Confronted with the problem of sexual harassment, a public high school in New Jersey implemented an awareness program. To document the extent of sexual harassment, the administration arranged for the Career Equity and Assistance Center for Research and Evaluation at Montclair State University to conduct a replication of the American Association of University Women (AAUW) survey on sexual harassment. The instrument used in the AAUW study was administered to all students during their English classes. Of the 711 students surveyed, 46% were female. A major finding was that 76% of the students believed that harassment happened in their school, and 73% had personally experienced sexual harassment. Most (94%) of the harassment took place between students, but 30% of students reported teacher to student harassment. Students reported that 47% of the harassment occurred in the hallways and 29% occurred in the classroom. Most students (59%) believed that harassment occurred because it gave the perpetrator power over another person. Results were in general agreement with the AAUW study, although reported levels were slightly lower in the New Jersey school. A major difference between the two studies was that students in the original AAUW study saw harassment as just a part of school life, rather than an attempt to gain power over someone. (Contains 4 figures, 1 table, and 2 references.)

(SLD)
SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN A NEW JERSEY HIGH SCHOOL: A REPLICATION STUDY.

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
Sexual Harassment in a New Jersey High School: A Replication Study

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All students in a public high school in New Jersey were surveyed to determine the extent of sexual harassment during school activities. The impact of harassment was described by the students in response to the question: "In your own words try to describe how you felt right after being sexually harassed." The responses included:

"After being sexually harassed, you feel degraded and exploited. You also feel helpless, because you might not be able to do something back."... female, black, 9th grader

"I thought about it a little, it was on my mind and I felt rejected and confused, and unattractive."... female, white, 9th grader

"Very strange. It was strange because I had never done anything to the harasser."... male, white, 11th grader

"I felt betrayed by the person because we had been friends for a while and then he totally betrayed my trust."... female, white, 10th grader

BACKGROUND

In 1992, the findings of The AAUW Report: How Schools Shortchange Girls indicated problems of gender equity and bias within the public schools of America. To further investigate these problems, specifically sexual harassment, AAUW commissioned another national survey which was reported in Hostile Hallways: The AAUW Survey on Sexual Harassment in America's Schools. Four out of five students (81%) in that survey said that they had experienced some form of sexual harassment during their school lives.

Confronted with the problem of sexual harassment, a public high school in New Jersey initiated an awareness program. To document the extent of sexual harassment, the administration arranged to have a replication of the AAUW Survey on Sexual Harassment in America's Schools conducted in their school.

METHOD OF STUDY

The Career Equity and Assistance Center for Research and Evaluation at Montclair State University (CEAC) was directed to conduct the replication study. The survey instrument previously used by Louis Harris and Associates to conduct the AAUW Survey on Sexual Harassment in America's Schools was employed.

Personnel from the CEAC administered the test to all students attending school on one day in February, 1995. Tests were administered in English classes and all classes were tested on the same day. Students enrolled in multiple English classes were instructed to complete the survey only once. Teachers stayed in the room dur-
ing the completion of the test; however, they were requested to stay at the front of the room. Students were instructed to consider all school activities when answering questions, but to limit answers to only school activities.

Questions were answered directly on the test forms and were hand entered for computer analysis at the CEAC. Number and frequency were determined for each question.

**FINDINGS**

Of the 711 students surveyed: 46% were female and 54% were male. The largest percentage of the students (34%) were in the 10th grade with most of the remainder enrolled in the 11th grade (32%) or the 9th grade (25%).

The majority of the students (64%) indicated that they were White/Caucasian. Additional demographic categories included Other (10%), Black/African-American (10%) and Asian (10%).

**The Problem**

The first question students were asked was “Do you think you know what ‘sexual harassment’ is?” Nearly all of the students (92%) responded in the affirmative. Only 1% indicated that they did not think they knew what sexual harassment was while 7% were not sure.

Students were then presented with the following definition of sexual harassment:

"Sexual harassment is unwanted and unwelcome sexual behavior which interferes with your life.

