

*Naming the
Unnamed:
**SEXUAL
HARASSMENT
IN THE CHURCH***

**Committee on Sexual Harassment
of the Council on Women and the Church**

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ACSWA

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*Council on Women and the Church
United Presbyterian Church in the USA*

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INTRODUCTION

How this booklet came to be . . .

In 1978, the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church assigned to the Council on Women and the Church responsibility to “*study the problems of sexual harassment, and to explore ways of involving the church in ministering to victims of sexual harassment.*” The Council appointed a committee which developed a working definition for sexual harassment: **Any unwanted sexual advances or demands (verbal/physical) which are perceived by the recipient as demeaning, intimidating or coercive.**

In surveying the work that had already been done in the study of sexual harassment, the committee found that a number of organizations and individuals are dealing with the problem as it exists in the working places in America, such as the Working Women’s Institute in New York City.*

As it worked, the committee became more and more aware of the problem as it occurs within the life of the church. Not that the problem is epidemic, but the problem does exist in the United Presbyterian Church—in congregations, middle judicatories, judicatory committees, church agencies and councils, and church related institutions, such as seminaries. According to the information gathered by the committee, many of those victims were not really helped through the normal channels open to them in institutions and judicatories. Frequently, the victim was blamed, or not taken seriously, and an effort was made simply to protect the reputation of the harasser without protecting the church, its members and employees from future harassment in other communities.

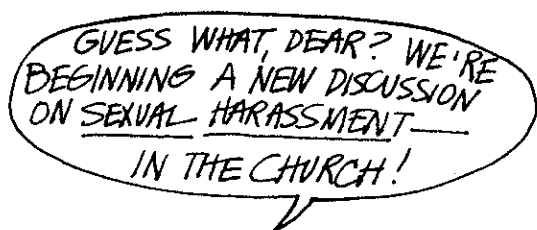
As a result of this preliminary *ad hoc* survey of sexual harassment within the denomination itself, the committee decided to limit its response to the General Assembly’s referral to the problem of sexual harassment as it exists within the church. The problem must be faced here and dealt with. If the church can relate to this problem within its own life effectively, hopefully, church leaders will be enabled to counsel both those who are victims and those who are harassers in the larger community of men and women.

The committee sought to find out how widespread was the incidence of the problem, what forms it took, and what sorts of solutions had been developed within the church. First, the request for data was advertised through those periodicals which are generally read by Presbyterians and through distributing materials at the women’s booth at the meeting of the 1979 General Assembly. Meager response was forthcoming, even

*See resources appended to this report.

though every effort for anonymity was maintained. This fact may indicate that the problem of sexual harassment in the church is limited. However, a sufficient number of stories came to the attention of the committee and in such a manner that it became apparent that victims, feeling threatened by harassment, are reluctant to talk about their experience for fear of adverse consequences, and even more reluctant to put anything in writing.

The research division of the Support Agency assisted the committee by sending a questionnaire to presbytery and synod executives, to ministerial relations committee chairpersons, to deans of seminaries, and to other persons with significant responsibilities for personnel concerns within the church. The survey addressed not only the scope of the problem, but also requested information about the effectiveness of procedures for dealing with the problem. The response to these questionnaires has been used in preparing the report of the committee.



ABOUT THIS BOOKLET . . .

This booklet's title is "Naming the Unnamed" because, while sexual harassment has been going on ever since Adam tried to blame Eve for the missing apple, it is only within recent memory that women have had a name for what often happens to them. Since the early '70's, with the impact of the women's movement on society, women have increasingly begun to object to being treated as objects. Hence, in the workplace which women have entered in unprecedented numbers they are no longer willing to tolerate the daily round of innuendos, ogling, jokes, touching/pinching that has been their lot. As a consequence, sexual harassment has now been named and is taking its place in personnel policies as a real grievance and in legal precedents as a form of sex discrimination.

Sexual harassment takes many forms—particularly in the church. Whatever the form and whatever the relationships—man/woman, woman/man, man/man, or woman/woman—a power dynamic is involved. Without the element of coercion rooted in one person's having power over another, harassment does not occur. The peculiar problem with sexual harassment in the church is that that power dynamic may not be so clear as it is in the workplace. In the church, there are relationships (professor/student, senior pastor/assistant pastor, field work supervisor/seminarian, elder/minister) which affect or limit one's opportunities to serve within the church structure—not only immediately—but for years to come!

While the fact is well-known that men, particularly ministers, have sometimes been the victims of women harassers, the examples used in this booklet focus only on women as the victims—since that is the more frequent situation. The situations described here are told as "herstories," each one written in the first person, each one fictionalized to protect the identity of those involved but based on a true incident.

