four-year high school in a middle class neighborhood in a suburb of Akron, Ohio. Her graduating class was around 550 students. The racial make-up of her school was primarily white with maybe 10 nonwhite students attending. She further reported having grown up in a very strict, Catholic family. Renee enjoyed high school but reported that she was very shy and not a social student. Renee's interview occurred on May 19, 1998 and lasted almost 20 minutes. As an interviewee, Renee spent time thinking about many of her answers before carefully answering. She presented herself as comfortable taking about her experiences, and spoke easily once she thought about each question.

"Shanna"

Shanna (age 19, Caucasian) attended a "white suburbia" high school in New Jersey. She reported that her school "wasn't very big"; she reported a graduating class of 600 or 700, with a total student population of 3,000. The school included grades 9 through 12. Shanna attended the school for three years and then skipped her senior year to come to college. She reported her freshman year as fun but the other two years were not enjoyable. During her last two years her main goal was to "get out". Shanna's interview occurred on May 14, 1998, and lasted 20 minutes. She appeared comfortable answering the inquiry, and was generally verbal and detailed in her response.
"Susie"

Susie (age 23, Caucasian) attended one of the two high schools in Westerville, Ohio. She described it as a large school, with a graduating class of 400 students. The majority were white and inner city adolescents. She attended this school from grades 9 through 12. Susie remembered high school as being "fun" and she wished she could go back. She felt she was somewhat protected from harm because she had an older brother in the grade ahead of her. She was a cheerleader at her school as well. Susie's interview demeanor was fairly casual and comfortable. She easily answered all inquiries with little outward sign of distress. Her interview was conducted on May 27, 1998 and lasted approximately 15 minutes.

"Tabitha"

Tabitha (age 21, Caucasian) attended four years of high school in a very small school system south of Canton, Ohio. She graduated with a class of 47, and no African-Americans were part of the school population. The school system served two towns, each with the population of around 500 individuals. In review, Tabitha reported that her overall feelings about high school were positive. She contended that it was so small that everyone were friends with each other. Tabitha's interview took place on May 12, 1998 and lasted 21 minutes. She presented herself as comfortable and demonstrated no hesitancy in answer any questions or explaining any answers.

"Tammi"

Tammi (age 22, Caucasian) reported that she attended a small, rural Catholic school in Ohio. Her graduating class was 54 students. She further described the school as attended by primarily "wealthy" and "elite" in terms of intelligence, primarily offspring of local professionals, such as "doctors" and "lawyers". She felt she got a much better "quality" education compared to the students in the local public school across the
street that had graduating classes of approximately 500 students. The racial make-up of her school included one African-American student and one Asian student at the time of her attending. She recalled enjoying her high school experience, and "had a close knit group of friends, six of us" that had been close since sixth grade. Although, she did qualify that her school had some "cruel" and "obnoxious" kids as well. Tammi's interview response was generally relaxed; she answered questions thoughtfully and thoroughly. Her interview lasted approximately 15 minutes and occurred on April 30, 1998.

"Vikki"

Vikki (age 25, Caucasian) lived in an upper economic class, Jewish, New York neighborhood but her professional parents wanted her to have a different education and sent their children to a middle class, public high school located in a Catholic neighborhood. The school population was overwhelmingly white with perhaps 20 Black students and 5 Jewish students. Her graduating class had around 260 students in it. She reported enjoying school, happy to be gone from it but remembering it fondly. Vikki was interviewed on May 4, 1998 and the interview lasted 19 minutes. She answered questions openly, did not appear to be uncomfortable discussing her experiences. Vikki presented herself as a very verbal young woman.

**Harassment Experiences/Perceptions/Reactions**

One difficulty of this dissertation is to adequately group together the experiences of the 24 women who participated in this study and still maintain the power of their voices sharing what they have experienced. It is important to me to maintain the quality and emotional charge of their experiences in their voices so I will utilize extensive quoting, while trying to synthesize whenever possible. Frankly a lot of data was collected.
during the interview of 24 women. At the risk of overstating the harsh reality of their experiences versus diminishing their volunteering to open their humiliations for "public" examination, their experiences will be maintained in as complete form as possible. Sometimes, "how" they told their life stories is as significant to what they experienced. It seems an injustice to over-analyze their experiences and dissect them for discussion, since one of the main goals of this dissertation was to allow the participants a chance to give "voice" to their experiences, some of them for the first time. It is meant to give testimony to their "realities", as they see it, more than an effort to second-guess. Their experiences will be presented, with a brief analysis of each person's response and will be "loosely" broken down based on the themes that arose characterizing their experiences. The break-down used is experiences with public taunting/verbal harassment (the most common by far), experiences with sexual harassment from teachers (the second most common experience), experiences with harassment from rumors, experiences with harassment by females, experiences with sexual assault, experiences with problems away from school that lead to school harassment.

Public Taunting/ Verbal Harassment

Twelve of the 24 for women involved with this study spoke about experiences they either endured or witnessed involving public verbal taunting in a sexually harassing manner.

Allison. Allison related a high school experience dealing with verbal harassment from male classmates that she admits to participating in yet later regrets her compliance.

"Yeah, and anytime I wore shorts, this was in ninth grade, this is when it first started. The guys from the other middle schools would be like: 'Hey, show me your legs. Let's see you flex those muscles.' I know, maybe that's not real sexual harassment. But I would be extremely embarrassed. I would do it though because I wanted to make friends. Then afterwards, I'm like, 'Oh my god, get me out of here. I can't believe I did that.'"
Allison also related another example of harassment with which she was passively compliant, because she felt compliance would gain her acceptance, despite her personal embarrassment.

"In the lunchroom, there was a senior and I was a freshman. He was this big, you know, hot stuff, you know, macho man, and he was a Greek God... He was like, come over here, and I was sitting by a table of guys, like freshman guys who were watching. He was going, 'Come over here. Sit on my lap and dance on me'. And I did it because it was him, and I said, 'Oh, okay. Why not'. Since everyone was watching to see if I would be cool enough to do it. And he was like, 'Why don't you give me a number?' and I thought he might call me sometime but nothing ever happened though. All the freshman guys went, 'Ooooooooooooooooooooh. I was just like, 'wow' I just remember being like this guy wants little old me, and then I sat back down, and I was like shaking, and thinking, 'oh my god. I just sat on his lap in the middle of the cafeteria and wiggled around' I didn't even want to, well I did but I didn't want to say no to him either."

Allison was unique in her willingness to share numerous accounts of sexually harassing experiences in an open and straightforward presentation. Her experiences occurred in public domain areas of school and usually occurred in front of other classmates, which may shed some light on why she was willing to "comply" and not confront the perpetrators, despite her personal embarrassment. Allison's examples present several important trends; girls accepting harassment as expected and "normal". girls "willing" to endure sexual embarrassing situations if it might improve their popularity, girls willing to accept public embarrassment, and the commonality of experiences in some high school populations. It is important not to error in thinking that only those women who shared numerous experiences experienced them because unfortunately this study did not adequately solicit the quantity of experiences, but instead the characteristic of an experience, and its results.

Amy. Amy shared information about experiences she said, "happened every day, every day you went to school." She explained that going to school meant going past rows of lockers where male students would daily conjugate and harass the females that walked past them.
"So there was always something said, whether it was like, you know, just the things that weren't always personal and mean, but to other people, like whistling, or you know, barking. Like, after you realized what it was like, you would never go to school by yourself. I mean, like you would never have walked in by yourself. You would always want to make sure you were with your friends. At least that's how it was with me and my friends. We would always make sure that we walked together."

Amy's experience of "shielding" herself from harassment by "always" walking with friends was a very common action taken by the women in this study. This doesn't seem to be a way to completely avoid harassment but it may lessen the likelihood or soften the impact.

Amy also was affected by an experience that happened to a friend of hers.

"My best friend in high school our freshman year was just traumatized when like someone would come up behind you and push your pants down... Because she had that done to her before the entire lunchroom, yeah... Yeah, and she was really fat and shy, you know. she was really quiet."

Sexual embarrassment of friends is interesting because although you may not personally be humiliated, you are affected by the emotions of your friend, and by the hostile environment that creates a fear that what if it happens to you next? Amy responded to her environment by passively accepting such embarrassment as "normal" and that she felt unable to change the problem. Despite the embarrassment of her and her friends, Amy was willing to accept such degradation as normal, part of school, and acceptable because it happened to all females at school.

Ann. Ann's experience with sexually harassing behavior was somewhat based on her first year status creating an easier target because Ann and her friend were not used to such experience and unsure how to respond or protect themselves.

"My best friend and I, we were walking out to the car, the senior boys were like a loud outbreak, harassing and everything. You know, 'Why don't you come with me,' asking if they could do things to our body parts, and loud teasing to us, and we didn't know what to do. We were freshman, and so it happened for about a week... Just like, 'You look good,'
and you know, 'Sexy today,' or like 'Why don't you come over, and fool around with me.' You know, little sexual things like that. Things about boob size and what they would do to them, except they always used nasty terms... At first we were like, "Okay, whatever." but then by the end of the week, it was happening every day, so we didn't know what to do... My friend would cry sometimes, she told me. I remember like, I mean, it's been a while, but I remember her telling me, like she was kind of nervous about it because she thought they would attack her later."

Ann's experience of verbal harassment and her recount of it was presented with little detail given to her emotions or reactions. She spoke of it quickly, directly, and with little extraneous information. Not only was the experience itself embarrassing but the underlying fear that it could escalate to more harmful behavior. Ann's experience is also indicative of younger, naive students being victimized by older students.

Elizabeth. Elizabeth began her remembrance of her high school experiences by relating the hall taunting that regularly occurred when females walked passed male classmates at the lockers. "They think it is flattering to say sexual taunts in the halls and try to grab you at the lockers but that happened all the time. you just accepted it and ignored it."

Elizabeth further expanded in a general way on the "normalcy" of harassment in her high school environment.

"You'd walk by, and they're like, 'Hey, sexy.' it just seemed more normal, you know. Their hormones are raging...Yeah, I mean, I think some girls were really upset. like I heard some girl say from my school that she hated it.... And I had guys lie about me."

It is interesting how Elizabeth is willing to "rationalize", accept, and even excuse the embarrassment and humiliation that frequently occurred to females in her high school.

Kimberly. Kimberly spoke of the embarrassment of public unwanted sexual attention at football games.

"Like if you would walk, the big thing was the football games, one section at the football game would be all seniors and if any girl would walk through there, nine times out of ten someone would grab their butt or slap you or something like that... I wouldn't have gone
through there, honestly. Because it was embarrassing and you would hear people yell things (about bodies). I would go all the way around, or run through."

This experience affected her enjoyment of the games as well as her experience in watching the game because she felt obligated to bypass the boys by taking a longer, less convenient path to move around with her friends. Again, this was an example of public embarrassment.

Lisa. Lisa reported being publicly harassed to the point of quitting school because she was unwilling to "put out" or take drugs.

"These guys were always saying things like, 'Oh, Lisa, she thinks she's great' like she's like Ms. feminist... Basically what I am saying is that I was not willing to put out. I did not want to be involved in the kind of things that they were... A lot of my friends were doing a lot of drugs. It was kind of like the early eighties, sort of the end of the coke era. free sex. the eighties, so they were doing a lot of stuff. It was a lot worse than what I'm saying. They'd be like really pressuring me, a big hassle.... Well. it got worse, sort of started out just like, I was like that, you know and it would be where they were coming up to me in the hallway and stuff and like following me around. And you know, harassing me and stuff like, and saying, 'Who's going to be the one?' It was physical. It was physical after they started following me around and stuff. They would like push me around and try to touch me and things like that, snap my bra, grab my breasts, which was really like embarrassing. I don't know what their real goal was which make it even scarier, what they might really want to do if they had the chance."

Eventually, Lisa ended the problem by quitting school. Her harassment was very public, verbal and physical, and lasted a year. Several things are particularly interesting about her ordeal: she was harassed by "friends" who she had known since grade school, the harassment was intended to get her to conform, and her greatest fear came from more than the harassment itself. it was the fear of what it may escalate to be. She presented an interesting idea of being able to accept the harassment but being afraid that in the future it would become rape or other violent actions. It was this fear of future possibilities that caused her to leave school and eventually obtain a GED.
**Mindy.** Mindy related sexual harassment that was specific to her and her friends who had the unfortunate luck to develop breasts early on and ones that became larger than their classmates.

"I remember being in a concert that we did, and the guys all sat in the front row, and we never knew why, and then we found out that it was so they could see us closer, because we had bigger breasts. They would stare and laugh... I never thought of it as being like a bad thing. I felt uncomfortable by it but it was just how it was."

Mindy's experience with public comments about her chest began in middle school and continued through high school. It's frequency and "normalcy" made it easier for her to just accept it, despite her discomfort. She did state that no one ever tried to physically touch her chest, that would have been the thing she would have taken action about, but the verbal taunts were "easier" to laugh about and "ignore".

**Monica.** As a freshman Monica attracted the interests of a 19-year-old male student who was still in freshman classes. At first she was flattered by his attention until his attention became harassing and humiliating.

"It always happened when someone was at least in the close vicinity. I guess he wanted people to hear him or something but some days when I was sitting studying, or in line to play a game, or walking outside and he would look me up and down and make eyes at me. At first I was like flattered but then he got so obvious and rude and it got really horrible. Everyone would look and laugh at me when he did it. He said a lot, crude comments, like one day I had dried glue on my leg (I had shorts on) and he said 'What is that—dried sperm?'... You can't imagine, it made me want to dry up and die. I thought I would never live it down because it became like a school joke for other kids to then say it to me. They thought it was so funny but it really hurt, really.... Another time he publicly asked me to go to a party with him and told me he wanted to 'knock my eggs loose'... He wanted everyone to hear, that was his point but I am not sure why. And I was so naive I asked him what it meant and he laughed and these other guys laughed and he said he wanted to fuck me hard till I cracked open. I thought I would die. I had never had anyone say that kind of stuff to me before. It was so horrible... I don't like to repeat most of them, he was rude and it happened for like a whole year so there was a lot but I'd rather not say all of them. They all had to do with my body and sex and stuff like that."
This harassment was intentionally public and created a hostile environment among other students as well. Monica also endured an attempted rape while a senior in high school.

"I went out with a guy from a class who tried to molest me on the first date. I was very nervous around campus, trying to hide from him and ignoring him and trying to be around other people when he was around or even thought he would be. I did miss some classes this time because the one time I saw him in the hall he pushed me in a corner held me down tried to kiss me, grabbed my breasts and wanted to know if I wanted to have fun with him again. I started crying and people came past and he said 'can't you take a joke?' and never talked to me again. After that it was like I was invisible but it still make school awkward, he was in my classes."

Not only was this personally embarrassing but it also became a public embarrassment. Students who had witnessed her physical attack in the halls continued to tease her long after the perpetrator gave up.

Nikki. Nikki developed a large chest in middle school and endured harassment about it throughout high school.

"I had a very big chest. Even when I was in fifth grade... I started getting a chest probably in about the fifth grade, sixth grade. So when I was in ninth grade, guys would go crazy... For example, one kid was in one of my classes and he would scream and call me 'chesty love.'

I am a very strong person, so things like that, I don't let them bother me and I laugh about it. I had a huge. I had a very big chest and so everywhere I went, people would be like 'Oh, my God'. Like I'd walk in somewhere and they'd be like 'Oh, my God'. Until junior year when I got a breast reduction because I couldn't take it anymore. I was very self-conscious about it... I was the girl with the big chest. That's what I was known as. not Nikki, but the girl with the big chest. It was upsetting."

Although initially Nikki denied being affected by the harassment, she eventually stated that she got her breast reduction because she "couldn't take it any more." Sadly, the harassment didn't end with the reduction because then she had to endure frequent public comments about her chest being smaller.