Sexual harassment is not behaviors that you like or want (for example wanted kissing, touching, or flirting.)"

After reading the definition, students were asked to respond to the following question: "Keeping the definition of sexual harassment in mind, do you think sexual harassment happens in your school?" Slightly over three-fourths (76%) responded “yes.” 21% selected "not sure" and only 3% selected “no” (see Figure 1).

The majority of the students (94%) indicated that the harassment in their school was student to student harassment. However, nearly one-third (30%) indicated that teacher to student harassment occurred. 17% indicated student to teacher harassment and 10% indicated school employee to student (see Figure 2). Since students could check more than one type of harassment, percentages add to more than 100 percent.

To determine the types of sexual harassment occurring during school activities, students were asked: “During your entire school history, has a person you know from school experienced any of the following things when she or he did not want to experience them?” Sexual remarks, gestures or jokes were the most common form of harassment, with four out of five students (81%) reporting knowing...
Table 1. Types of Sexual Harassment Experienced

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Behavior</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Sexual remarks, gestures, or jokes about her/him</td>
<td>574</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Received a sexual picture or note about her/him</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Sexual graffiti, messages, or pictures about her/him (for example on the bathroom wall, locker room)</td>
<td>293</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Sexual rumors spread about her/him</td>
<td>495</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Called lesbian or gay: or “homo.” “faggot,” “lezlie,” “dyke”</td>
<td>542</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Had someone “moon” or expose themselves to her/him</td>
<td>355</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Were brushed up against, grabbed at, or pinched in a sexual way</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Had her/his clothing pulled at, off, or down</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Been blocked or cornered in a sexual way</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Been forced to kiss someone</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Made to do something sexual besides kissing</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To determine where sexual harassment occurs, the students were asked “If you have experienced sexual harassment at school, where has it occurred?” The most common site of harassment, selected by almost half of the students (47%), was the hallways. The second most common site checked by 29% of the students was the classroom. Only 7% indicated that the harassment occurred in the bathroom and 9% in the locker room. See Figure 4 for additional places where harassment occurred.

When asked if they would report if they were harassed, students’ answers differed depending on who harassed them. If the harasser was a teacher or a school employee, 66% of the students responded that they would report the harassment. 26% were not sure and only 9% said that they would not report the harassment.

If a student was the harasser, the percentage of students who would re-
Figure 4. "If you have experienced sexual harassment at school, where did it occur?"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Percent of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>hallways</td>
<td>47.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>classrooms</td>
<td>28.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other</td>
<td>20.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cafeteria</td>
<td>18.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>school yard</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gym</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>school parking lot</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>locker room</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bus/bus stop</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bathroom</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on a school trip</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the case of a student harasser, 37% reported that they were not sure if they would report the incident and 23% indicated that they would not.

**DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

Results of the present study demonstrate that sexual harassment is a major problem. Major findings include:

- 76% of the students believe that harassment happens in their school.
- 73% of the students had personally experienced harassment.
- 94% of the harassment took place between students; however, 30% of the students reported teacher to student harassment.
- 47% of the harassment occurred in the hallways and 29% in the classrooms.
- 59% of the students believe harassment occurs because "it gives a person power over someone."

Both the current and the AAUW surveys found that sexual harassment is a widespread problem in our schools. The current study reported slightly lower levels (76%) than the AAUW survey (81%), but both levels represent a pervasive problem.

A major difference between the two studies relates to the reasons students think harassment occurs. In the current study, the reason cited by the largest percentage of students (58%) is that "it gives a person power over someone." Only 6% indicated this was a reason for harassment in the AAUW survey. The reason for harassment given by the largest percentage of students in the AAUW survey (37%) was "it's just a part of school life/a lot of people do it."

One possible reason for this important difference is the intervention awareness program initiated prior to the current study. One outcome goal of awareness programs is to students to become familiar with underlying causes of harassment. The current study reflects an understanding on the part of these students that harassment does not just occur without reason.

**Bibliography:**