In addition to the information about sexual harassment included here, a workshop design has been developed, with the assistance of the Working Women's Institute. Planned for a two-three hour session, the workshop is designed to raise consciousness about sexual harassment in the church in the hope that, by "naming the unnamed," this form of injustice can be eliminated.

Normal grievance procedures have proven to be less than adequate when dealing with sexual harassment in the church. This is because those procedures ordinarily depend on negotiation with persons over the victim in the power structure—and somewhere along the way, one of those persons may be the harasser! For this reason, a new type of procedure is suggested on p. 16. This involves the creation of an OMBUDS TEAM, who stands outside the regular power structure, yet is related to it, and who can be fair and supportive to all concerned.

THEOLOGICAL STATEMENT

Sexual harassment is a particular form of the human problem of treating other human beings as objects instead of persons. We become human through personal encounters. Sexual harassment is a form of encounter which is dehumanizing for the victim. It involves an unwarranted misuse of power on the part of one person against the other.

Although sexual harassment has been a problem for centuries, it has only been named within the last decade. While in principle and sometimes in practice sexual harassment can be a problem of man against man, a woman against a man, it has surfaced most frequently as a problem of the aggression of men against women. The fact that it has not come up as an identified problem within the life of the church until recently is related to the imbalance in our culture in the relationship between men and women. Those who are concerned that women should come into their full personhood have identified this particular form of the denial of that full personhood as sexual harassment.

Certainly our ancestors in the faith were not without some guidance here. In the Westminster Shorter Catechism the following answer is given to the question concerning the seventh commandment:

The Seventh Commandment requireth the preservation of our own and our neighbor's chastity, in heart, speech, and behavior.

The Book of Confessions, 7:071.

Though this is not the language to which we are accustomed today, we can discern in this statement a concern of people for the integrity of the other person, an integrity that is violated in sexual harassment. Certainly that concern for the integrity of the other person is expressed in the Sermon on the Mount as a part of Jesus' commentary upon the meaning of the seventh commandment. (Matthew 5:27, 28). Here as well as in his teaching regarding divorce Jesus was resisting the tendency of men to exercise dominance and compulsion in relation to women and was making room for women to come into fuller personhood, into their full humanity.

In a world and in a church where people fall short of the ethic of the kingdom, people in the Presbyterian tradition have taken care to provide checks and balances within the government and discipline of the church to prevent any person or group from obtaining and maintaining an unwarranted position of power. This is in keeping with the traditional motto of Reformed theology "to God alone the glory."

The converse side of this theology is a concern for justice for the person who is being dehumanized by the unjust use of power on the part of groups or individuals. This concern must manifest itself to the victim of sexual harassment. In practice, because of our discomfort in dealing with our sexuality in general, we have not done a very good job in helping

those who are sexually harassed. This should not keep us from trying to do better now that we can see the problem for what it is.

Consistent with the collegial government for which Presbyterians are named, the discipline of our tradition based on Matthew 18:15-17 was designed not to bring punishment but therapy to the church. In those situations where a matter could not be settled between two people within the church it was taken to the elders. Only if it could not be settled by them did it become a public matter. The extreme action of excommunication was not interpreted by the Reformers as punishment so much as a radical medicine which hopefully would have a shock effect upon the person so treated and bring about a spirit of repentance.

In cases of sexual harassment, the victimizer as well as the victim needs therapy. Concern for the victimizer should not overshadow the necessary concern for justice and compassion for the victim. Too many times in the past in cases which have come to our attention the victim has been blamed and more concern has been shown for the reputation of the victimizer. The result has often been disastrous for the victim and the victimizer has been passed on to another position without having dealt with his own sickness.

Whatever we propose as Presbyterians in dealing with sexual harassment—whether within the church or outside—we need to use a process that will stop the harassing. We should provide support for the victim and work for therapy for all concerned so that it will not happen again to other persons in other places.

A problem that occurs in traditional procedures for redressing grievances when it comes to sexual harassment is that the *abuser* is most often higher in the hierarchal structure of the organization than is the abused. This problem also occurs within the structure of the church. As a result, there needs to be an alternate route within our judicatory system for dealing with sexual harassment.

... sexual harassment is the assertion of power by men over women who are perceived to be in a vulnerable position with respect to male authority. Being an assertion of power, sexual harassment serves to reinforce in women the notion that, if they value their psychological and physical integrity, they must function within certain limits, both in terms of work choices and personal behavior.