Nikki was also affected by the public harassment of one of her best friends.

"One of my friends when we were in ninth grade got pregnant. And I guess you could say that she was more or less she was a little promiscuous... And we had stones outside of our
school, like in the middle. And people would write things about her all over the stones, like nasty things... Like making comments about her blowing people, like blow jobs. I mean crazy stuff. And this girl was MISERABLE. And she ended up getting an abortion but saying that she didn't feel well because she had a stomach virus. So she had a reputation, so it was like, after people did find out that she was pregnant and never forget it. To this day people bring up this girl to me and then they are like, 'Oh, you know, that whore from high school'. They used to write things all over the place, in the bathrooms, the walls, it was horrible. She was a really nice person and everywhere we went, they were so embarrassing, trying to get her in bed, calling her names."

Nikki was rightfully confused because her friend had gotten into a mess getting pregnant, and endured years of public comments and school graffiti, yet the same guys from school would frequently try and date the same girl they were publicly embarrassing. Being friends with this girl and watching her frequent harassment greatly affected Nikki's feelings about males and resulted in her avoidance of a social life in high school. She was afraid she too would become a target for harassment similar to her friend.

Nikki's school also had public chalkboards hung in a school lobby where students would frequently write harassing statements about female classmates and no adult would erase the gossip.

"There were chalk boards. They would write things about girls up there. Like any gossip they could get on a girl, they would start writing it across the board. About like this one was with this one and that one. It is very humiliating. It's horrible. That never happened to me personally, but."

Again, witnessing the public humiliation of friends resulted in Nikki avoiding any socialization with the opposite sex for fear of sexual harassment.

Susie. Susie related two examples of sexually unwanted behavior that occurred in her school, but she denied either of them having much of an impact on her.

"Just some comments yelled in the hall, small stuff you would just laugh off, boys would be boys kind of stuff 'nice ass' things they wanted to do to us. dumb stuff. Didn't really hurt my feelings, just embarrassed me a little."
She labels the behavior as a normal, expected experience but she did classify it as embarrassing. Since she remembered it, I wondered if it was more embarrassing when it occurred versus looking back at it.

**Tabitha.** Tabitha was a victim of verbal harassment by male classmates who felt it was acceptable to tease her about her small breasts while they were in hallways and classroom settings. She wasn't the only victim of such taunts but never-the-less felt embarrassed by it, despite her response of laughing it off.

"Really there was only one thing and it kind of carried all the way through high school. They were always commenting on the size of my breasts. I guess they kind of made fun of everyone, but I kind of felt singled out a little bit because I was probably the smallest in my class. It affected how I dressed in high school. Little things like that that I laughed at, everyone laughed at, but... it was really embarrassing."

Tabitha endured so much embarrassing attention that it became "normal" and she began to doubt her own response. Laughter became an easier response than demanding a halt to the attention.

**Vikki.** Vikki gave many general examples of male behavior that were sexually harassing and embarrassing but because of their frequency she discounted their seriousness. In fact, she excused the males of responsibility, turning it all into childish play, never acknowledging that although it may have been just "annoying" to her, it may have been very embarrassing to others to be physically and verbally harassed.

"I don't think the guys really realized what they did. Like they go around and they give you wedgies and they think it is a joke, they try to unsnap your bras... They'd write notes to you... They would be real perverted and stuff, threats of what they wanted to do to you... Sexual talk. I would throw them in the garbage, like these guys must be bored in the class. I think and they just want something to laugh at but its annoying getting those notes."

Vikki is like many of the study participants, she downplays the importance and validity of her personal embarrassment, as well as down playing the responsibility of the harassers.
In conclusion, 12 of the women spoke of verbal sexually harassing experiences they either endured in public areas, often in front of many other students who joined in the harassment. Many of the women spoke of the frequency and normalcy of the experience, despite the potential for great embarrassment to the women victims. Sadly, very few women ever responded with genuine feelings of outrage or reported the problems that were occurring. Little was stopped from re-occurring to another woman the next day, so the cycle continues.

Teacher Harassment

Eight of the women participants of this study shared experiences with sexual harassment from their teachers.

Heather. Heather shared several memories of sexual intimidation and harassment she remembered from her past, including experiences from middle school.

"Okay, well to go back really far in 6th grade... I remember we had a gym teacher, a male gym teacher, and he would like hit on all the girls... Oh, like say things, you know, like 'Oh, you're looking really good.' And he told me once that, 'Oh, I can't wait till you're older or when you get married, will you invite me to your wedding, so I can have an excuse to kiss you?' I mean, all the girls knew he was creepy, and everybody was afraid to be alone with this teacher.

She also had an experience with unwanted sexual attention from an industrial arts teacher in high school.

"I got in trouble because he would let me do whatever I wanted, like he never made me do the work. He said he knew I couldn't because I was a girl. Yeah, and I mean, I would try, and he was like, 'don't hurt yourself,' 'Oh, no, you can just use someone else's. that will give you enough to give you a passing grade, or whatever.' He would make comments like, 'Oh, you're too pretty to be in this class.' That made me feel even more uncomfortable, because he was letting me get away with more than anybody else. It just made me feel real uncomfortable, because he would make comments out loud about, 'Oh, you're so pretty.'
As a result of being treated "special" by this teacher, Heather was harassed by other students who she felt were "jealous". In fact, she "lost" friends over the "rivalry" that resulted between her and other female friends in the class.

**Jodi.** Jodi related an experience with a high school math teacher who physically and verbally harassed girls in his classroom. Not only were the girls personally embarrassed but they got to witness the embarrassment of their classmates enduring his behavior.

"I had a math teacher who used to have comments to all the girls about what they were wearing...Saying that's hot stuff or whatever and slap them on the back of the butt or the leg. He was probably in his forties or older, when he was teaching, he would be like crude to all the girls, very crude to the girls. He was always putting his arm around people, patting their butts, commenting on hair clothes while staring at their breasts, that thing. It ended up that I ended up dropping math, and not finishing because I think I finished my requirements after I had taken my SATs. I hate math, but I also hated him as a teacher, and I thought I had to fool around with him. I had to play his game or fail, you know. He ended up sexually abusing a girl and got fired. He would never hit on anyone like in the hallway. It would be like as you were leaving class or rub against you when he was helping you at your desk, like elbow your breasts."

Jodi dropped the course and did not take any action against the teacher, and she felt compelled to try and put up with the problem in order to succeed. It is odd that she noted that he ended up losing his job for sexually abusing a student, as if what he was doing to her and her classmates wasn't really sexual abuse. Her normalization of the problem is sad.

**Joy.** Joy's experience begins prior to high school where she was forced into a sexual act with a teacher who becomes obsessed with her and transfers to her high school to continue their "relationship". Her abuse was publicly embarrassing because her teacher would be openly physical and verbal in a very intimate manner.

"The abuse began at my middle school, where Mr. B molested me (he forced me to have sex with him one time in a classroom one day after school). He then followed me to my high school. There, he would call me pet names like sweetie/ sexy/sugar/etc. in front of my peers and also in passing. Every time I had him for class (he was a substitute teacher), he would grope my shoulders/hair/thighs... One incident he grabbed my breast. He would whisper stuff like how sexy my handwriting is (I have the worst handwriting)
in my ear. He would tell me he loved me. He liked winking at me. Most of the time, this is stuff that happened during class—because after the incident when he molested me, I made sure I was never alone with him. He did manage to grab me one day and pull me into an empty classroom...where he did all sorts of things to my body I don't want to say and where he threatened me (this was my first encounter with him at my high school). All his flirting with me in class in front of my peers was humiliating."

Although Joy has never taken any action against the teacher, the devastating effects of her public and lengthy embarrassment have greatly diminished her self-esteem and ability to relate to any males. A lot of this will be presented in later sections.

Kim. Kim related a extended harassment that was perpetrated by her male health teacher on an ongoing basis. She felt it was especially bad because they were already discussing potentially embarrassing topics so adding unwanted sexual jokes and touching was unbearable.

"It wasn't directly towards just me, it was overall. He was the health teacher... He was also the football coach. He really touched girls a lot, like a hug, pat on the butt, but that was all girls, not just the special ones... He always make sex jokes too.... Plus the fact he always played around his favorites. He did what they wanted in the class too much. There were three periods they would come down to his class grade papers, or whatever. So I mean I think, you know, he favored cheerleaders. It didn't bother me that he didn't pay attention to me most of the time, except when he would hug me. I was kind of like embarrassed, I tended to be quiet in class... He was this big school hero, he could do whatever he wanted and it was OK, especially if the team won."

Again, Kim was harassed personally but also harassed by witnessing her classmates as objects of her teacher's attention.

Kerri. Kerri also spoke about the inequality between sports "heroes" in high school and why she thought it was sexually harassing.

"Sports players got to do everything that the girls didn't, you know. They got all the money, no grade problems and the sports, and the girls got, well they didn't get anything. They got to use the football field, you know, when the guys didn't need it.... they got to say whatever they wanted to other students, like girls, and no one would stop them, they were the players. I kind of see that as sexual harassment in a way, too, because it makes us feel less, harassed kind of and no one will stop them or help us."
She included examples of a teacher not making the football or basketball players take exams and when she publicly questioned his decision she was openly attacked by the teacher (called names and yelled at) while the other students sat by watching. Eventually the school counselor got involved and tried to mediate but Kerri was eventually kicked out of the classroom for being "disruptive". Kerri's experiences are interesting because the first involved public embarrassment by a female student and the second was public embarrassment from a teacher because she openly challenged his sexist bias.

**Kimberly.** Kimberly also spoke about a history teacher who was inappropriate sexually with the female students.

"He was extremely open about looking at girls' breasts and like you'd walk up to his desk and he would goggle. You could see it mostly like when you were in the classroom sitting and somebody else would be up there and he would like make a face at the class to make people laugh but it was like, okay. And if you would wear a dress or a skirt to school, he would comment on it... It got to the point where two of my friends were really like avoiding him and didn't want to be in his class. He was the only AP history teacher and we all took the AP class and so you couldn't avoid him if you wanted to take AP history you had to be in his class... My two friends both got to the point where they really was like, oh, here he comes in the hallway so let's go this way. So that was pretty bad."

Although Kimberly minimized the effect this teacher's behavior had on her, she admits to begin affected by the discomfort of her friends.

**Nancy.** Nancy was physically harassed by her English teacher during her junior and senior years of high school. This occurred in the 1960's, long before she had any terms such as harassment to put on her trauma.

"He actually lived about a half a block from my home and was married. In my mind I am trying to go back to the first time when I noticed that there was something strange about this man and the way he conducted a class... I began to be kind of uncomfortable because I would notice that if I was just sitting there, that he would bump into me as he was going by. I just thought that he was just trying to get by. But then I began to realize that he was not indeed bumping into me but rather he was rubbing up against me. To be real graphic, he was rubbing his genitals against my shoulders as he was going by because that would have been about the right height. I went through a series of stages. The first was very innocently thinking he was just bumping into me. And then when I realized that it wasn't just that, at first I thought, am I reading something into this that wasn't really
there? In other words, do I have a dirty mind? That this wasn't what he meant to do and I'm seeing something that's not there. But it continued. And I began to really get scared about what I was going to do? It made me feel very badly inside, like I was causing it or something? Two years. It went on for two years. Once I realized that this was a pattern of something that he was intentionally doing, I developed a way of avoiding it. But you see I had to be very careful because this was the respected authority figure. So I could not confront him or offend him. My parents would have never stood for such disobedience to an adult, let alone an adult teacher. So I would figure out ways as he would go by to lean forward, to pull down my sweater in the back or you know, to drop something and pick it up off the floor, to lean over as if I was going to look at something else, to turn. But you had to always, when you were in the class, when you were trying to take notes or trying to read or do whatever you were supposed to do, you always had to watch where he was because if you relaxed and work on your stuff, the next thing you knew was that he would come up behind you and do this to you... I hated that class. Because I had to be on guard every second. And the other thing that happened is that I began to think that it must be something that I was doing that caused this. Was it the way I sat in class? Was it the way I dressed? So, I tried everything. In terms of making myself unattractive, wear baggy, unflattering clothes, avoiding him totally, never looking at him so that there was no inadvertent message that was being sent by eye contact.

Nancy's narrative presented an interesting glimpse of the stages one might progress through in trying to understand or accept the unavoidable harassment by a trusted teacher. She was very clear about how extensively she internalized his harassment as her fault, the actions she took to try and prevent it, as well as the personal humiliation it caused her. Interestingly enough, although she endured such embarrassment silently for two years and never mentioned it to anyone, she discovered she was one of many girls the same teacher "rubbed against" when she attended her 25th high school reunion. Somehow in the course of reminiscing while eating at a large table, one woman mentioned the teacher, and several more added their experience until they all understood they were all victims who had silently endured his abuse. They considered "doing something about it" but, by this time, he was dead.

**Susie.** Susie relayed an example that actually occurred to a friend of hers. She explained it a casual tone as if it was no big deal, despite the enormous impact such illegal activity could have on students.
"A friend I had, a teacher had an affair with her. She just would brag about it. It was gross because she thought she was better because of it and we all thought she was stupid to do it for a grade."

Rumors by Males

Three students spoke of experiencing sexual harassment in the form of rumors started by male classmates.

Allison. Allison related an experience that dealt with the harassment that occurs because of rumors.

"He was my friend, too. We were at a party. For some reason we were in the bathroom at the same time and he came out he told everybody that... this is so embarrassing. Well... that I saw him with his clothes off. I wasn't even in the bathroom with him in that way. I was like getting aspirin from the cabinet and he was washing his hands, fully clothed! That really bothered me, too, because everyone believed him. I guess he thought it was really funny but I was devastated. I was really embarrassed."

I asked Allison if she confronted her "friend" about what he was saying.

"I remember doing that, and he just kind of threw me off. And we just, you know, forgot it, okay, because that happened a lot. Telling lies about girls to make them look easy, trashy, even when nothing happened. I tried to just blow it off even if it was embarrassing but I knew girls that were really, really embarrassed and cried or quit hanging out because of it."

Tammi. Tammi dated a school football player throughout her freshman year and in her sophomore year began noticing an unusual amount of attention from other males at school.

"And then I heard a rumor that they had heard that I slept with the quarterback, which I never had, and so they had this bet going to see which one of them could sleep with me, and I found out about this, which was hysterical. I laughed at first, because I thought it was like, was ridiculous that they would actually do it, and I thought it was embarrassing. I thought it was just like someone was just telling me a story, like they weren't really doing it. So then I got to the point where everybody in the school thought I'd slept with the quarterback, that was really embarrassing, because then I felt that people thought bad of me, called me names. I thought these guys were being nice to me, in talking to me in class, because we got along, and we had a good time. And now I'm thinking the whole
time they were talking to me, was just to see what they could get, which was really kind of horrible. Well, it's embarrassing, everyone knew what was going on but me."

Tammi’s embarrassment was public and made even worse by the fact that she was the victim of rumors that affected how people reacted to her and she didn't realize it. She was too embarrassed to ask her ex-boyfriend about his part in the rumors because she felt that would make her embarrassment more public. Instead, she responded by hoping it eventually went away.

**In Classroom Harassment by Students**

Only Amanda spoke specifically about a sexually harassing experience that occurred in a classroom setting.

**Amanda.** During the summer before her junior year, Amanda took a college-prep course at a community college in hopes of working towards early admission into a university. She knew no one in the class, but from the first day, she noticed an African-American male student staring at her to a degree that made her "uncomfortable." Her experience grew day after day as the male African-American student progressively increased his attention to following her around the classroom, to whispering about her, eventually speaking to her despite her public objections, asking personal questions that made her uncomfortable, and eventually attempted to "accompany" her to her car, where Amanda felt compelled to seek "rescue" from another student for "protection". Amanda tried to politely yet forcefully reject his attentions until his interest heightened in this manner.