*Working Women's Institute,
Comments on EEOC's Amendments
to Guidelines on Discrimination
Because of Sex.*

ANN J. — CANDIDATE

MY STORY BEGINS . . .

. . .with my first appearance before the presbytery's Candidates Committee. As only the second woman to ask to be "taken under care," I expected to be asked some hard questions—about my "call," about my plans for seminary, about my faith. I had prepared for the interview carefully—even to writing out some responses to expected questions. The executive presbyter told me that this was a "tough" Committee—but that hardly prepared me for what happened.

The interview lasted only fifteen minutes. There seemed to be one minister-member who dominated the proceedings, even though he was not the chairperson. From the beginning the way he looked at me made me feel uncomfortable. After a few perfunctory questions, plus several others about whether or not I had considered marriage, what would I do if I got pregnant and was the pastor of a congregation, etc., this one minister requested that he be allowed to serve as my advisor, "since we both live in the same area." It was quickly approved, and from then on he insisted that he must see me—as part of his responsibility toward me. On these occasions he usually took me out to dinner, to a restaurant complete with romantic "ambiance," taking advantage of every occasion to touch my hand, hug me when helping me on with my coat, etc. My own abhorrence of these intimate "meetings" began to give me headaches, making it impossible for me to concentrate on my studies. But I didn't know what to do . . .

After nearly a year of this, one night he asked me to meet him at a nearby motel. I flatly refused, which sent him into a tantrum. He threatened to report to the Candidates Committee that I was unfit to be a minister, and he screamed over the phone, "You'll see, I'll keep you from being ordained—you little bitch!"

A few weeks later I went home for the weekend, and decided that I simply must report this behavior to someone in the presbytery. Since the executive presbyter had been quite supportive of me, I decided to start there. He appeared not to be surprised! He sympathized with me, and promised that this man would be off the Committee before my examination. He arranged for someone else to be my advisor.

But the real climax came when, later, I arrived for my examination. Who was there to greet me but my harasser! He tried very hard to convince the Committee that I was *not* a proper candidate—citing "personality disorders." He might have succeeded if my new advisor had not advocated so persuasively on my behalf. The harasser is no longer on that Committee, but he remains in his pastorate—where I have heard that he continues his harassing.

**GUIDELINES OF EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY
COMMISSION**

1604.11 Sexual harassment — (a) Harassment on the basis of sex is a violation of Sec. 703 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 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 for employment decision affecting such individual, or (3) such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.

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(b) In determining whether alleged conduct constitutes sexual harassment, the Commission will look at the record as a whole and at the totality of the circumstances, such as the nature of the sexual advances and the context in which the alleged incidents occurred. The determination of the legality of a particular action will be made from the facts, on a case by case basis.

(c) Applying general Title VII principles, an employer, employment agency, joint apprenticeship committee or labor organization (hereinafter collectively referred to as "employer") is responsible for its acts and those of its agents and supervisory employees with respect to sexual harassment regardless of whether the specific acts complained of were authorized or even forbidden by the employer and regardless of whether the employer knew or should have known of their occurrence.

BETH P. — CHURCH SECRETARY

MY STORY BEGINS...

...after I had been on the job for a little more than a year. Having worked in a business office for twelve years, where off-color jokes and snide comments were standard daily fare, I anticipated that my work as secretary in the office of the First Presbyterian Church would be a real joy! I loved the work, the easy-going relationships with the two pastors, the sense of responsibility for helping to "hold the congregation together."

Gradually, I became aware that the newly-elected president of the Board of Trustees stopped by far more frequently than had his predecessor—to ask questions, drop off papers, etc. In the beginning I thought nothing about it—except to note that he always managed to come when I was alone in the office. Within a few weeks he started bending over me, complimenting me on my perfume, clothes, hairstyle—whatever, all the time his eyes were fixated on my breasts. One day I made the mistake of getting up from the desk as he was standing in front. He moved to block my way, grabbed me and tried to kiss me! I pushed him away as hard as I could, and shouted, "How dare you?" Angered, he started toward me, then turned abruptly and walked out, muttering under his breath.

I couldn't get the incident out of my mind, yet I didn't think there was anyone I could tell. My husband would be furious; both ministers would find it hard to believe—because my harasser was a respected leader in the community and they had counted it a coup to get him to serve as president of the Trustees. Unfortunately, I told no one...

Within three months, the senior pastor called me in to say that he had a lot of complaints from various people recently about my work, particularly from the Trustees. He was sorry—but he and the Session had decided to let me go...

Like rape, sexual harassment has been a hidden problem, treated as a joke, or blamed on the victim herself. Because of a long history of silence on the subject, many women feel uncomfortable, embarrassed, or ashamed when they talk about personal incidents of harassment. They are afraid that it will reflect badly on their character, or that they will be seen as somehow inviting the propositions.

*Project on the Status and
Education of Women, "Sexual
Harassment: A Hidden Issue"*

IS SEXUAL HARASSMENT REALLY A PROBLEM?

The attitude that sexual harassment is "trivial" or that women should be able to "handle" it remains alarmingly common. These attitudes stem from traditional societal and institutional definitions which portray women as primarily sexual beings. As long as these assumptions prevail. . . , women will continue to be denied equal terms and conditions of employment.

*Project Statement from
Working Women's Institute*

Since the mid-70's when the name "sexual harassment" was attached to the behavior that women experience, particularly in the workplace, its incidence and its causes have begun to be the subject of serious research.

In 1980 the District of Columbia Commission on Women published a report, *Sexual Harassment in the Workplace*, which begins with a survey of the studies made from 1975-80:

1975- Working Women's Institute (then in Ithaca, N.Y.), conducted two surveys of university employees, with 70 percent of those participating having experienced at least one instance of sexual harassment.

1976- *Redbook* Magazine. 88 percent (out of 9000 respondents) indicated having been harassed one or more times.

1977- Survey of 875 employees (both women and men) at United Nations. Fifty percent had either experienced or witnessed sexual harassment.

1978- Benson and Thomson, researchers at University of California at Berkeley. Of 269 senior women students, 20 percent had been harassed by a teacher.

1979- Housing and Urban Development Newsletter to employees. All 63 female respondents reported harassment from supervisors, other employees, with 90 percent of those who rejected the advance reporting "work-related consequences."

In testimony before the U.S. Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee in April, 1981, Karen Sauvigne, director of Working Women's Institute in New York, pointed out that the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) in seeking to enforce Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, has declared that sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination for which an employer may be held responsible. This may take the form of sexual harassment by supervisors, by co-workers, by clients/customers, or a sexually degrading work environment.

In the fall of 1981, the Research Division of the Support Agency of the United Presbyterian Church conducted a survey of synod and presbytery executives, deans of ten seminaries, chairpersons of judicatory com-

mittees on ministerial relations and personnel, and personnel officers of agencies. Among the findings from this survey are the following—

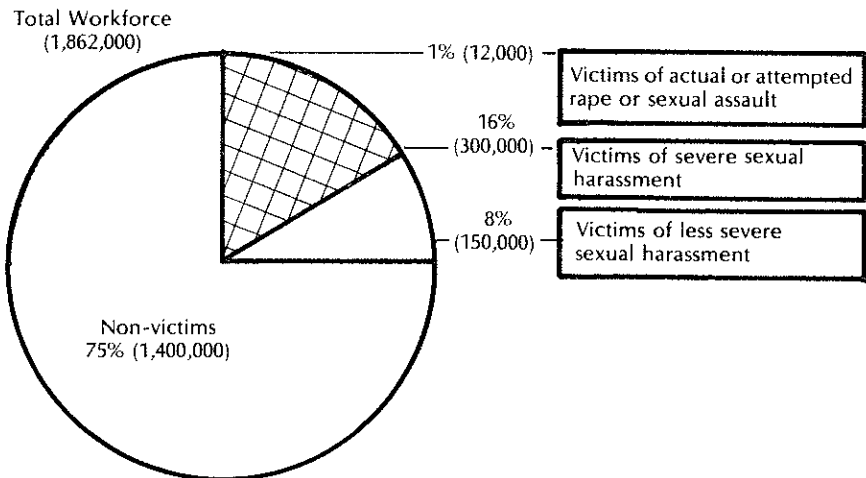
—from judicatory respondents:

- 7 percent of respondents reported that in the past three years their presbytery received complaints concerning work or career-related incidents of sexual harassment.
- 3 percent of respondents reported that complaints were received in their presbytery in the past three years by a person who perceived that someone they knew was experiencing work-related sexual harassment.
- 39 percent responded that they were *not* aware of sexual harassment in the church before receiving the questionnaire.
- 79 percent indicated no perceived need for a formal grievance process to deal with sexual harassment in the church.
- 70 percent of judicatory respondents indicate a need for more information on this subject especially for those with personnel responsibilities.

—from seminary respondents:

- 50 percent (two out of four responding deans of seminaries) reported receiving in the last three years complaints from both students and employees of incidents perceived to be sexual harassment.
- 75 percent indicated their sense of a need for a seminary grievance process.