"So the next day was the same thing. I sat down and I saw him sitting in a different seat where I was sitting the day before. So, of course. I sat where I was sitting on the first day, and he got up and moved again. So he kept moving his seat. It was the same thing over and over again. He was whispering to me, and he asked me if I believed in God out of nowhere. I said, 'excuse me! Leave me alone!' I said, 'To be honest with you, I don't think this is any of your business, and I choose not to discuss this with you.' He would just ask me random questions, and then that day, after he asked me if I believe in God, the class ended, and I gathered my belongings very quickly, and I got out of the classroom, and for some reason, I thought he was still in class. He was already standing outside the
door. He was like saying like, let me take you for coffee, and I said, 'No, I have to go to work.' He said, 'Let me drive you there.' I work in New York City. You know, this can't be happening, and I started walking to my car. Look, I left and he was still standing there. I walked to my car, and turned around, and he was following me to my car. So, I was in a state of panic. I didn't know what to do. I was by myself and near panic. My car was a block or so away. And I saw him following me, so I turned immediately, and started walking in the opposite direction. There was this woman in my class who was like, she was a mother. She was kind of like friendly, because we started speaking, and she saw this going on. So I went up to her, and started explaining, he's from our class, and he's following me. Please walk with me.' So she walked with me, and he was still following me when I was walking with this woman. He was talking to me again, asking me, 'Please let me take you out for lunch. Let me take you out for coffee.' The woman was saying to just go on, and he was just standing there all the time, following us, and I would never do this; but I was walking with the woman, and I got in the car with her because I didn't have any other alternative"

Once Amanda was safely transported to her car and driving away she had to pull over and cry for a while before calling her parents. Her parents intervened by speaking with the teacher and working out a way for Amanda to continue the class without attending. But Amanda was unable to keep up and eventually had to drop the course, which halted her attempt at early admittance into college. Her perpetrator was kicked out of the class due to his harassment of Amanda, as well as other instances of disruptive behavior he exhibited in class. Amanda told her experience in a halting, almost haunting tone with great detail, as if relating a spooky story. She was very traumatized by its occurrence. In her case, she was in an unfamiliar environment, where she knew nobody, and her response to her harassment was somewhat tainted by these circumstances. Amanda was also very worried about "over reacting" to the man because he was black, but his racial identity also heightened her fear of him.

Sexual Assault in Building

Three of the study respondents experienced physical sexual assaults within the high school building.
Elizabeth. Elizabeth required a little time before relating the details of a serious sexual assault she experienced in high school. After gaining a level of comfort with an initial disclaimer, she found the strength to share a more personal experience from her past.

"There was this place in the commons, where everyone hung out between classes and free time. Well this group of guys had always been there, and I was used to having them say things about my boobs or legs whenever I walked by. It was no big deal, they said it to every girl no matter how good her legs or how big her boobs. But one day, I was late for class, and I was a senior and really serious about being a good student, so I was alone, which I didn't like to be and they weren't in class but in their "space" and as I came past one of the guys who was really big pushed me up against the wall and put his hands under my skirt and inside my underwear and tried to like cram his fist inside me telling me that was small compared to his 'dick' and wouldn't I like to feel his 'dick' and really cum, or something like that. I was trying to break free and trying to scratch him, and really mad. I didn't cry until later then I was so mad and embarrassed because his friends, like five other black guys were laughing and saying 'you get it', 'harder', 'she likes it', 'you tell her', stuff like that. Giving each other high five's and trying to get a look under my skirt at his hand. It felt like a couple of minutes because I was struggling and I wasn't going to make it easy for him to put his hand in me but he did, on my bare skin, and a little inside me because I was really sore and bruised for days, every time I sat down or went to the bathroom I burned. It was gross. He was laughing and talking trash while showing off for his friends and eventually I pushed him away and ran up the stairs."

Elizabeth ran to class, afraid of being late and did not report her assault to anyone. Elizabeth's experience of sexual assault in front of a group of students was very graphic and painful for her. It is interesting that she presented more feelings of worrying about being late for class and embarrassment more than anger or outrage. Sadly, as will be seen later in the section of how friends react when told, she was re-victimized and blamed for her experience by her boyfriend because she refused to let him "retaliate". It was also interesting that Elizabeth felt she had to "test the waters" and relate general experiences before leading up to an outrageous experience. It is also important that Elizabeth's assault occurred in a public domain of the school building and occurred in front of several students. Because she did not know any of the participants in her humiliation, other than they were African-American, she never reported her experience to anyone and no one was ever held accountable for their violence.
Renee. Renee was raped by a boyfriend in the locker room after school. She felt she couldn't do anything about it because she had no proof and she feared the public embarrassment that disclosure might bring.

"My freshman year in high school so it was almost ten years ago. It was an ex-boyfriend now, but he forced me against my will, raped me, whatever. Well, we were in the locker room after practice, everyone else was gone, home, and we had an argument, and we're like working it out, making up, you know, doing the make-up thing, kissing, and all that, and then he wanted to go further, and I kept saying, 'No.' I got the old line, 'If you love me, you'll do this,' and he started and I knew I couldn't fight him off because he was a lot larger than I was so... I knew struggling was going to be hopeless, so I was trying pleading but I knew everyone was out of the building... You know, 'Stop, stop, please stop... I knew I wasn't going to stop him and I didn't want to file charges against him, because I didn't have any bruises on me, or anything like that. And then everyone would know."

Renee has never told anyone of her experience before and refuses to admit that it had any serious impact on her life.

Allison. In Allison's senior year she was a "show choir member" and sang with a partner who was a junior male. She described it in this manner.

"It's usually fun. But a lot of times you have a partner and they'll hold you while you're singing, but when I would be with this one guy I'd just be standing there, and his hands would be all over the place. It got to the point where... Where he would put his hands on my chest and squeeze or rub my behind, stuff like that... He was bigger than me, a lot, he was a big boy, and so I fought a little like pushing him away. I was a little intimidated, but more annoyed. The thing was though, it didn't just happen to me, there were like two or three other girls, so we knew..."

Away From School

J. J recalled an experience with sexual assault by two males away from school that resulted in eventual charges and legal action as well as a continuation of abuse and harassment in school by classmates of the males who assaulted her. She had been out drinking at club (with a fake id) with her friends and chose to accept a ride home with
two males who were friends of her friends. On the way to her home they say they had to stop at a house and she said it was OK as long as she got home by 1:00.

"So we go inside and they start drinking and smoking and everything like that. I sit on the couch and they like come over to me. I'm like what's going on and I have to go home. So they are like no, no, no, don't worry, we'll have you home by 1:00, we promise. So they did everything, like took off my shirt, that kind of thing and the whole time I'm just sitting there saying I have to leave. I have to go home. I have a boyfriend. I don't want to be here. They put their hands in my pants, their mouths on me. gave me hickeys all over my body. but I wouldn't move around so they could, you know. Not that! I just sat there, embarrassed to say much. kind of scared. I didn't want to get hurt."

After 45 minutes, they took her home and she hoped she could "pretend it never happened." Unfortunately, her boyfriend sees the marks on her body, and makes her tell her parents. Her parents brought legal charges against the two males and the whole ordeal became a dividing factor among students who felt it was right that she brought charges and those friends of her attackers who felt she was to blame and wrong. The frequent harassment at school resulted in her father hiring a bodyguard so she could attend school functions, such as dances and sports events, with a minimum of harassment. J's initial experience didn't occur at school but the after-effect greatly harmed her high school experience and resulted in many months of harassment by other students.

**Harassed by Female Classmate**

Two of the women participants related harassing incidents perpetrated by female classmates.

**Jamie.** Jamie recalled a unique experience of being sexually harassed and embarrassed by a female classmate.

"She used to bother me because I was in the popular group and she wasn't... I think it was going on all through high school but at one time. I guess she felt like she had these friends that were gonna like back her up, and she could abuse me... She was on my bus. She lived down the street from me. That was mostly where it was, on the bus or at the stop. She just like started with me for some reason... Mostly she would just make fun of
me and anything, like I was ugly. She would sit there while her friends would make fun of me on the bus. There was this group of guys also who she got to, they would say that I had a big nose, and I was fat and I had a big butt, call me slut or whore or whatever they thought was funny."

Despite Jamie being harassed on a school bus and not in a school building, its jurisdiction is still within the responsibility of the school board and is justified as unwanted sexual attention in an educational setting. Her embarrassment occurred in a public setting and was joined by other students witnessing the problem, but none of the students harassed her inside the school classrooms.

**Kerri.** Kerri experienced a lengthy harassment in ninth and tenth grades from an older student named Stacey. For three months as a freshman, Kerri dated a football player who later dated Stacey. Stacey and Kerri were in "color guard" together and Stacey initiated a lengthy harassment of Kerri, presumably out of misplaced jealousy about the sexual activity Kerri and the male had engaged in.

"She felt that I was a threat, because he was hers now and no one else could have meant anything to him. She said I shouldn't have done anything with her man.... I mean I would be walking in the hall to guard practice because it was actually a class that we had during the day. Seventh period, and I mean she would just make, you know, comments to me about... Such as, go to hell, I was a tramp, she was going to get me back. I was fat or ugly. They were derogatory sexually. Yeah, she did threaten me. I mean, she'd say, "Don't get near him or I'll kick your ass," kind of deal... I mean it would have to do with the relationship I had at the time, or you know, what we were doing at the time, or she just was a mean person... She was really bad when her little clique of friends was walking in the hall."

**Long Term Effects**

It is important to remember that the women themselves decided what was a long-term effect of their high school experience. There is no other source to back up their perceptions as they presented them in present time. Of the 24 participants in this dissertation, only three (Ann, Kim and Kimberly) responded negatively to the inquiry about long-term effects of their high school sexual harassment experience. They felt their
experience did not have any long-term effects on them. Although the responses to this inquiry vary greatly, depending on the individual's experiences and perceptions, several interesting trends stood out. One interesting aspect of the responses was eight of the women recounted how they responded to the negative, high school experience by becoming stronger, smarter, and more compassionate to others experiences with harassment.

When asked what if anything was a long-term effect for her, Allison, who was physically assaulted by a singing partner while performing in a show choir, responded. "I think actually, in a way, it's made me, I don't know, be more independent. Like how I feel with guys like I don't care if they have an opinion of me, instead of trying to impress them, well maybe I'll try to impress them a little bit, but then I'm not going to worry about it. I'm not going to try to be sexy for you, or you know. I'm going to do what I want. I definitely think it's made me a little more independent and not as self-conscious."

Amy felt her ability to empathize with others was heightened as a result of her experience. "It made me less likely to make fun of somebody else, or talk about someone else. It made me, you know, put myself in somebody else's shoes, and you know, understand, empathize for what, you know, this other person is feeling, and how, you know, what these guys are saying to these girls, and things like that basically are wrong."

Jamie, who was harassed by a female classmate, replied that her long-term effect was also positive. "I definitely think that in time it made me stronger as a person in the long run and having to deal with people saying things to you and how you feel about yourself. I mean people say stuff and you can't let it bother you. I knew they were doing it because they were insecure themselves."

Jodi, who was physically and verbally assaulted by a male math teacher, felt that as a result of her experience she "knew now how to protect myself, and what to look for, you know, if a person ever treats me like that again."

Kerri, who had been harassed by a female student and later by a male teacher described her strength in this way,
"If I notice some of those same actions or qualities that she had, I just stay away from those kinds of people, especially like in class or something. There's like the sorority girls who talk about everyone behind their back. I just stay away from that. Even when I was a freshman living in a dorm I never wanted to get into that. I don't try to interact with people like that."

Lisa, who experienced a lengthy time of being verbally and psychologically harassed to the extent that she quit attending school, described her resulting strength as an adult in this manner.

"I think probably some negative things are that I really get uptight when I see stuff like this going on. Still I'm frustrated and I will remember things. I'm much more together about it now... You know, I think I do sort of blame myself. I think I'm more now than then. Because I feel like I know about this, I understand and I still think that I have to be the strongest. I have this perfection thing and I feel like I let myself down and it's like I let these things get to me."

Although Lisa clearly is still struggling with her past and trying to make meaning of the experience, she is also attempting to gain strength from her ordeal.

Nancy, the oldest of the respondents, has had over 30 years to come to grips with her physical harassment from her male English teacher. She was very insightful in how she has used her past to the benefit of her family and students.

"Well, it has made me believe children. Made me cautious in terms of listening to what my own children say or any signal that they might be giving about something that was going on. Although in the case of two of them, I missed it entirely and have found out in later years that they have experienced similar types of things that took them a little while to tell me about it. They didn't wait 30 years. But the other thing is that I think it has made me a better teacher in terms of how much I am aware of what happens to my students and how my actions impact them... If nothing else, it gives me a certain amount of empathy for people who are victims. But the one thing it has made me realize is just how powerful teaching is. And what an authority figures a teacher can be and that it is possible to abuse that. There is a tremendous responsibility that goes with that and if you are going to be a good teacher, you have to realize how powerful that is. And take seriously the impact that you can have on your students' lives."

Lastly, Tammi also felt she has become a better person after being traumatized by hurtful sexual rumors that spoiled her high school experience.
"Yeah, I think it gives me a lot more strength and backbone... Like you know now, I'm able to handle problems better. I don't know. I'm able to walk up to somebody and like, 'Listen, I heard this, and I, you know, just from that experience, I mean, I've heard about it. You seem like you know.' You know, the purpose was to embarrass me that I have heard about it. I do know that it's going on, and it is going to stop here and now... I think it taught me a lot, and to stand up for myself, and to show everybody how I'm feeling, and be more confident when I walk down the hall, and all that."

In contrast to the before mentioned responses to long-term effects are the 13 women who explained some of the negative responses that still hurt their lives and relationships, which they directly attribute to their personal experiences with sexual harassment. Two of the participants. Amanda and J. struggle as adult college students with the fear of being alone.

Amanda, who was verbally harassed and stalked by a classmate, described her long term fear in this manner,

"When I'm walking, I hate going anywhere by myself. Like I don't like to be alone especially at night, I never ever walk anywhere alone even in the daytime, when there's a million people out, I still don't like walking by myself. Especially at night. I never, ever, ever walk by myself. It's just like I'm always like looking over my shoulder."

J. who was sexually assaulted responded. "I know I am safe here at school although if I think about it I get the creeps walking alone for a while, I sleep with my light on." She says she feels safe, but a person who feels safe wouldn't sleep with the light on.

Four of the women interviewed felt that they still have the after-effects of increased self-consciousness and fear of attracting the attention of men. Monica, who was harassed and embarrassed by a male student she liked stated,

"I still worry guys will say things I won't know how to stop and will be laughed at by my friends... But I could loose them if they know how stupid I am with guys... They tease me because I am really shy, don't really like guys, not like gay, just shy. I guess maybe I wouldn't be if I hadn't saw how crude a guy can be."
Shanna, who was assaulted in her first year of high school and again assaulted in college, described her progressive self-consciousness in this way,

"I don't trust very many people, especially men... It affected me physically too. My freshman year before all this started happening, I was always, I'd always put my make-up on and I'd do my hair, I'd make sure, I must have spent two or three hours getting ready for school every day. I would always get up a couple of hours early, but when stuff like that happened, I wanted to avoid the attention so I physically withdrew. my mom even noticed it. She was just like, 'What happened to you?' I was always wanting to go out in my best clothes and I just stopped. Absolutely. At first, she thought it was drugs. And that's just not where I was at all. Then she just accepted it as a phase. Even to this day, there are very few times when I'll actually go all out to do those kinds of things because when it does happen, I get the unwanted attention and I just don't really want it. That's not why I do those things, I never put make-up on and I never did my hair to attract attention. I did it for myself... And it all got ruined because I get the attention and I don't need that. I don't need to deal with it. I actually think I work harder at not getting it now, especially now in college."

Tabitha, who was harassed in high school for having "under-developed breasts", contends that it still colors her relationships in college.

"Yes. When I first met my boyfriend, it was the one thing I was just so worried about. Because we met one night and I met him for two minutes. Then we were set up by a mutual friend. And I said are you sure he knows I have no breasts, because it was dark that night. And I was also worried about the scar on my face and I said well, maybe he doesn't. To him it just doesn't matter at all. He is so great and so supportive about it. I mean, he knows that it still bothers me sometimes."

Vikki also responded that she has image problems as the result of frequent sexually harassing behaviors from the boys in her high school environment,

"Yes. I'm self-conscious... I'm self-conscious about my body, about my chest. Like with my boyfriend, I'm self-conscious. it took me a long time to start getting comfortable with it, the lights have to be out, things like that. I was never fat or anything like that, but just them making fun of me, about my chest size just made me self conscious. My mom keeps asking me why do I keep buying these miracle bras? You're fine, you're fine. And I know, because I know there are a lot more smaller people than I am. But I still am super aware of my body and how it looks... When I get with a guy I get self-conscious. Like I don't go around and hook up with people because I'm self-conscious about myself, I can't go do those type of things. If I'm with a guy, like my boyfriend, it takes me a long time. We have been dating for 10 months, we were just talking about this the other day and I'm like, yeah, I am small, shut the lights off. shut the lights off and he's like why. Every little thing bothers me, like a slip of a comment... Like why don't you go exercise."
Like he'll say, do you want to go bike riding today? And I'm like why? Am I fat? Do you want me to go out and exercise? Everything is turned back to that."

The most common long-term effect of experiencing sexual harassment in high school that was mentioned by the respondents focused on the women's current responses to and/or fear of males. Renee responded,

"Yeah. For me, it affects any trust I have in any man now... It's very difficult for me to trust men in general. Women I have no problem with. I have problems with men."

Shanna, who experienced sexual abuse as a child, and several attacks by males stated.

"Like I said, and I don't have no more relationships. I don't trust any man now. I have a boyfriend now but it's been seven years. I've been with him since I was 14 years old. So, that's probably the only trusting male relationship I have, but we still don't have intercourse."

Elizabeth, who was attacked in a commons area by a male while his friends watched and cheered him on, responded with a similar response about men.

"I still get really uncomfortable when a guy I don't know well touches me. I kind of freak and jump back. A lot of guys think I am uptight. And I won't go in bars, ever because the few times I have, people are too close to you, trying to touch you."

Heather, who experienced several instances of harassment from teachers, was one of five women who felt they still experienced a specific distrust of male educators. Her explanation summed up the fear succinctly.

"Yeah, I mean, I don't know. I think even with the other teachers, like male figures that are a lot older than me, I feel uncomfortable with sometimes... OK, I make sure I'm not wearing anything, you know, that would draw attention from them, because I thought maybe I did something, because I love to wear skirts. I'm such a girlie girlie, you know, and I thought maybe because I wear skirts so much... I don't really trust male teachers that much. I mean, I do, but I don't know, I'm a little wary... I don't know, I mean, I trust male teachers, but not as much as I trust female teachers. I would take a female every time if I could, I don't know, I see them as a threat."

Of all the participants in this study, Joy was the woman whose long-term effects appear to be most devastating and extensive.
"It has most definitely impacted my life. I still have periodic nightmares with insomnia and depression. I am unable to be intimate with my significant other. Sex scares me to the point of dissociating. I have a death fear of males (besides my boyfriend). I don't do well with strangers and attempt to avoid all situations in which interactions with people will occur. As a result of my fear of sex/intimacy, I lost my boyfriend of four years, which had a great impact on my future."

**What Was the "Educational Effect" of Your High School Experience?**

Every participant reported some educational effect because of the sexual harassment they experienced in high school, many more seriously than others. Some of the women were cautious in "admitting" any effect. Jodi is an example of one such person. Her math teacher perpetrated Jodi's experience, and although her experience clearly added to her inadequacy in math, she discounted any residual effect it may have had in her education as a whole.

"Well, I'm terrible in math, anyway, but he being my math teacher never helped. I think he was the worst math teacher I had. I mean he was just a terrible math teacher. It didn't really affect me like emotionally or anything like that. It could have been much worse, you know... He did it to every girl (so it didn't affect me emotionally). It only made me feel uncomfortable when I was around him, and when I wasn't around him, it was fine."

Another example of such minimalization was Kim. Kim, who experienced inappropriate sexual comments and touches by a teacher, responded to her assessment of its educational effect in this way.

"Yeah, I mean it wasn't like that big of an issue, but it was something in the class. I really hated that class... I made it pretty impersonal, I just tried to stay quiet and, you know, just not interact with him anymore than I had to. So... Yeah, I didn't really pay much attention there. I didn't like the way he handled the class at the time, he was sleazy, but I don't think it affected my grade at all."

Despite her discounting the experience as not that "big of an issue", the result of "hating" a class, not paying attention in the class, and staying quiet quite likely had some effect on her retention of class materials, and enjoyment of the subject.
Mindy, Monica, Nancy, and Nikki also responded that the experience was minimally detrimental to their education yet they did comment on how the experience affected their personal experiences and self-perceptions in the school environment. Mindy was harassed by classmates over a several year duration as a result of having largely developed breasts early in eighth grade but she stated that it didn't really affect her education.

"No, no... It may have if it kept going on, or if I was being made fun of, or they were trying to touch me, or you know... I never even thought about it, I was never worried."

Monica experienced harassment from an older male student who she originally thought was "romantically" interested in her, but whose attention became quickly embarrassing and harassing.

"It really ruined my freshman year, but luckily it was at the end of the school year so it didn't affect me too negatively. It did limit how I acted with males at school because I was afraid it would turn into the same thing if they thought I cared or liked them. I wasn't apt to get into conversations with them and I wasn't very comfortable around any guys. How did I know who would become a jerk and I didn't want it to start all over again."

Nancy experienced sexually inappropriate touching by a teacher and at first denied that it affected her educationally but eventually amended that to say that it did affect her concentration and self-identity, and her view of all men.

"I don't know that it affected my school experience so much. I don't recall that it made me more suspicious of my other teachers or more wary, or less reluctant to participate in class or anything... No but I think it made a big difference in how I looked at myself. It made me doubt the messages that I gave to people. It made me very cautious about the way I dressed. I guess it ruined my concentration in his class... I think it affected perhaps my view of men to a certain extent. I grew up in a house with all sisters, so I didn't have a brother. And there was, of course, my Dad. But I did some serious avoiding of my Dad too so I guess maybe I did, to a certain extent, let that transfer a little bit."

Nikki, who was harassed by classmates for having a well-developed chest, tried desperately to convince me she wasn't affected by the harassment. It affected her enough so that she had a breast reduction operation in her junior year of high school.
"As I said before, I am a very strong person. I don't, I'm not one to let things get to me that way. Like I won't let things affect my schoolwork. You know, things that happen to me, I don't let it affect me. But it did, the attention would be on me, like if I would walk into a place with my friends or even when I was younger, if I would go anywhere. When people would talk to me, they would be talking to my chest. It's uncomfortable. I felt uncomfortable that guys would look at my chest when they were talking to me and not at my face. I was very uncomfortable."

She was not specific in how this affected her education other than its effect on her general comfort level in public, which presumably included her high school environment.

Of those respondents who contended the unwanted sexual attention did affect their education, the most common thing affected was grades, class concentration, worsened social experience, and silencing of themselves. There were numerous examples of such overall educational effects.

Amy became less likely to speak up in school for fear of putting negative attention on herself, especially when witnessing verbal abuse of other students. She reported feeling bad about silently watching "less popular" students being harassed but rationalized her silence as her safety.

"I think really in a way, it made me realize that school isn't fair, it kind of got me used to these comments that students just had to put up with, comments that were embarrassing and hurtful."

Ann, having been verbally and physically assaulted in the school parking lot with a female friend the first few weeks of her freshman year in high school, reported experiencing an "extended" period of not wanting to attend school and fear inside of school of meeting up with her harassers again and being bothered again.

Ann also reported concentration problems that affected her school work in classes at the end of the day.

"So, sometimes I would just not be able to pay attention towards the end of the day, because, I mean, we didn't know what they would do, if they would be there again."
Elizabeth reported several educational effects including change of clothing habits, avoidance of certain areas in her high school, grade problems, and complete avoidance of social aspects of school because of her experience of being sexually assaulted in a staircase and later blamed and attacked verbally by her boyfriend when he heard about her experience.

"Well, I never wore skirts to high school after that. I guess I thought if I hadn't worn that skirt, which I threw out, it wouldn't have happened. I still won't wear skirts too often and before I wore skirts all the time. I have really great legs and loved short skirts but not since then. Just in case it gives guys ideas... I never walked past their spot again, neither did my friends... My grades were shot that semester between the assault and my boyfriend. I had no one to go to prom with or any of the other things I had looked forward to for years. It really ruined all my fun at school. I just went there and went home, I didn't hang out or go to any dances any more. It changed my attitude too because I really didn't trust guys, and not just black guys. any guys."

Heather, who suffered through unwanted sexual attention from a teacher and "special" treatment of not having to do the work to get an A, responded to the inquiry of educational effect in this manner,

"Yeah, and I had to drop this class, because I just thought I couldn't put up with it. I remember one day, I just cried the whole day, because I just felt so stupid, and all the trouble it caused with my friends, these two were mad at me because the teacher wasn't hitting on them".

J was sexually assaulted by two of her boyfriend's friends after a night of underage drinking. The memory of her assault and the fear of it happening again greatly impacted her educational experience in terms of grades, attention in classes, attendance, and enjoyment of school.

"I didn't want to go to school. My grades really suffered. So, I would sit in class and all I would think about was are they going to be outside my classroom."

J later stated,

"I don't really remember most of my grades in high school, they weren't ever really great. I think I blocked them out. But I think I was your typical senior, as far as going to class
and after I knew, what was it after the first semester, the grades didn't go to the college, so I didn't care, that sort of thing, but yeah, they got really bad."

Jamie, who was harassed for an extended period of time on her school bus responded.

"Yeah. I was scared to go on it (bus).... No. I never missed school. There were a few days where I didn't want to go in because of it and maybe it affected how I was doing in school because at the end of the day I would agonize about what going home would be like, not pay attention."

Jamie was also affected in her class performance because one of the harassers, a female, was in her grade and in some of her classes, although the harassment occurred only on the bus.

Her math teacher perpetrated Jodi's experience, and although her experience clearly added to her inadequacy in math, she discounted any residual effect it may have had in her education as a whole.

"Well, I'm terrible in math, anyway, but he being my math teacher never helped. I think he was the worst math teacher I had. I mean he was just a terrible math teacher. It didn't really affect me like emotionally or anything like that. It could have been much worse, you know... He did it to every girl (so didn't affect me emotionally). It only made me feel uncomfortable when I was around him, and when I wasn't around him, it was fine."

Kerri was affected educationally by a female who harassed her in this manner.

"I was much more quiet. I have no problem talking now... At the time. I would try to stay in the background, and you know, not voice my opinion, and just do as much as I can to keep it calm and not, you know, cause a confrontation or... I mean, I'm a smart individual, but I've never really applied myself, so I just did what I did, I was a B-C student... I guess in the back of my mind I always knew. you know, she's not the type of person that you should let something affect you for your whole life, you know, every aspect of your life at the time."

However, her response indicated that her involvement in classes, her grades, and comfort level were clearly affected, even if she tried not to let the harassment affect "every aspect" of her life.

Kim, who experienced inappropriate sexual comments and touches by a teacher, responded to her assessment of its educational effect in this way.
"Yeah, I mean it wasn't like that big of an issue, but it was something in the class. I really hated that class... I made it pretty impersonal, I just tried to stay quiet and, you know, just not interact with him anymore than I had to. So... Yeah, I didn't really pay much attention there. I didn't like the way he handled the class at the time, he was sleazy, but I don't think it affected my grade at all."

Despite her discounting the experience as not that "big of an issue", the result of "hating" a class, not paying attention in the class, and staying quiet quite likely had some effect on her retention of class materials, and enjoyment of the subject.

Tabitha reported experiencing unwanted sexual comments about her "small breasts" throughout her high school education by classmates but denied having it affect her education.

"Not really. I remember in my biology class we sat at tables and we got to choose whom we wanted to do the group work with and stuff and I never, I always stuck with my friends. She (the teacher) wanted us to work with different people every time but I just never felt comfortable with that."

Tammi was the victim of sexual rumors by an ex-boyfriend and as a result was harassed for a lengthy time by other males who wanted her "sexual attention" as well.

"Yeah, because I was always kind of followed. I was self-conscious about how I acted so people wouldn't go see we told you so. It made it really hard to pay attention in class. People looked at me different. I mean it was toward the middle of senior year, or toward the end so lucky grades don't matter once you are in a university."

Despite her discounting of the effects, she does state that her educational performance was negatively affected.

Amanda, who was verbally and psychologically harassed in a college prep class to the point of being stalked, responded in this way,

"I had to drop the class. I actually wanted to take it in hopes of getting into college early. It was political science, and now I haven't taken it here yet either. So I have to take it again. It was just like a scary experience, because I've never encountered something like that. It just makes me think like there are many sick people out there, and it could happen to anybody, and it could happen again here, today, and I would never know."
She is unsure if she will ever take a political science course again because of the association of her traumatic experience. Several respondents acknowledged severe educational reactions to their experiences of unwanted sexual attention in high school. Vikki experienced unwanted sexual physicality at the hands of classmates on a regular basis and contends it did affect her educational attainment.

"It did because you're always concentrating to see what everyone else is doing. You always have to watch your back. See what I'm saying... When the teacher's not looking. They'll pull down your pants. if you're standing up or whatever. So how does this affect you in class? You don't concentrate. Because you're always worried about holding up your pants and stuff, you know... And the guys, when they pull your bra, it hurts. And what happens if they unsnap it. I have to go to the bathroom and put my bra back on."

Shanna recounted a lifelong "sexualization" that began by being sexually abused by several men as a young child, raped by several males in middle school and high school, and sexual involvement with teachers in high school. She described the educational effects in this manner.

"It was awful. In freshman year, I didn't learn anything in high school. Everything I did. I did on my own. And there were other things that happened. I had an accident in my junior year, which had to do with cheer leading. so I was mocked for that continuously. too. But. I missed a lot of school."

A male she had broken up with raped Renee and the experience turned into a lengthy experience in sexual harassment when her rapist spread rumors about her around school, which resulted in numerous, lengthy harassment by males in her school.

"I think more than anything. I sort of turned into a bookworm. I mean. I didn't have great grades in high school, but I started studying a little bit more. I started working on my papers a little bit sooner, because I'm a... To avoid people, and keep my mind on something else other than what was going on that way."

I suppose studying harder could be seen as improving her education and grades but her comfort level and personal embarrassment certainly affected her enjoyment and social experience in high school.
Lisa experienced extreme harassment for an extended period from classmate "friends" for being unwilling to "put out" or engage in drug use. She was seriously harassed verbally and physically,

"Well I didn't want to go sometimes to the classes that they were in and I would try to sit in different places. But it was kind of hard because my friends were there, I couldn't detach myself from my friends, I would be by myself... Well, to be honest with you, yeah, that probably happened (skipped class and changed paths). It did happen toward the later year, I don't know if I really want to go into all that, but it did affect my education... Well, I ended up not going (to school) for a while because of this. I mean nobody really knows that was the reason."