Figure 1
PERCENT OF WORKFORCE WHO EXPERIENCED
SOME FORM OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT



Permission to use granted by the
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BRENDA T. — SEMINARY STUDENT

MY STORY BEGINS...

...in my pastoral theology class, second year in seminary. The professor had been at the seminary for many years, and in fact, was one of the two senior members of the faculty. After my first year there, I spent the summer in Africa, which changed my outlook on lots of things, including the pastorate. I began to challenge him in class, especially about some of his assumptions concerning congregations and their needs. It was kind of a sparring relationship in class—and I enjoyed matching wits with him. After about a month of this, the professor asked me to come for an appointment during his office hours to discuss a paper I'd written.

When I got there, he asked me to sit on the small sofa he has, so we could go over certain points in my paper. I noticed that his knee kept touching mine—and whenever I moved away, he moved closer. I felt very uncomfortable, and didn't know what to do about it.

A few days later, he called me at the dorm and asked if I would have lunch with him—to talk about something I had said in class. I suggested that we could meet in the seminary dining room, but he proposed a downtown French restaurant. It was one that I'd been wanting to go to, but still, I didn't like the idea of going with him. Apparently he could tell I was stalling, so he said he'd ask Dr. _____, to join us. So I accepted.

Dumb me! I should have known that Dr. _____ would be "unable" to come at the last minute! So there we were—the two of us. As we finished our coffee, he said, "Now I trust that you're free for the rest of the afternoon. I have some rare books I'd like to show you back at my apartment."

Suddenly it became very clear—I knew he lived alone, his wife having died years before. I mumbled something about being "tied up for the rest of the day," at which point, he became nasty. He called me ungrateful for having come for lunch...and a whole lot of other things—which made me realize that he really felt threatened by the questions I raised in class, etc. I quickly left the restaurant—but did not leave my troubles behind! That spring, while I was seeking a call, he made it a point to talk with people in any congregation considering me to tell them of my "questionable" views and my inadequacy as a potential pastor. Because of his vindictiveness, I was unable to get a pastorate for two years after graduation—and then only by going to another part of the country where his name is not so well known.

Perhaps the worst thing about sexual harassment is that women have been socialized to feel flattered by much of it.

*Helen Lewis, director of District of Columbia
Commission on Women, 1979*



MYTHS ABOUT SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Myth: Sexual harassment only affects a few women.

Fact: Several surveys have documented the widespread nature of sexual harassment. In one study, 88 percent of the respondents said they had experienced one or more forms of unwanted sexual advances on the job.

Myth: Sexual harassment is rare on the campus.

Fact: Women have only recently begun to talk about the long hidden problem of sexual harassment of students, staff and faculty. Fear of ridicule and a sense of hopelessness about the problem and a feeling that it's a "personal" dilemma have kept the problem concealed.

Myth: Women should ignore sexual harassment when it occurs.

Fact: In one survey, 33 percent of those reporting sexual harassment tried to ignore the unwanted attentions. In 75 percent of these, the harassment continued or became worse. One quarter of the women who ignored the sexual propositions received unwarranted reprimands from their bosses or had their workloads increased.



Myth: If a woman really wants to discourage sexual attention, she can do so. If she's sexually harassed, she must have asked for it.

Fact: Many men believe a woman's "no" is really "yes," and therefore do not accept her refusal. Additionally, when a man is in a position of power, such as employer or teacher, the woman may be coerced or feel forced to submit.

Myth: Most charges of sexual harassment are false. Women use these charges as a way of "getting back" at a man with whom they are angry.

Fact: Women who openly charge harassment are often not believed, may be ridiculed, may lose their job, be given a bad grade or be mistreated in some other way. Women have little to gain from false charges.

Myth: Sexual harassment is not harassment at all. It is a purely personal matter between men and women. It's a fact of life.

Fact: When a woman is coerced by a professor or her employer, she is not always in a position to readily reject such overtures, or if she does, she may face adverse reactions. Several courts have ruled that sexual harassment on the job constitutes sex discrimination under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, and in some instances have awarded damages to women. Whether sexual harassment against students constitutes sex discriminations under Title IX of the Education Amendments is now under litigation.

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MARY ANN Q. — CLERGYWOMAN

MY STORY BEGINS...

...in the church basement with one of the elders. But before I tell about that, let me explain that, as one of a myriad of clergywomen who have found it difficult to find a congregation willing to call a woman as pastor, I decided that the next best thing would be to serve as an interim pastor. When the chance came for a three-year stint as a pastor-at-large in this presbytery, I jumped at it.