After thinking about it for a while, Lisa continued to explain,

"Yes, it affected my grades because I was absent more and you know. I was absent more and I avoided my classes and it affected my grades which in turn really actually affected my whole last year of high school. I had to go to summer school and finish up, because I just could not. And it was a very odd situation for someone at my level.

Joy, who had a long-time sexual "involvement" with a teacher (several years), reported the educational effect in this manner.

"My grades were greatly affected by the abuse. I totally withdrew and concentration was impossible. I quit participating in school activities because of the depression and always feeling lethargic. I lived in constant fear of going to school... I never knew when I would have him for a teacher... And I would have panic attacks when I learned he was subbing for one of my teachers. I lost a few friends for the mere fact I totally shut out everything and everyone. I never talked in class. I wore all black. I never smiled. People thought I was weird."

Parental Knowledge of High School Harassment

Of the 24 women who shared their high school experiences of being sexually harassed, only five reported that their parents were informed about the problems they were experiencing. Of the five women whose parents were aware of the problems, two of the women had parents who responded passively to halt the problem. Ann, who experienced verbal harassment in the school parking lot, stated that after being informed
of the harassment she was experiencing in the school parking lot, "My mom said 'Just
don't walk past that area'. She didn't take it too seriously."

Jamie, who experienced harassment from a female student on her bus ride to and
from school over a several month period, had a little more response from her mom.

"I would get off the bus crying every day. And I didn't want to go on the bus and would
get off the bus crying to my mom. She called the school. She just wanted them to talk to
them. I was mortified at first. I wanted her to pick me up, I would try and be late so I
wouldn't have to take the bus."

However, it generally did not work, and most days Jamie had to take the bus to and from
school and be exposed to her harassers.

Of the few participants who did go to their parents for help, it apparently was a
very emotionally draining experience. J. who was sexually assaulted by two friends of
her boyfriend, first disclosed to her boyfriend. He made her tell her parents.

"As soon as I saw him, he knew something happened, marks on my body and stuff. And
I told him. He said you have two choices, either I kill them, or you go tell your parents.
So, he came with me to tell my parents. Just to see the look on my parents' faces was
horrible. We went to the police and everything, but nothing ever happened. My dad was
hysterical, crying. He didn't know what to do.... My dad just like ranted like what he was
going to do to them... I didn't even know how to, like to tell your father, especially.
That's the worst. Especially me, I'm a daddy's girl. He just ran in the door and hugged
me. My brother was on the phone to the police department. It just so happened my
boyfriend's father was the fire chief, so he met us at the police station and got things
moving so I didn't have to sit there all day. So it only took an hour there. The cops knew
who this one kid was, he's been arrested before, he had a record. But nothing ever
happened because his father had money so they just kept postponing. I went through
three DA's. They were preparing me to testify... My father called the school and said,
listen you are responsible for her from 8 in the morning until 2:00 in the afternoon, if
anything happens, I hold you responsible. After that, it's my job. So everyday, the dean
would walk me out to my car, not make an obvious thing out of it but he would stand
there at the beginning of the parking lot just making sure I got into my car all right. And
if we went to football games, I'd have a bodyguard my dad would hire."

Several of the women were clear about why they did not share their traumas with
their parents. Shanna had experienced sexual abuse from her step-father as a young
child, was attacked and raped on several different occasions in middle school, and eventually harassed by male educators in high school. Shanna did not tell her mother about her high school experiences with harassment because of her disappointment with a harassment incident that happened when she was in middle school.

"She doesn't know any of this happened. She would die... The only time I ever said anything actually was the first time something was said about me in seventh grade. About me and somebody that was in eighth grade and my mother went to them... That was the only time I told her. And she got involved and he was captain of the basketball team in eighth grade and because he was like our star athlete and nothing was done. It was like, his name was ---, and --- wouldn't do this and --- wouldn't do that, like I was lying and I didn't have any reason to. I was twelve years old."

The negative response of the school as well as the "embarrassment and humiliation" of telling her mom resulted in Shanna keeping her high school victimizations to herself.

Tammi, a victim of false sexual rumors by male classmates, discounted her experience as being important enough to tell anyone about. "No, because it was just one of those things that seemed like things that happen in high school, and people do, just an age thing that happened. You can't trust teenage boys. So, I never bothered telling anybody at all anyway."

Elizabeth, sexually assaulted in school by a male classmates, did not tell her parents because she was "disrespectful" to the principal in trying to get him to intervene in her problems. As a result, she worried about how her parents would respond to her rudeness, and discounted how they would respond to her victimization.

"My parents were very strict about behaving in school, doing our best, never getting in trouble and I thought they would be so mad if they know how disrespectful I was to the principal... I know that now but at the time I felt stupid for telling anyone because it only made me look like a slut. I handled it all wrong."

A male student who she initially thought was interested in a relationship with her but his attention eventually became harassing and embarrassing harassed Monica. Monica was similar to Elizabeth in internalizing her own "guilt" and "responsibility" after
being verbally and physically harassed, and did not want the embarrassment of telling her parents the full extent of her trauma as a result.

"No way, I never even thought about it. I felt so stupid like liking it at first made it my fault and I could never repeat what he said. I would have died... I didn't have any friends to tell. I did tell them a little, just some of it because I could never say that stuff out loud but I told them he was like following me and was making me really embarrassed and some of what he said... My mom told me to just avoid him but my dad, he's a teacher really got mad and said he was going to go to school and like punch the guy. But my mom said that would only make it worse and it was illegal with my dad being a teacher and all... But they didn't stop it. They just made it clear I wasn't to blame, he was, and I could like miss gym class if I wanted and make it up later or something."

Nancy, physically fondled by a male teacher, also felt she could never tell her parents about the sexual attention she was receiving from a teacher and responded in this way. "So I could not confront him or offend him. My parents would have never stood for such disobedience to an adult, let alone an adult teacher." Her personal discomfort and embarrassment were second to her fear of her parental response.

Did You Tell Your Friends in High School?

Twelve of the women participating in the study admitted to sharing their harassment experiences in high school with their high school friends/classmates. Joy's experiences were ultimately brought to the attention of the school because of her confiding in her friends.

"I had confided in two friends freshman year, but made them swear not to tell anyone (and they didn't). They comforted me and let me get the 'secrets' out... It helped. During my suicidal periods... I needed friends. As stated in a previous question, it was another friend sophomore year that broke my confidence and reported the incidents."

Kerri also told her friends. "I talked to my friends about it, stuff like that, and they basically felt the same way that it was pretty much ridiculous, and they ignored her just like I did."

Kimberly's harasser was a teacher whose harassment was common in school and generally accepted by the students.
"When it first happened, he was like one of those teachers everyone had every year. Because I had him for sophomore year for history and junior year for AP history and senior year for government. It was like you couldn't get away from him... He ran the government club and did all this. So it was hard to avoid him. But it did get to the point where jeeze he kind of got annoying as we got older."

Lisa described her disclosure to her friends in this manner.

"I think I talked to friends about it but I don't really think I talked to them on a level where they could actually help me... I mean, it was sort of like, 'those assholes' and they were like 'yeah, they're assholes' but for some reason they focused more on me than they focused on them. I think my situation was a little more severe."

Tabitha reasoned her sharing in this manner.

"Yes. I had my best friend in high school. I talked to her about it and that helped too. She'd say don't let them get to you, they do that to everyone... I just kind of laughed and went, yeah right, whatever. I didn't act like it was a big deal, because I knew if I made a big deal out of it, they would tease me more about it."

Of all the respondents who acknowledged confiding in friends, Elizabeth was the most verbal and traumatized by her sharing of the assault experience she had been victim to in a hallway by an unknown assailant.

"After a week of being really silent my boyfriend wanted to know what was wrong and I told him and he got really angry and told his friends and they all said they were going to find the guys and beat the 'Niggers' up. I had to literally stop them, like hold my boyfriend back and we had a big fight because I didn't want a race war at school. He said I must have liked it or I would let him fight for me but I said no way. I would break up with him if he did. Instead, he broke up with me a few days later. Called me a 'Nigger lover' and a 'slut'... But it shouldn't have because white guys in school did it too. it really made me see what a jerk I was dating. He was a racist just wanting a fight but I didn't even know it, it had never come up before."

**What Was the Response of the School to Your Experience?**
**What Could be Done Differently in Schools to Stop This Problem?**

Despite the fact that "sexual harassment" has been prohibited in educational settings since Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972, J was the only participant in this study who was aware of a sexual harassment policy in her school setting. Her
awareness was due to the administrators who aided her in her sexual harassment experiences by using the existence of such mandates to threaten the perpetrators in order to get their behaviors to quit. Eleven of the study respondents specifically stated that they did not have any idea if their school had such a policy.

One of the questions study asked participants what, if anything, they felt schools could do differently in order to reduce incidents of sexual harassment among their student population. Of the 15 participants who responded to the inquiry about this topic, only one responded negatively. J had very responsive school administrators and she felt they did all they could.

"No. My school district, as far as that goes, was wonderful. As soon as my father called them and alerted them to the problem, they were there on top of it. They had the police come to the school. They would have done anything for me. He said to one of them, if you bother her on my property, the police will come and arrest you in front of all of your friends. The dean said to them, I promise you, you will never be so embarrassed in your entire life. No. My dean was good. I had a problem with a teacher too. When my father said, I mean he was tenured. He would call me an idiot or stupid or stuff in class. So, my dad called the principal and said either you handle it or I will, and they had him transferred."

The 14 respondents who felt the school could make changes to support students' experiences had various ideas. The most common suggestion was changes in teacher responses, attention, and increased teacher patrolling of school areas such as hallways and parking areas. Elizabeth had the following to say about teacher response.

"If they didn't let guys get away with it or make excuses, like blaming me, then guys wouldn't think it so funny. I am sure no one ever said to them don't do that, it is wrong."

Joy was very adamant about what school response would improve the experiences of students.

"Teachers and students need to understand that sex/flirting has NO place in the schools. There should be zero tolerance for teachers who flirt with their students so students are more inclined to report incidents. Teachers and students should be informed regularly about what constitutes sexual intimidation/harassment so they can identify it when it
happens. Officials need to 'believe' the students and not treat students like they did something wrong."

Vikki summed up the general lack of teacher response in this manner, "I'm sure that teachers know it goes on. And I don't think they really cared, ever really."

Several study participants took a more proactive and preventative stance on school changes. Jodi, for example, stated.

"I think they have to check staff records. They have to do background checks. They can have assemblies on how to protect yourself from being, you know, sexually abused. I guess even the administration educating the students about what is okay if something happens or to come to them privately, you know..."

Lisa was also very opinionated about school responses and responsibility,

Well, see that's the whole thing, its like do you want to put a band-aid on it or do you really want to prevent it? The whole idea of preventing this is much larger than any kind of program you could set up. I think probably it would make it better if there were some type of trusting individuals that these young adults could go talk to. If there were included in the sex education, some more things about gender roles, sexual roles, things like that. The more knowledge that young adults would have about this, I think it would be better."

Nancy not only had a proactive perspective but she has integrated it in her teaching of students.

"One of the classes that I teach is a class on personal development and we talk about all kinds of topics including sexual harassment. And we talk about it within the school and we get into all kinds of discussions about where is that line between teasing and having fun and doing that kind of thing and when you cross over that line to making people uncomfortable and what constitutes harassment? And what do we do about it? And I think that when we begin to talk about a lot of that then students know that it is not a topic that's totally taboo. So if they are experiencing something, they can talk to somebody about it. I think that was the worst part of my experience, that there wasn't anybody to talk to about it."

Nancy, Kerri, Mindy, Renee, and Tabitha all shared the similar response that schools should have an accessible, understanding, and knowledgeable person in the school that students could feel comfortable going to when sexual harassment experiences become a problem. The person often suggested was a guidance counselor, but the main
objective was someone who would listen to the student with a non-discriminatory perspective. Underlying this suggestion is the notion that students do not have a "safe" place to share their experiences and where they can get help handling their problem.

Was Sexual Harassment a Common Practice in Your School?

Of the 16 study participants who responded to this question, four answered strongly affirmatively. J responded, "Yeah, oh, yeah" Lisa stated, "Yes, it was common", and Shanna and Tammi said yes, as well. Shanna qualified her affirmative response in a matter of fact manner with numerous examples of student/faculty liaisons, as if their commonality made them less problematic.

"I have friends who slept with teachers. I was friends with cheerleaders. I wouldn't call them friends, I'd call them acquaintances, we just happened to be, and it was a game to see how many teachers you could get in bed. They were so immature....and I know they are still working at the same high school and they are still doing the same thing. They keep getting older but the kids keep getting younger. And they still do it. Nobody says anything or does anything about it because. I mean, now the problems are bigger at my high school, it is a different kind of level."

She went on to explain examples she was aware of in further detail.

"The teachers would know right away that these students were showing some kind of interest. And so they would push it a little bit and they would get involved in the after school activities and the teachers would be there because most of the young teachers always took everything after school. So we'd end up always going out and something would always happen. Especially at night in the park, like on the picnic tables, there were a lot and sometimes four or five couples were like going at it on the tables at the same time. we just sat and talked, glanced over, ignored them or made out without, you know. Oh, and the park bushes, we hid blankets there, and a box of condoms because one guy had a dad who was a pharmacist. Safety first, you know. It was always like that."

One aspect of Shanna's response that is notable is the manner in which she stated clear examples of sexual impropriety by teachers with students in such a casual manner. Her reaction to such interactions as being the result of students pursuing teachers does not
negate the fact that teachers are the "responsible adult" and that the students are underage girls.

Tammi was also lengthy in her explanation of the "normalcy" of the sexualization of interactions among students at her school.

"Yeah, kind of like if someone always comments on how short someone's skirt was even though we wore uniforms, you know. So, yeah, there was a certain degree, like the one couple who aren't kissing, you know, they had a fight, and this and that, and we'd go around and tell 'em, so the boys kind of shared every sexual adventure in the locker room with anyone who would listen it was just the fact that we were so small, that everybody knew everything, and if somebody had worn a black bra under their white uniform shirt, everyone talked about it behind their back.... Did you see Sally today? She has hickey or slept with John last night without protection. Oh, you know it was one of those things, that things just got around faster than anything."

Again, her casualness in talking about behaviors and conversations that can be embarrassing, personal, and perhaps harassing was presented in such a casual manner that the behavior was accepted as "normal" and expected.

Although the other 12 respondents stated that sexually harassing behavior was not frequent in their school, their responses were often followed by a qualifier that made their initial "no" seem more like a "yes". Four of the participants qualified their "no" response by stating at least they never heard about it happening or no one had ever told them about other experiences. As a result, it is difficult to discern whether it was not a problem in their schools or were they just unaware of it.

The other common qualifier that came after a negative response were examples of behaviors that technically were examples of sexual harassment, but were discarded by the respondents as important. Monica is an excellent example of a negative response followed by examples of sexual harassment. She initially stated, "I never heard people complain about it" but then she followed that up with, "but I am sure there were a lot of it because I kept so quiet so why wouldn't other people? They wouldn't have confided in me anyway. I know a lot of guys said things to girls at the lockers or grabbed them or
stuff but I kept quiet and stayed away." Her response was negative then positive with a briefly stated example that made sexually harassing behavior seem blase. Nancy gave a similar response, "If it was discussed, they didn’t discuss it with me. I have no notion of those things going on. There was a lot of teasing that kind of thing that would happen. What you have to understand is that was a different time and there was an awful lot of stuff that just wasn’t discussed and was very taboo”.