During the first three months, I served two different congregations as their interim pastor—and loved both the work and the people. The major difficulty was the temporary nature of all one's relationships. Just about the time I had found some friends, it was time to leave that church.

The next church I went to was somewhat different. There was tension among members of the Session—for no reason that I could understand. I did notice, however, that this tension seemed to increase when a certain male elder was present. Personally, I found him rather fun—with a good sense of humor, and always dependable in fulfilling his assignments. So I was totally unprepared for our encounter in the basement...

Just before a Session meeting one evening, I realized that I needed some supplies from the church school room in the basement. I dashed off to get them, only to find this elder following me—"to help me carry." I protested that the supplies were just not that heavy. As we turned the corner at the foot of the steps he caught me and swung me around into his arms. I managed to pull away, and demanded to know what he thought he was doing! His answer I'll never forget. He whispered, "Just remember girlie, I'm your boss!" From then on, my encounters with him always ended in a similar situation that I managed to control.

But in the end, he won—in a way. My evaluation from that church (which was quite negative)—became a permanent part of my file. Because of it, I know of at least two churches that decided they did not want me to serve as their interim...

Sexual harassment interferes with a woman's ability to perform her job even when it does not result in her departure from work. It effects a cumulative disadvantage on her as she must devote time and energy to handling advances, remarks and/or situations that could otherwise be expended on her work.

*Karen Sauvigne in April
1981 Testimony*



WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE HARASSED

- Complain to your harasser, in front of witnesses. Let him know very clearly that you don't like his behavior and want him to stop.
- Keep a journal of the times, places and witnesses present whenever the abuse occurs. Write exactly what happened or what was said.
- Talk to other women at work and find out if they have a similar problem. Form a support group to deal with the problem.
- Complain to your supervisor in writing, asking for an investigation of your charges. Request a reply in writing.
- Move up through the organizational structure if you don't get results. Get as much as you can in writing.
- The U.S. Equal Rights Opportunity Commission treats sexual harassment as a civil rights violation and requires the employer to do a more thorough investigation than just asking the accused harasser for his story. Ask for an investigation.
- If you can't stand the situation any more and quit, apply for unemployment benefits. State clearly that you quit because of harassment. If your claim is denied, contact the EEO.
- Both state and federal civil rights laws cover sexual harassment. You have a right to sue. Contact either or both to file a claim. Be warned that the wheels of bureaucratic justice grind very slowly.

A GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

An effective means of dealing with grievances may be the establishment of an OMBUDS TEAM. Such a team might be made up of a mix of persons: clergy-laity, female-male, of different ages and backgrounds. They should be persons known to be impartial and yet sensitive, well-respected, level-headed, compassionate and able to keep a confidence. They should be willing to learn, to listen supportively, and to commit themselves to keeping up-to-date on issues related to sexual harassment.

A suggested method in the United Presbyterian Church for appointing the OMBUDS TEAM would be for the Executive Presbyter to convene an *appointing committee* consisting of one person from each of the following: The Women's Concerns Committee/Task Force, the Presbyterian Association Executive Committee of United Presbyterian Women, and the Ministerial Relations Committee or its counterpart. This committee would name the OMBUDS TEAM, which would, in turn, be confirmed by and responsible to the General Council of the Presbytery. A five-year appointment is suggested since there may be long periods of no activity, then much demand of the persons' time at other periods.

The names of the members of the OMBUDS TEAM should be publicized so that individuals with a grievance or a question could make contact with them either directly or through the Presbytery Office. A member or members of the OMBUDS TEAM selected by the person bringing the grievance may accompany the person as an advocate in any conversations or hearings related to the grievance. The person bringing the grievance shall have the right to name her/his own advocate in any case, whether a member of the team or not. It would be the responsibility of the OMBUDS TEAM to work out a resolution of the problem which would be satisfactory to the victim and helpful to the harasser.

There appears to be no payoff for women to take the risk of using the grievance process. This issue is so subtle that most men out of their cultural conditioning will deny what is happening. Most of the people who have the authority role are men so why do it?

*Comments from Survey by Research Unit,
Support Agency, United Presbyterian Church — Oct 1981*

GUIDELINES FOR THE OMBUDS TEAM

Members of the Ombuds team need not be an expert or professional counselor. What is important is sensitivity, openness, and willingness to learn.

Ombuds team members should:

Be able to maintain confidentiality at all cost

Be knowledgeable of grievance procedures and range of options

Be knowledgeable about the availability and quality of professional counseling in the area

Be attuned to but don't seek out sexual harassment

Be ready to respond to requests for assistance

Be aware of the implications and ramifications of the dynamics of power involved in each situation

Be able to give precedence to compassion and justice for the victim balanced with concern for the harasser.

Make the church a safe place to talk about these experiences and to feel some action will be taken against people who intimidate others.

*Comments from Survey by Research Unit,
Support Agency, United Presbyterian Church — Oct 1981*

DESIGN FOR WORKSHOP*
on
SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN THE CHURCH

Goals of Workshop

- I A To understand what sexual harassment is
- B To recognize that sexual harassment occurs in the church
- II To consider ways of dealing with sexual harassment.

NOTES TO THE LEADER

Introduction

After the group is settled in, introduce yourself. Ask all participants to do likewise, saying something about why she/he has come to the workshop in a sentence or two.

“Unveil” the list of goals that you have posted. Be sure that everyone understands these goals and is ready to proceed.

Introduce the filmstrip.† (Be sure to preview before showing it.) If the group is large, you may want to indicate four sub-groups, each of which could be assigned a particular segment of the filmstrip to be responsible for identifying:

- 1) how the sexual harassment began?
- 2) who was aware of it first?

Time: 2 Hours

Number of persons: 15-25

I Filmstrip Showing

Show Filmstrip, *Naming the Unnamed*.

After the filmstrip, discuss in the whole group:

- 1) What did you learn about sexual harassment from the filmstrip?
- 2) How do you feel about sexual harassment in the church?

Write responses on newsprint. Be alert to probe for consideration of...

...expectation that church is a religious community where everyone is respected;

...trust/intimacy as part of “church environment”;

...expectations regarding primacy of ethical principles in the church;

...church as asexual;

...role and authority of male clergy as part of socialization;

...lack of clarity about power dynamics involved, i.e., may involve elected/staff relationships as well as employer/employee relationship;

...ways in which variables such as age, race, life experience, income, etc., may affect ability to perceive/give credence to sexual harassment.

II How to Deal with Sexual Harassment in the Church

A. BY THE VICTIM

Ask each small group to analyze its assigned My Story** by suggesting what could have been done at each point in the story.

Get the report back from each group. Use the newsprint to pick up on various basic principles of coping that emerge from these reports. On the basis of their experience, sexual harassment victims have indicated the importance of the following:

- ... *trust your own instincts/judgment*
- ... *be wary of avoiding the problem*
- ... *recognize that every situation of sexual harassment is different*
- ... *talk with someone else about the situation*
- ... *try to resolve the problem at lowest/earliest possible level*

since the point is to *stop the harassing* without destroying the relationship.

Invite the group to evaluate suggestions of what victim might have done at each of the points proposed from the small groups. Include consideration about how the participants feel about various proposed solutions, since some may be quite difficult for the average person to do.

Make clear to the group that if a simple “Stop It” at the first instance of harassing does not give results, then consider the following next steps:

a) **verbal confrontation with harasser—**

- describe situation/behavior that is unacceptable (i.e., “when you do . . . , it makes me uncomfortable”).
- ask that the behavior be stopped. OR

b) **request in writing** (this provides a record in case it may be needed but may also be more alienating)

- write out carefully behavior that is upsetting.
- time the harasser’s receiving of the letter so that victim is not present.
- follow-up verbally if harasser does not bring it up.
- be ready to “stand your ground” as victim in your discussion.

B. WITHIN THE CHURCH STRUCTURE

Point out that the victims’ success in handling situations of sexual harassment vary, so the church has a policy and procedure. Outline, using pp. 16-17 of this booklet.

If time permits, ask small groups to develop use of OMBUDS TEAM for their own My Story. Point out, or ask group to identify, why ordinary grievance procedures do not work in most cases of sexual harassment (i.e., most grievance procedures depend on the institution’s regular chain of command—which often includes the harasser).

(continued on next page)

... [T]his is a subject about which persons are reluctant to speak. Those who have experienced sexual harassment personally may be the most reluctant, because of the stigmatization which they sense they may encounter if they discuss their experience with others. Victims of sexual harassment recognize that their marriages and other personal relationships, as well as their jobs and careers, may be jeopardized by revealing that they have had such an experience. In many cases, their fears are justified, since this is a problem to which people tend to respond by blaming the victim... [W]e cannot talk about the incidence of sexual harassment. We know that sexual harassment occurs in the work place. We have no reason to believe that it occurs with either any more or any less frequency among church employed persons. Incidence is not the critical issue here, since whatever is reported is probably just the "tip of the iceberg."