Susie was also a good example of a no turned to a yes,

"Well I had some people say stuff to offend me... Like if I made them mad they’d say something, like they’d call me a bad name, like "bitch", or something like that, it wasn’t harmful because I just blew all that stuff all. it didn’t bother me."

Calling a person "bad names" such as "bitch" would fall under sexual misconduct, and could be embarrassing to some people. Whether or not it was embarrassing to Susie at the time is unknown, but at the time of her interview she was reducing it to "unimportant" status.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Reported</th>
<th>Number of Participants of That Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
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<td>22</td>
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<td>23</td>
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<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1

132
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High School Location Reported</th>
<th>Number of Participants Reporting Their High School at That Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Akron, OH</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athens, OH area</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canton, OH area</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cape Coral, FL</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleveland, OH</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbus, OH</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dayton, OH area</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long Island, NY</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miami, FL</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Jersey</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York, NY</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oceanside, NY</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia, PA</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seattle, WA</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toledo, OH area</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Harassment Type (perpetrated by students unless otherwise indicated)</th>
<th>Number of Participants Reporting Being a Victim of Harassment of This Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public verbal taunting</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harassed by a teacher</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rumors</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom setting</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual assault (rape)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial sexual assault off school grounds, followed by school harassment</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harassed by females</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3

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Effects on High School Experience
(all 24 participants indicated at least one such effect)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect</th>
<th>Number of participants reporting that effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Embarrassment</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncomfortable about the attention</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower grades resulted</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoidance of certain parts of school grounds</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty paying attention in classes</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoidance of social activities</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance problems</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Didn't want to attend</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduced participation in class</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self doubt and blame</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of friends</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoidance of a particular academic subject</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hated a particular class</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change of clothing habits</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dropped a class</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dropped out of school</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5

134
## Long Term Effects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect</th>
<th>Number of participants reporting that effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No effects</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reported POSITIVE effects:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learned how to protect self</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>better judge of character</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>less likely to make fun of others</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>less worried about impressing others</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>more able to stand up for self</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>more empathetic</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>more independent</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>more likely to believe children</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reported NEGATIVE effects:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fear of attracting male attention</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fear of males</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>distrust of male teachers</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>poor body image</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sexual dysfunction</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fear of being alone</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>depression</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>distrustful of people</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fear of walking alone</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>insomnia</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nightmares</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sleeps with lights on</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6

## Suggestions for How Schools Can Make Sexual Harassment Less Likely

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggestion</th>
<th>Number of participants making that suggestion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase teacher response</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase teacher patrolling of school areas</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in-school education about harassment</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have a designated faculty/counselor to consult</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 7

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How This Study Compares to the Literature Reviewed

One of the most important parts of the research process is comparing how the study's results compare with what is already known in the literature. The following section will examine exactly that: How does the results of the dissertation compare with the literature presented in chapters one and two?

According to Cobb (1995) and Garbarino (1980), smaller high schools (less than 500 total students) are much better environments for students. Only Jodi, Nancy, Tabitha and Tammi attended "small" schools. In fact, most study participants had individual class numbers over 500, which may contribute to part of the experiences they endured.

Lawton (1993) stated that sexual harassment is defined by the victim: if a person finds the comments or physical contact to be unwelcome, then it is harassment. This is relevant to my dissertation because several of the participants were reluctant to label the "embarrassing" or "harassing" behaviors they endured or witnessed frequently in the hallways as sexual harassment. There were several participants, including Vikki, Susie, Allison and Elizabeth, who responded to the unwelcome sexual attention as "normal" and "laughed" at the behaviors they witnessed. Some people may argue that they were not sexually harassed as a result of their reactions. I argue that females, especially adolescent females, desperately want to fit in and to not draw negative attention to themselves. Their reactions are more indicative of this wish than their not feeling harassed. The definition problem can become confusing when the direct victim of the attention doesn't feel harassed but other students who see it feel threatened or uncomfortable with the interaction. According to Larkin (1994), many women and girls are still reluctant to link the term "sexual harassment" to the degrading, intimidating, and demeaning behavior they so often encounter in their own lives. Furthermore, researchers such as Kelly (1987) have found that most women have difficulty identifying the ordinary, everyday incidents of sexual harassment because so much of this behavior is considered to be nothing more...
than natural expressions of masculinity. The women in my study definitely echoed these sentiments.

According to Stein (1993) American Association of University Women (1993) and Mona and Herndon (1995), sexual harassment in schools most often occurs in public places such as hallways, lunchrooms, physical education classes, on school busses, in classrooms, and at school sponsored activities. This is strongly supported by every participant in this student except J's sexual assault in the locker room. Study participants gave examples of sexual harassment in every one of the places mentioned by Stein.

The silence of adults in the school community is a problem for students who are being sexual harassed according to Stein (1993). Furthermore, Stein stated students often become mistrustful of adults who fail to intervene. As a result of the silence of adults, the school environment becomes poisoned for everyone - innocent witnesses and bystanders alike - in addition to the intended targets of sexual harassment (Stein, 1994). Because only Renee's rape in the locker room occurred in a completely isolated place, it is quite likely that at least some of the sexual harassment the participants in the study experienced was observed by or known to the educators in the building. Not one participant mentioned an adult school employee coming to their aid on their own initiative. Even Amanda, who was harassed for days in the classroom during class time before ultimately being followed, did not receive any significant intervention from the instructor who had to have noticed the "problem". Only a few study participants reported their experiences to school authorities and of those who did, only J felt the school responded appropriately. What was very common among respondents was their expectation or assumption that school authorities wouldn't help them.

Survivors of Educator Sexual Abuse and Misconduct Emerge: SESAME (1998), an organization whose main goals are to gather information about education abuse, presented the results of a study where 64% of their study participants disclosed their
harassment to another person; 13 of these were not believed by school personnel. 4 were not believed by their friends, 4 were not believed by their parents. 3 were punished by their parents, and 34 did not reveal their experiences for 5-30 years later. In my study, only 2 of the 24 told their parents, 6 told friends, and none of them were fully supported and/or protected as a result of their sharing.

Stein (1995) and Stein, Marshall and Troop (1995) asserted that sexual harassment often operates in the full and plain view of others, and that sexual harassment instances have become ordinary, expected, and public. Stein also stated that it is a problem when bystanders see those in charge ignore it and therefore become afraid to get involved because they may be next and believe no one will intervene to help them.

These findings from Stein's studies are parallel to the experiences of the women in this dissertation. All 12 women who shared experiences of verbal taunting, the 8 women who experienced harassment from teachers, the 2 women harassed by women classmates, and the 2 rumor victims all experienced their assaults, embarrassment, and unwanted sexual attention in front of "bystanders" who did not intervene. In addition, many participants discounted their pain and embarrassment as being so common it was normal. It was stated by several participants that the fear of escalation prevented them from reacting to some extent.

Santrock (1996) contended that an adolescent peer group is a very important source of status, friendship, and belonging in the school setting. In addition, the peer group also is a learning community in which social roles and standards related to later life and achievement are formed. Newman and Newman (1995) stated group identity, peer acceptance, and clique inclusion are all very important self-esteem and self-identity builders crucial in the lives of teenagers. For teenagers who are socially estranged, without social support or group belonging, alienation can be a problem (Newman and Newman, 1995). So what is the peer acceptance, the social status, and group belonging
that results from having your peers watch you, maybe even frequently see you being a victim of sexual harassment? I couldn't find any research that specifically addressed this but it is likely that public humiliation in front of many students does take a particular toll on students public and personal self-images. According to Newman and Newman (1995), adolescents who have chronic problems integrating into peer groups in high school may develop lifelong problems in work, intimate relationship, health, and personal aspects of life. For many adolescents, the most important aspect of their lives is how they are seen by peers. To be excluded means stress, frustration, loneliness, hostility, and poor mental health. This is indicative of the participants in my study because the majority of the respondents felt that they were ostracized and excluded from "belonging" like other students did as a result of their experience.

The American Association of University Women (1993) said 20% of student harassment is perpetrated teachers or other authority figures. Eight of my twenty-four study participants gave specific details of being harassed by teachers. That is a 33% response rate. According to Summit (as cited in McGrath, 1994), it does not matter that a student says "yes" in the case of student/adult involvements. No student has equal power to say "no" to an authority figure or to anticipate the consequences of sexual involvement with a caretaker. Ethics require that the adult bear sole responsibility and any sexualized interaction between educator and student is always an abuse of power (McGrath, 1994). This is relevant to this study because a few respondents mentioned "willing" liaisons between students and educators. It is still sexual harassment.

Both Shankshaft (1994) and McGrath (1994) found that educators who sexually harass are almost always males who define themselves as heterosexuals. This appears to be true of male educators who harassed the women in this study. None of the participants mentioned any knowledge of women educators harassing students.
The results of the SESAME study (1998) noted reactions/responses of sexual harassment victims and all of their findings were also reported by various women in my study. Reported effects included suffering hostility from the school, suffering academic problems, dropping favorite subject, feeling unsafe at school, dropping out of school, being threatened by teacher, suffering peer harassment, and becoming isolated/withdrawn. Lawton (1993), Stein, (1995), and the AAUW (1993) all presented extensive examples of the embarrassment, humiliation, fear, and self-consciousness very similar to the responses of the women in this study. The AAUW (1993) survey found the consequences of being harassed included “not wanting to got to school”, “not wanting to talk in class”, “finding it hard to pay attention in school”, “staying home from school or cutting class”, “making a lower grade in class”, and “thinking about changing schools”. These are also the most common responses/educational effects of the women in my study.

The AAUW survey and text Hostile Hallways (1993), found that sexual comments, jokes, gestures, and looks were the most common forms of harassment. This was also true in my study, with 23 of the women experiencing some harassment in this manner. AAUW (1993) also reported that among girls who reported being harassed at school, 57% had been harassed by a group of males; 18% by a male acting alone; 11% by a mixed group of males and females; and 3% by a group of females. In my study 22 of the 24 were harassed by a group of males, only 3 (8%) were harassed by a male acting alone, and 2 were harassed by female acting alone.

Almost two thirds of the girls being harassed in one study told their harassers to stop and over 1/3 resisted with physical force (Mona & Herndon, 1995). Unfortunately, this is not indicative of the women in my study. Elizabeth, sexually assaulted in a commons area, and Kerri who confronted her history teacher, are two of the very few
examples in my study where the victim clearly resisted and demonstrated strong reactions
to get the harassers to stop.

Shankshaft, Mendel, Johnson, Sawyer, Hergenrother, and Barber (1997) found
that the majority of harassment women experience in high school is based on their
physical attributes (such as unattractive or unstylish girls, or physically mature girls).
This very accurately described the experiences of the women in present study.

Of the extensive coping strategies utilized by people in the literature, Weisman's
(1984) examples of laughing it off, redesigning yourself to create less attention,
avoidance, and compliance are the ones most often represented by the women in the
present study. Metheny, Aycock, Pugh, Curlette and Silva-Cannella (1986) stated that
the most important personal resources for coping efforts appear to be self-esteem,
perception of control, and self-efficacy. In the research conducted by Methany et al.
(1986), a healthy coping effort is self-disclosure (being open and able to share thoughts
and feelings) and catharsis (release or purification of emotions). Lastly, healthy coping,
includes assertive behavior that prevents the festering of stress inside you and also a cycle
of lower self-esteem. In the cases of the women participants in this study, it could be said
they did not cope well since they rarely disclosed their experiences, they were not assertive
in changing the stressors, and they didn't exhibit much perception of control. More often
they responded with what Methany et al. (1986) called negative coping strategies such as
avoidance or withdrawal, denial of reality, and blocking out feelings and reactions.

Herman (1992) also focused on the issues of trauma and recovery, and found
avoiding and placating the harasser/abuser are the most common tools for coping, which
include runaway attempts or trying to be as inconspicuous as possible to avoid attracting
attention. Again, these negative coping strategies don't alleviate the problem or lessen the
effects. Herman (1992) found victims often conclude that their imagined "innate
badness" is the cause of the abuse. The abuse victim seizes upon this explanation early
and clings to it fiercely, for it enables her to preserve a sense of meaning, hope, and power. If she is bad, then her harassers (peers and/or educators) are still good and can be interacted with. If the victim feels she is bad, she feels that she has some hope of saving herself by becoming good. If the victim believes she has brought the fate of abuse on herself, then she has the power to change it. The results of this study help us understand how the women in the study often continued to interact with the male students who harassed them. They often blamed themselves for being in the wrong place, wearing the wrong clothes, etc.

Allison, Ann, Amy, Nancy, Kimberly, and Susie are all study participants who took on self-blame and engaged in changes in clothing and interactions in order to attempt to avoid further harassment.

Significant research on adolescent girls' coping strategies has been done by Gilligan. Gilligan conducted extensive interviews with girls from 6 to 18 years of age (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan, 1990; Gilligan, Brown, & Rogers, 1990). Gilligan states that as young adolescent girls experience this dilemma, they increasingly "silence" their "different voice". They become less confident and more tentative in offering their opinions, which often persists into adulthood. Sadly, the results of this study also mirror the women in my study. Numerous women report silencing themselves, silencing their voices of dissent and outrage, silencing their participation in class and social activities, and becoming less confident. And yes, overwhelmingly, the women of the study carried this silence, caused by fear, into their adult lives and environments.

The study conducted with 24 women for this dissertation strongly mirrors the results of the research presented in chapters one and two of this document with the exception of two findings. The finding of women victims often band together in group in an attempt to avoid of lessen experiences of harassment was not found in any research studies cited, although it was common in this study. The other result of the present study that did not find support in the research reviewed was one reaction of responding
physically or verbally against the harassment. The women in my study did not generally react against their harassers. They generally suffered silently, and the harassment had little or no cost to the perpetrators.
CHAPTER 5
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In order to conclude this qualitative research study, the following topics will be addressed. What are the strengths and weaknesses of this study? What are the implications for practice and/or treatment? What further research is needed beyond this study? What did I personally learn from engagement in this project?

Summary

There was no difficulty finding women to participate who had experienced sexual harassment. This lends validity to the frequency of the experience, no matter where you go to high school. The majority of women had no trouble coming up with numerous instances of examples that affected them. In addition, they had no trouble recounting the experiences and the details, despite the past nature of the events. This may be due to the long-term effect of their experiences. They have influenced their adulthood to the degree that they clearly can remember. It is disturbing, but maybe typical, that teenagers do not/did not share their "victimizations" with their parents. They did not generally want or expect their parents to help them through their problem with harassment. The majority of women (80%) did not discuss their experiences with their friends, despite the depth of long-term effects that these women admit to suffering.

It is interesting that surviving "normal" or "frequent" harassment areas in school was generally handled by banding together with other females. Respondents didn't say whether or not this ended the harassment but it did seem to lessen the embarrassment from such encounters. The harassment of these women occurred primarily in "public" areas of school: hallways, lockers, lunchrooms, parking lots, etc. The harassment most
often occurred in front of many students. The harassers quite often seemed to be harassing for this reason, to impress their friends or to act impressive in front of their friends. Sometimes the "friends" of the harassers would join in; a type of group harassing was common. Not surprisingly, the vast majority of harassers were males, and even the women who harassed did so out of jealousy or to impress a male.

Despite the presence of sexual harassment laws in education, very few women took actions against their harassers, and if they did, it was usually not by their choice. It wasn't clear if they didn't report the abuse because of embarrassment, feeling nothing would change, or personal feelings of guilt; but harassment was rarely reported to school personnel by the participants in this study. Worse than not bringing the problem to the attention of authorities was that very few women responded negatively to their abusers. They accepted their embarrassment silently, as if silence would somehow make it less real or painful. If they didn't act silently, they laughed along with the harasser, hiding their pain and embarrassment.