*Report on Sexual Harassment Study,
Mary Mattis, director, Research Unit,
Support Agency, United Presbyterian
Church/USA — February, 1981*

Conclusion

Ask each participant to write out a brief evaluation of the workshop, by completing the following sentences:

- 1) In this workshop, I have learned...
- 2) About sexual harassment, I now feel...

These are to be left unsigned and given to the leader.

*A more detailed *Design for Workshop on Sexual Harassment* is available from: COWAC, Room 1151, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, N.Y. 10115. Cost: \$1.00.

†*Naming the Unnamed*, 10 minutes, color filmstrip plus cassette tape, available from COWAC, address above. Cost: \$10.

**Select from the *My Story* sections of this booklet. Use as case studies for this part of workshop.

RUTH W. — ELDER

MY STORY BEGINS...

...at a presbytery retreat, for which I was one of the leaders. There were two others on the leadership team, both ministers. We had worked hard on the design for this retreat, meeting several times in advance. I've only been in this presbytery about two years now, but when I moved here, someone knew about my background as a Christian educator—so I've been kept busy ever since. I'm enjoying the freedom to be a "volunteer." A few months ago the congregation elected me an elder—which was a truly great moment for me.

Jack had been one of the more creative men on the Christian Ed Committee of presbytery. We saw eye-to-eye about lots of things. I began to notice him looking at me—could almost feel him staring at me during meetings. He'd always bounce up to offer me a chair, hold my coat or whatever. I just thought he was a thoughtful, polite, "gentlemanly" person...

After the first day of the retreat, he suggested a "planning meeting" in his room and I agreed, not suspecting he had ulterior motives. When he closed the door behind me I saw that Al, the other member of our committee was not there. I asked about this, and his response was to move in close to me and whisper, "Oh Ruth, don't you think it's time that you and I..." I slapped him hard and ran for the door, but he caught me. In a threatening tone, he said, "I wouldn't do that if I were you. You know, I have ways to get back at you if you make any trouble."

I couldn't believe he would do that. But he could, would and did... In fact, he managed to portray me as a "church-tramp"—an accusation that finally led to the disruption of my marriage and eventual divorce. What really hurts me is that there he is, still carrying on—with who-knows-whom!

* * * * *

Sexual Harassment resources available from:

Alliance Against Sexual Coercion
P.O. Box 1
Cambridge, MA 02139
(617) 482-0329

Working Women's Institute
593 Park Avenue
New York, New York 10021
(212) 838-4420

SELECTED ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY ON SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Audio Visual

The Workplace Hustle. San Francisco: Clark Communications, 1981. 33 min. \$520; rental \$90. (Order from Clark Communications, 943 Howard St., San Francisco, CA 94103.

Books

Farley, Lin. *Sexual Shakedown: The Harassment of Women on the Job.* NY: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1978; NY: Warner Books, Inc., 1980. \$9.95. Focuses on the sexual harassment of women on the job and the role sexual coercion plays. Numerous case studies and interviews are included in this well-documented and researched volume.

MacKinnon, Catherine A. *Sexual Harassment of Working Women: A Case of Sex Discrimination.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979. \$22.50; paper \$6.95.

Explores the extent of sexual harassment of working women, focusing primarily on the legal aspects of the problem and possible solutions.

Periodical Articles

Ledgerwood, Donna E. and Johnson-Dietz, Sue. "Sexual Harassment: Implications for Employer Liability." *Monthly Labor Review*, April 1981, pp. 45-46.

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's sex discrimination guidelines are explored and the circumstances under which the definition will be applied are identified. The liability of employers is also identified.

"Sexual Harassment...Some See It...Some Won't." *Harvard Business Review*, March-April 1981, pp. 76-95.

An indepth look by a lawyer at sexual harassment through the use of survey questions and anecdotes. The legal ramifications of sexual harassment are also given.

Sexual Harassment Study, Summary of Findings, compiled by the Research Unit of the Support Agency, UPCUSA, February '82, from questionnaires sent to Presbytery staff and elected persons; Deans of Students of selected seminaries; and Officers and staff with personal responsibilities. COWAC, 475 Riverside Drive, Room 1151, New York City, NY 10115. \$1.

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Working Women's Institute, 593 Park Avenue,
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Alliance Against Sexual Coercion, PO Box 1,
Cambridge, MA 02139 (617) 547-1176

Federal Organization for Professional Women,
2000 P St., N.W., No. 403, Washington, DC 20036.

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Order from: COWAC, 475 Riverside Drive, Room 1151,
New York City, New York 10115
\$2.50 each; bulk rates available upon request

DEFINITION OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Any unwanted sexual advances or demands, either verbal or physical, which are perceived by the recipient as demeaning, intimidating or coercive.