**Strengths and Weaknesses**

One aspect of this study that is both a strength and a weakness is the fact that I was someone known to each of the women interviewed. This was a strength in getting the women to engage in the process with me. They knew me, my interests, and my goals well enough to be willing to participate. They also trusted me to interview them and to properly represent their stories in my dissertation. This prior rapport was invaluable in allowing me to engage in and explore such a personal and potentially embarrassing issue. I feel the advantages of my previous relationship with the participants far override the weaknesses it presents. A stranger may have never gotten these women to engage in research and share intimate aspects of their lives.

On the other hand, there is a definite weakness in my pre-relationship with the women. Although I don't feel it affected my ability to analyze their words, it is possible
that I could have come up with very different responses if I was not examining the words and lives of people I knew. This provides a problem for the checks and balances by outsiders merely reading the interview transcripts, as well as placing a lot of responsibility on my accurate recall.

Other strengths of this research are its thoroughness. All the women were given as much time and thematic latitude as they desired to complete the interview process. Any details of the women's lives that I included in my discussion of the interviews was pre-approved in advance so as not to compromise the identity or feelings of the women. I tried very hard to respect the rights and desires of the women as well as to complete the task to the best of my ability. I believe I succeeded in this goal.

I also think the methodology of open-ended interviews proved to be a strength in eliciting personal and individual information about what it means to have experienced sexual harassment in high school and how it has affected one's life. This is not to say that these twenty-four women and their perspectives represent all or even most survivors but they do show that bad things can happen to women in high school, affect their lives and coping, and the women still can be viewed as happy and healthy people. Interviews allow the "voice" and perspective of study participants to be heard and acknowledged. That is a major strength.

As with any study, there are definitely weaknesses to be noted. Twenty-four women is a small number of voices and experiences. It would be inaccurate and illogical to assume these women statistically represent the sexual harassment survivor population. Interviewing many more individuals of differing cultures, ages, or gender could have greatly broadened the results gathered.

Based on the research literature reviewed, I had a definite direction I wanted to pursue through the interview process. It is possible that more response latitude could be given to gain more or different information, and more specific questions would have
presented more concise information. Although this could be a weakness in any study, it seems worth noting.

There are many strengths to this study. The experiences of 24 women provide a lot of examples of sexual harassment in high school. In addition, the women were often quite graphic and detailed in their experiences, giving a good glance at what their lives were like. A broad range of experiences were presented, ranging from verbal harassment to rape, from there being one male perpetrator to many male perpetrators, harassment from male educators and from female educators, and male student perpetrators vs. female student perpetrators. Women represented were of a reasonable range of ages, and of a range of types and locations of high schools.

As with any research study, this dissertation has many flaws. One of the primary problems is the issue of definition: what may be sexually harassing to one individual may be viewed as flirting to another. Sexually harassing behaviors are very much individually defined, and if the "victim" isn't up front with her disapproval of such attention, there is some debate whether or not the perpetrator can or should be held accountable. In the same vein, adolescence is a time of testing boundaries and challenging roles. There can be some differentiation between adolescents saying "inappropriate" things out of adolescent testing versus adolescents purposely trying to harass. What may be "funny" and "playing around" to someone may be very objectionable and embarrassing to another. Lastly, the 24 women participants of this study are examining their high school experiences based on their adult knowledge and definitions. This could create a differentiation in what they define as sexually harassing. Of course, some examples presented by the women were clearly sexually harassing experiences, but a fair number were experiences that some people may discount as normal "adolescent behavior." One shouldn't discount normal behavior or frequent behavior as necessarily appropriate.
frequency of males orally harassing females in hallways and lockers may be "normal" or "typical" but that does not imply that it is acceptable to publicly humiliate females.

In keeping with the dissertation goal of providing a place for the participants to tell their story in their own voices, I left the ultimate definition of sexual harassment to them. There were definitely times when they mentioned things I felt were inappropriate sexual attention, yet for whatever reason the participants ultimately labeled the experience as no big deal. Whether or not it is no big deal now that they are adults versus whether it was a big deal when they were teenagers can be debated. It was never my goal to convince them of their victimization, so their definition was left as their own reality. The women told their "stories" with minimal input from me. There is nothing built into this study to validate their experiences, no means for verifying their stories, and it must be stated that their memories may or may not be accurate.

While reading the experiences of the women who volunteered for this study, it is important to keep in mind adolescent development, and the give and take of interaction that is central to high school life. It would be unfair and erroneous not to mention that although the women may have been victims at times, many adolescent females also instigate or initiate inappropriate responses as well. Adolescents can be very cruel to each other, even at times those who are themselves victims.

It is also important to keep in mind that adolescents are still trying to understand where they stand in the world and what they can do to impact it. The responses of ignoring, being humiliated by, or not reporting their victimization, all common responses of these women, can be seen as variances of their uncertainty of their position as teenage girls. Some of the experiences may have turned out very differently if they had occurred to older, more mature individuals.

The design of this dissertation has many flaws as well. Interviewing, transcribing, and analyzing 24 different women's interviews was extensive. Because I was not looking
to present any specific number of examples, it would have sufficed to have interviewed fewer women, and I would still have obtained a good sample of experiences. In addition, it is perhaps a flaw to have interviewed the women just once. This methodology choice was made because of the sheer number of participants. Interviewing fewer women in more detail may have given this dissertation richer details.

The variation in ages and high school locations makes a comparison of these women to each other very difficult. Nancy was in high school 40 years ago in an entirely different time then many of the participants who graduated a few years ago. The sample for this dissertation was entirely a convenience sample of women in my department who were willing to share with me. There is no attempt by this researcher to generalize their lives or experiences to other women, other disciplines, non college women, or anyone else.

Implications for Practice and Treatment

This dissertation has enabled 24 women to share their perceptions of their high school experiences that have caused them pain, embarrassment, and anguish. Through being able to speak, be heard, and be believed, they have gained some level of peace. No one indicated any problems that occurred as a result of their participation. In contrast, several of the women had never spoken of their experiences and reactions to anyone before and reported a level of relief after speaking to me. This type of forum allows women to see they are not alone in their experiences, their reactions, or their long-term effects. There is a sense of comfort in being "not alone." Hopefully other women will see it as OK to speak of their pasts, to feel comfortable in talking about it in the future, to feel strong enough to intervene if they see it occurring, to pass on any strength they gain to their children. This dissertation is just a drop of water in the ocean, and maybe the ripple will cause some change.
As the literature reviewed and the interview results demonstrated, many adolescent females experience sexual harassment in high school and it results in unhealthy, serious after-effects. This needs to be acknowledged by practitioners helping women cope with their childhood experiences. At the same time, it is important to note that survivors are alive, they have survived and coped with the abuse and life afterwards. There is a level of strength and success that has to be acknowledged along with any problems in their lives. Survivors, like the women interviewed for this dissertation, can be incredibly resilient and are much more than their experiences and dysfunctions. In addition, survivors are often very astute about their past and its effects, and listening to their words and perceptions, as I tried to do in this dissertation, can be an invaluable tool in gaining information and helping them and others cope.

This study and its findings have several potential uses in the field of education. The stories the study participants have shared present clear examples of what occurs in high schools. Teachers, administrators and parents can all learn some of the harsh realities that students are not generally sharing with them. The literature reviewed and the study could easily be modified to be presented to in-service workshops or classroom settings. Maybe teaching those who want to be teachers about student issues will help the teachers be more proactive in halting the problem. Despite the lack of interest teachers often have in participating in hallway duties, clearly some adult needs to be present as a deterrence to harassers.

Further Research

As with any area of research, this dissertation is just one piece of an entire picture. Further studies on the coping strategies utilized by women who were sexually harassed in high school could examine why the women coped in certain ways. Studies could explore the same themes I did from a male survivor point of view. It would be interesting to examine coping from the experiences of sexually harassed women who have reported
their perpetrator, and see how the reporting affects coping and long-term effects. It would be informational to interview people who are perpetrators of sexual harassment and see why they harass, if they think about the impact on their victims, and how often they engage in such behaviors. The subject of sexual harassment in education could be examined by grade level, by race, in a year-by-year comparison, as well. I could go on and on but clearly many options are available for expanding the present research. This research also could be expanded in size, studying more women in order to gather greater variance and statistical representation in their examples. A study of males experiences with harassment would greatly expand the field because it occurs but has been grossly under-researched. Interviews of women (or men) based on specific ages, from specific school locations, or even specific school districts or towns could be beneficial.

The Contribution of This Study to the Field

There are several ways this study contributes to the study of sexual harassment in education. The participants of this study were able to tell their stories, from their perspectives, in their own words, and this has been preserved as much as possible. Their embarrassment, pain, angry, and humiliation are clearly stated, as well as their strengths of survival. It is a contribution to be able to not only see what words they use to retell their experiences, but how they have been affected over time. Other studies have given us statistics on what occurs, where and to whom; this study gives rich examples of the actual experiences of victims.

This study also is unique in its examination of educational affects suffered by the women participants. Other studies have looked at psychological and emotional responses but not how their experiences were reflected in their educational choices, and responses. It is also unique to explore what, if any long-term affects are noticed by the participants. Past studies have looked primarily at responses short-term: during or directly after the sexual harassment experience occurred.
Personal Reflections

It has been a long and exhausting struggle to complete this research. I have learned a lot about sexual harassment and about myself in the process. As with many people, there is a public persona that often conflicts with private perceptions about them. The women in my study were no exceptions. I knew them through the university but I had no idea what they had experienced in high school and how it affected who they were. Until I began delving into the literature, I had no idea how extensive the research had looked at sexual harassment. The sheer volume of the numbers of victims and the regularity of their experiences led me to want to explore why and how people continue in high school and beyond despite their experiences.

While conceiving this project I never considered how psychologically difficult it would be to read all the studies and testimonies. It brought up many personal issues and problems I thought I had moved past or forgotten about. I feel strongly that being an insider researcher has great benefits into insight and expression but it also can take a personal toll on your own psyche. I wouldn't change a thing about what I wanted to study and how I wanted to accomplish it overall, but there are several things I wish I had done differently. I think it was a big mistake to conduct such lengthy, in-depth interviews on 24 women. The generation of transcript pages was overwhelming for a new researcher. I worry that I have not adequately done justice to their words and their stories, simply because I engaged in long interviews asking too many questions in too many directions. I really should have focused my inquiry in a more narrow direction and at fewer people at this stage of my education and knowledge. I think I need to engage in a more extensive literature review about style and content analysis before I take on research of this dimension in the future. Although I am generally thankful for this experience and the knowledge I have gained, I am glad it is almost over. I am tired and ready to shift research focus to somewhat less personally intrusive topics.
Conclusion

It has taken five years to design, conduct, and write this dissertation. I originally set out to explore the lives of several women who had experienced sexual harassment in high school and how it had affected their lives and education. It is equally important to tackle the issue from the perspective of why someone victimizes females in a sexual manner. It is important to understand the issue so that we, as researchers, parents, and adults, can help find ways to alleviate the problem. My dream is that some day research on sexual harassment will be done through historical documents only. Optimism is one of the many characteristics that help sexual harassment survivors work through the abuse and struggle to survive.
APPENDIX A

EXAMPLES OF HARASSMENT

Peer-to-Peer Harassment

-Minnesota: Two 6-year-old first-grade boys in a private school sexually assaulted another 6-year-old at knife-point (Lawton, 1993).

-Johathan Prevette, 6, Lexington, NC, kissed a classmate after she asked him to. He was originally suspended for one day for “sexual harassment” but it was later changed to “unwarranted and unwelcoming touching of one student by another” (Zoglin, 1996).

-“Of the times I was sexually harassed at school, one of them made me feel really bad. I was in class and the teacher was looking right at me when this guy grabbed my butt. The teacher saw it happen. I slapped the guy and told him not to do that. My teacher didn’t say anything and looked away and went on with the lesson like nothing out of the ordinary had happened.” 14 years old. (Stein, 1994).

-The Principal of a Pensacola high school in Florida withheld allegations of sexual abuse by football players in order to preserve the team’s chances of winning a state championship. Charges are that a 15-year-old special handicapped girl performed oral sex on at least 20 members of the football team in a women’s restroom and in a locker room at the school on Oct. 17. Eight members of the team have been charged with lewd and lascivious behavior with a minor and face up to 15 years in prison if convicted. The principal and staff did not report the incident for fear of bad press for the school and team. The principal allegedly threatened to fire counselors if they let any information about the actions leak outside the school. (Archer, 1996).

Educator-to-Student Harassment

-Pahrump, Nevada. In 1982, Joseph Peterson, a high school business teacher, girls volleyball coach, yearbook adviser, and track/volleyball/basketball coach was found by his wife in bed with one of his students. After finding out he had a school-wide reputation for inappropriate touching and sexual come-ons, his wife Terri spent 13 years on a crusade to get the school to take action. Eventually he was suspended for 5 days without pay. Fearing he would get away with everything, his ex-wife then began a telephone marathon, calling one former student after another, looking for possible victims who would be willing to tell their story, eventually compiling a two-page list of former victims, including one woman who was raped by him in her senior year. Once one person was willing to come forward, others eventually came forward. After a lengthy court battle, Peterson was sentenced to life in prison (but will be available for parole in five years). (Safran, 1997.)

-Band director Edward Wright, Pennsylvania, was complained about in 1979 of sexual assault while drunk. He was found guilty of forcibly kissing another student on a weekly...
basis for 3 years (1980-83). He was then fined $2,500, given 3 years probation, and 300 hrs. of community service. Principal Smith’s son enrolled in school and told his father that sexual assault was occurring. Smith called the superintendent, who called parents of students suspected of being assault victims. In 1986 Wright was suspended and resigned. 1987, 3 students filed suit against the principal and the school district. Insurance settled $700,000 for 2 of the students; 3rd case remains unsettled. One month later the school board was presented with a petition by 231 students asking for removal of any accused teachers, “wanting to clean up their schools” (Zirkel, 1988).

-Richard Douglas, an Asst. Principal in Cincinnati, OH (Schwab Middle School), was accused by 7 female students of “inappropriate behavior”. He allegedly gave “boyfriend type hugs”, was seen touching, holding, and hugging in an physically intimate manner. was guilty of using and/or permitting use of marijuana and/or alcohol on school premises, was known to swear and make lewd remarks, had been seen kissing or being kissed by students, had been known to be closeted with female students, and had intercourse with one student. Although he was terminated August 1989, he was reinstated Feb. 1991 on the basis that “students are known liars” and because the school district had based their decision on “improperly supported claims”. Mr. Douglas received a 1/4 million package out of court and was hired in Kentucky.

-One school district is paying more than $1 million to settle a lawsuit alleging sexual harassment of female students by a former 4th grade teacher (Walsh, 1996).

-67-year-old Richard Baugh retired after allegations of sexual harassment became public. He pleaded guilty to 5 felony counts of Child Sexual harassment in Berkeley, CA. and 2 counts in San Francisco (from a previous summer teaching job). In a civil lawsuit brought on by 9 students and 5 mothers, claims were supported that the district failed to investigate complaints on Mr. Baugh. “He had developed a pattern of having girls sit on his lap, and he would rub his genitals against them. Sometimes he would touch their breasts”. Mr. Baugh ultimately served 6 months and 5 years probation (Walsh, 1996).

-A settlement was reached in another recent case in the 8,000-student Berkeley district. In 1994, $1.8 million was paid for a high school band instructor allegedly abusing 2 females (Walsh, 1996).

-A male English teacher sexually assaulted a male student. Administrators “urged” the teacher to take an early retirement after students threatened to boycott classes if the Professor (tenured) was allowed to return to classes (Blum, 1989; Lawton, 1993).

-Ceiro (1995) is an article about Christina Rosado (14) and her creative learning teacher, Glen Harris (33). He taught English and gym. Christina said she was attracted to Harris because he “seemed mature, friendly and different : an adult who listened”. On March 8, they boarded Amtrak and were on the run until May. Harris turned himself in after he saw himself on a Hard Copy story. He currently faces charges of statutory kidnapping. He drained his $6,000 in savings through ATMs, so the FBI was able to trace their movements. Mr. Harris faces a 25-year sentence. According to Harris, Christina claimed abuse by mom and dad, and he thought he was “saving her”.

-An Assistant Dean and a dance teacher at a North Carolina school of arts resigned following a civil suit by former student Christopher Soderlund, now 27, claiming he was seduced by R. Gain (teacher) and sexually harassed and humiliated by R. Kuch (Dean).
The defendant was taken to their house, served alcohol, and had sex with both faculty members. According to court testimony, they “taught students, including the plaintiff and even boys and girls as young as 13, that dancing was a sexual expression and that they would be better dancers if they were sexually active” (Broili, 1995).

- Wilfred Boyea, a 52-year-old special education teacher in Madrid, NY, was found guilty for raping three children in his classroom (Graves, 1994).
- Paul Leuetkemeyer, a 31-year-old middle school teacher in Fairfax County, VA, was found guilty on three misdemeanor counts of sexual battery involving two male students (Graves, 1994).
- Cheryl Paddock, a physical education teacher for 22 years in suburban Chicago, was found guilty of sexually assaulting a teen-age girl at her school (Graves, 1994).
- Kim Reynolds, 39, was found guilty on five counts of first-degree sexual harassment involving four girls in kindergarten through fourth grade at an elementary school in North Plains, Oregon, where he taught music (Graves, 1994).
- A middle school principal in Clayton, Missouri, was charged with sexually assaulting a 13-year-old boy at his school (Graves, 1994).
- A popular social studies teacher in DeKalb County, Georgia was fired for propositioning at least 8 female students (Graves, 1994).
- An elementary school principal in Liverpool, New York had his state certification revoked for repeatedly molesting two sisters over an 11-year period (Graves, 1994).
- In Salem, Oregon, a superintendent, principal, and six teachers suspected that J. B. Kissee had sexual contact with his female students, but no one reported him to authorities. Instead, the superintendent, teacher’s union, and lawyers reached an agreement in which the middle school physical education teacher and coach would resign. Kissee was given $8,000 for his pain and suffering and promised that he would not be reported to the Teacher Standards and Practices commission. Kissee worked in two more school districts where girls also complained of his touching before the commission heard of his behavior and revoked his license (Graves, 1994).
- A 1993 investigation in East Syracuse-Minoa, New York Central schools revealed that a French teacher, a gymnastics coach, a social studies teacher, and an industrial arts teacher had sex with students (Graves, 1994).
- In Anne Arundel County, Maryland, three high school teachers were arrested in 1993 for having sex with students. One of them, a social studies teacher, coach and drama adviser had sex with seven students, sometimes 2 to 5 times a week, over an 11-year span (Graves, 1994).
- Eliot Wigginton, founder of FoxFire magazine and 1986 Georgia Teacher of the year, was sent to jail for fondling a 10-year-old boy during an overnight stay. Before he pleaded guilty, 18 other young men were willing to testify about their molestation by him as well (Graves, 1994).
- The allegations began with a murder of a teacher by a 23 year old man who claimed that he had been sexually abused by the teacher since he was a pupil in the teacher’s class in eighth grade. It turns out the former principal of the school had been involved as well, and was indicted for enticing a child to come to his house for illicit purposes. Eventually
it came to light that at least 25 school workers were involved in a ring of homosexual abuse and drug use that included more than 75 children (Jennings, 1988).

- In Baltimore in 1987 a female teacher was charged with raping and fondling a 13 year old boy (Jennings, 1988).

- A NJ preschool teacher was charged on 143 charges of sexual abuse, possibly involving more than 20 children (Jennings, 1988).

- A high school basketball coach in Logan, Ohio was indicted on 10 sex-related charges of installing a video camera in the boys locker room to photograph nude students (Jennings, 1988).

- Police discovered Texas school teacher Frank Waldrop having sex with an eighth-grader, who later claimed the ‘couple’ had sex regularly. The mother sued the school district for being responsible for the acts of their employee (Cloud, 1998).

- In 1994, Donna Covello came forward after 21 years of silence to charge her high school guidance counselor with forcing her for 4 years to engage in “urination games, insertion of objects in her genitals and discussion of pornography.” Despite the fact that the counselor, Landau, does not deny the charges, he cannot be criminally prosecuted because the statute of limitations has expired. He is still a counselor at the school and “highly thought of as an educator, Dean and counselor” by the school’s principal (Willen, 1994).

- Mary Kay LeToumeau, found guilty of having sex with her 6th grade student, became pregnant with a second child from the same student just 2 months after being let out of prison for the first pregnancy. A married mother of four, Ms. LeToumeau stated that she and the 13-year-old student were in love and “soul mates.” The pregnancies were said to have been planned in order to affirm their love. It is likely that she will be sent back to prison for 7 years for a sentence revocation (The Ohio State Lantern, 1998).
APPENDIX B

STUDENT/VICTIM FEELINGS, RESPONSES AND REACTIONS

-“It was like fighting an invisible, invincible enemy alone. I didn’t have a clue as to what to do to stop it... Ignoring it only made it worse” (Stein, 1995).
-Responses: feelings degraded, embarrassed, terrible, angry, sad, cheap, stupid, humiliated (Stein, 1993).
-Fear of damage to one’s reputation, rumors to fear and combat (Stein, 1993).
-Girls report that they did resist their harassers. but resisters encountered “backlash” from the perpetrators and even other students which downplayed the seriousness of the situation (Stein, 1993).
-“Being harassed makes me angry and I feel degraded. I’m always on my guard trying to prevent what may happen next.” Age 13 (Stein, 1993).
-“I feel very terrible. I felt it was my fault, but it wasn’t. I didn’t tell teachers or the principal what happened. I think my problem is being scared. I’m scared they’re going to do something worse if I tell.” Age 12 (Stein, 1993).
-As a result of such experiences, “many students reported that they did not want to go to school or talk in class, that they found it hard to pay attention, and that they even thought about changing schools.” (Loredo, Reid, Deaux, 1995).
-Terrified, humiliating, angry (Larkin, 1994).
-Nauseous, tears, headaches, muscular spasms, insomnia, hypertension, anorexia, bulimia, uneasy feelings about their bodies development can be symptoms of the “sexual harassment syndrome” (Larkin, 1994).
-Some students felt they must limit their physical movements, skip classes, transfer schools, distractions from school work (Larkin, 1994).
-One student reported finding it difficult to concentrate on her work in one class because male students were constantly making comments about the girls they had sex with (Larkin, 1994).
-Sexual harassment practices had negative impact on their education such as avoiding hallways, monitoring clothing, not participating in class, skipping class, dropping courses, leaving school offered them some protection form harassment - but also made school an unwelcome, even menacing place (Larkin, 1994).
-The fear of being abused can prompt girls and women to develop self-protective strategies that limit their mobility and suppress their verbal expression (Larkin, 1994.)
-The reason most young women didn’t report incidents of sexual harassment was to protect themselves from further abuse (Larkin, 1994).
-The cost of speaking out about sexual harassment was often more harassment (Ramazanoglu, 1987).
“you just get used to it” (Larkin, 1994).
-“When I get sexually harassed, I feel like I don’t exist” (Larkin, 1994).
-“I feel very terrible. I felt it was my fault... I’m scared they’re going to do something worse if I tell” (Larkin, 1994).
-One of the reasons young women don’t report the behavior is that they just can’t bear to repeat it. It is embarrassing, humiliating, and they fear they may have done something to cause or deserve it (Larkin, 1994).
-Backlash: some students have found that the harassment only gets worse when they report it, particularly if school officials don’t take the complaint seriously. Many concede that it is better to be silent than to worsen the situation by speaking up and drawing attention to your problem (Larkin, 1994).
-Response: “when you get put down all the time, you end up feeling like you can’t do anything” (Larkin, 1994).
-Results: giving up their plans for a career in science, withdrawn from courses (Larkin, 1994).
-Many students report developing a variety of ingenious ways to avoid harassing behavior, but these tactics were not always successful and they required valuable energy that could have been spent on academic work (Larkin, 1994).
-They found the behavior unacceptable and offensive yet they acknowledge they do little to stop the behavior because they figure adults will not intervene (Roscoe, Strouse, Goodwin, Taracks, & Henderson, 1995).
-Results in both males and females feeling bad about themselves. Makes them feel powerless, depressed. Most common responses were ignoring it, rationalizing it, fighting it, changing behavior, or becoming part of a group to shield themselves from it. They often use more than one strategy to stop attacks, but no matter what defense was used they were hurt by the abuse (Shankshaft, Mendel, Johnson, Sawyer, Hergenrother, & Barber, 1997).
APPENDIX C
EXAMPLES OF SEXUALLY HARASSING BEHAVIORS

- "they would touch me, put their hands on my thighs and slide their hands up my shirt. They often tried to put my hand down their pants. I often told my friends but no one believed me. He grabbed me and threw me down and grabbed my breast. I felt helpless but punched him and he ran out. The teacher came in and yelled at me. When I tried to explain why I had hit the boy the teacher told me I deserved it because I wore short skirts. I was sent to the principal and I had to serve detention." 15 years old (Stein, 1995).

- Students spread stories about her. "I'll rape you", "you better watch out", "you're going to die; you're a bitch" (Larkin, 1994).

- In many cases demeaning comments are a backdrop to the physically harassing behavior that follows (Larkin, 1994).

- Examples of being pushed, kicked, slapped on the ass, followed, trapped, physically restrained (Larkin, 1994).

- Visual harassment: leering, gawking, ogling, gesturing, gabbing themselves. Pornography, graffiti. Such ogling can crush young women's excitement about their developing bodies, as they quickly learn the risks that accompany their physical maturation. Often, leering is a process used by males to select those females who will be the target of their future sexualized comments and behavior (Larkin, 1994).

- Examples: whistles, catcalls, horn honking, sleazy invitations, following, obscene phone calls, leering, and sexual gestures, flashing and masturbating, crude and demeaning propositions (Larkin, 1994).

- Verbal harassment: Verbal taunting was the most frequent way the students were harassed, although physical, visual, and racial harassment were also common occurrences. Often, a student would be hassled in a variety of ways in a single incident (Larkin, 1994). The frequent leveling of words like "bitch", "witch broad," "fucking broad," "dumb broad," "douche," "dog," "bimbo," "baby," and "chick" against these students or in relation to women in general usually occurred in the context of allegations that women were inferior to or less capable than men (Larkin, 1994). The verbal objectification of women's bodies was another strategy used to verbally diminish female students. Terms like "nice ass," "nice tits" and "sexy legs" were used to evaluate female students. A student found it disheartening that guys seemed to relate to her as an object rather than as a human being (Larkin, 1994).

- Jokes that demean women are so commonplace, those females who find them offensive are often considered "humorless". The label "male-basher" has been coined as a way of dismissing and silencing anyone who speaks about males in a critical way (Larkin, 1994).
-A common way for young women to be diminished was through remarks about their assumed participation or interest in sex. Such accounts, whether fabricated or real, empowered young men at the same time as they disempowered young women because of the double standard that condones male sexual activity and holds females responsible for it. As a result, allegations about being sexually active or provocative frequently placed young women in the position of defending their reputations (Larkin, 1994).  
-Rating hallways “feared humiliation of a low score.” One student who dared to challenge a male student about this sexist practice suffered the ultimate public insult: a score of zero (Larkin, 1994).  
-The girls begin to feel “alone and abandoned” (Stein, 1995).  
-AAUW (1993)  
* made sexual comments, jokes, gestures, or looks.  
* showed you sexual pictures, photographs, messages, etc.  
* wrote sexual messages about you on bathroom walls, etc.  
* spread sexual rumors about you.  
* said you were gay or lesbian.  
* spied on you as you dressed or showered at school.  
* flashed or mooned you.  
* touched, grabbed or pinched you in a sexual way.  
* intentionally brushed up against you in a sexual way.  
* pulled at your clothing in a sexual way.  
* pulled your clothing off or down.  
* blocked your way or cornered you in a sexual way.  
* forced you to kiss him or her.  
* forced you to do something sexual other than kissing.  
-Types of sexual harassment in school (Mona & Herndon, 1995): Sexual comments, jokes, gestures or looks; touched, grabbed or pinched in a sexual way; intentionally brushed up against in a sexual way; flashed or mooned; had sexual rumors spread about them; had clothing pulled at in a sexual way; had sexual messages/graffiti written about them on bathroom walls in locker rooms, etc.; forced to kiss someone; called gay or lesbian; forced to do something sexual other than kissing.  
-Forms of sexual harassment: sexual comments, physical contact, telephone calls, letter/notes, pressure for dates, sexual advances. (Roscoe, Strouse, Goodwin, 1994).
APPENDIX D

CONSENT FORM

Please read the following information before agreeing to participate in the research study. It is important for you to understand what you are agreeing to, so please ask me any questions that you have about the study and/or its procedures.

Sincerely,
Carolyn Slotten

1. Purpose of the research: I, _____________________________, voluntarily agree to participate in a research study conducted by Carolyn Slotten, MSW, LSW. I understand the intended research is a qualitative (in-depth, open-ended interviews) study of the unwanted sexual attention and its effects on students in high school. The purpose of the study is to gain insight and academic knowledge about the experiences I encountered in high-school with unwanted sexual attention and/or sexual harassment, how I coped with the experience, and how it impacted my educational experience.

2. Procedures: I understand that participation in the study will involve 1 unstructured, individual interview between me and Carolyn Slotten. The time involved will vary depending on interview content but an estimate of 1/2 to 1 hour for the interview is likely. Participants will be able to choose the location of the interview. The interviews will be audio-taped and ultimately typed in their entirety by Carolyn Slotten. All tapes will be identified by the participant’s chosen alias, not their real identity.

3. Confidentiality: I understand that, while I may choose to use an assumed name during the study, it will not be possible to change or omit all identifying information. I also understand that anything I may talk about might be used in final forms of the project. Therefore, this is not a strictly confidential situation, although I understand Carolyn Slotten will do whatever she can to keep my identity and information as private as possible. I am comfortable with my story being told as part of the research process and in any materials developed from the research. I will retain control over what topics I choose to discuss, although suggested guidelines will be provided. In addition, the signed consent forms will be the only written record of the study participants’ identities and they will be stored in a locked file cabinet separate from the audio tapes and transcripts.
4. Risks and Benefits: I understand that, like any discussion of painful life experiences, these interviews could bring up feelings of distress for me. I understand that safeguards against unnecessary or excessive distress have been built into this research: Carolyn Slotten, as a doctoral student in Human Development and Family Science at The Ohio State University and a licensed social worker, is trained as an interviewer, and she will respect my right to retain control of what is talked about with her. In addition, I understand that, even though such interviews often are considered personally helpful by the people involved, the research interviews in this study are not intended as therapy. I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time. I understand that part of my participation in this project can involve, if I choose, the opportunity to suggest particular uses to which information gained in this study might be put, although final responsibility and discretion for use of the information remains with Carolyn Slotten, as the principal researcher.

I have read and understood all the above terms and I agree to participate in this project under these conditions.

Signed ____________________________

Date ______________________________

For study questions, feel free to contact:
Carolyn Slotten (614) 292-9981
Dr. Barbara Newman (614) 292-5641 (Dissertation Chair)
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SESAME (1998) sesame-w@taconic.net.


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