

**Sexual Exploitation
in Higher Education**

**A Very
Private Affair**

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A Very Private Affair:

Sexual Exploitation in Higher Education

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Table of Contents

Foreword.....	7
Preface to the 1995 edition	9
Introduction	11
Chapter One Interfering in Private Worlds.....	13
Chapter Two Love on Campus	23
Chapter Three Counting the Cost and Measuring the Damage	33
Chapter Four Dealing with the Problem: Is there an answer?	45
Conclusion.....	57
References	59

Foreword

2013 continues to be a febrile year, with weekly reports of abuses of power previously unknown by the public. TV presenters, rock stars, comedians, care homes, celebrities, NHS institutions, all now under scrutiny, and with each new story a fresh wave of shock and outrage; and always the media supported question: is it true?

We have been asked by a private individual to publish this book in an accessible online format in order to increase awareness that the use, misuse and abuse of power happens in educational settings too. I want to acknowledge the work of this person, who, from experience, has campaigned tirelessly for many years to bring instances of the serial abuse of young musicians to light. As so often across history it is individuals refusing to give up which has led to some possibility of justice. And justice, qua the Tao Te Ching, is what remains when love has gone.

In common with many professionals, teachers often do not recognise themselves as having power, rather attributing others with power in their professional lives, most often those with managerial authority, government, law, parents, students. Indeed, ask almost any doctor, social worker, nurse etc 'who has the power?' and very few will identify themselves high on the list. This lack of awareness of how professional power is constituted can itself lead to a blurring of boundaries in the teacher-student relationship, an absence of distinction between personal and professional matters and at worst an abuse of trust, wrapped up as 'love', excused and confused with the notion that 'we're all equal'. So let us be clear, professional power in education, and hence power differentials, is accrued through five principle routes:

1. Professional skills and knowledge (necessary to undertake the professional role).
2. Role responsibility (to assess standards and make career-changing decisions).
3. Personal knowledge (of students' strengths and weaknesses).
4. Status (position in hierarchy and reputation).
5. Perception (of colleagues, students and others).

We are equal citizens, but we do not possess equal power in the relationship. This differential confers special responsibility on the practitioner - the responsibility to act responsibly. Professional groups tend mostly to have established codes of ethics governing the relationship between them and those toward whom they have a fiduciary responsibility; I can think of no extant code which omits a clear prohibition on professional-client/patient etc intimate relationships.

We have seen an increase in awareness; what needs to happen now is a concomitant raising of responsibility, across the whole sector. This means understanding that 'it could happen here', having appropriate standards in place, and taking action where it is necessary. Three simple things can make a huge difference when done with sufficient understanding of the high risk of harm when professional boundaries are breached: 1.Listen 2. Hear 3. Act.

The case at the Royal Northern College of Music which first reached the public domain in 2002 has re-emerged in 2013. In 1995 the authors of this book wrote that they hoped this book would contribute to more public and sympathetic debate about sexual exploitation in Higher Education. They believed there was an urgent need for reform of current practice. There is still that need in 2013.

Jonathan Coe
Managing Director
Clinic for Boundaries Studies
May 2013

Preface to the 1995 edition

Sexual exploitation is a delicate subject. From the onset everyone we interviewed was given a guarantee they would not be identifiable in any published material. We have made every effort to conform with that promise. In order to do so we have where required removed names, disguised institutions and altered the language or minor details to ensure confidentiality was maintained. All of those who helped us by answering our questions, talking to us about the topic, replying to our letters and filling in questionnaires will therefore unfortunately not be mentioned by name and personally thanked in this preface. The absence of individual recognition should not be taken as an indication of a lack of appreciation on our part. We hope this small contribution to the debate will help bring about some of the changes in policy and behaviour they all desired.

It is, however, possible to make a number of exceptions regarding confidentiality. We would like to thank Vicky Merchant of the University of Central Lancashire who organised the first conference on this subject thereby enabling us to meet and exchange ideas with a variety of people we would not have otherwise met. Mention must also be made of those in the University of Northumbria, Ranjana Bell and Monica Shaw, who found a 'small pot of money', which was of enormous help in allowing us to travel to a number of institutions to carry out face-to-face interviews. Finally an extra special thank you needs to be extended to two American colleagues Gary Althen of the University of Iowa and Luisa Deprez of the University of Southern Maine. Between them they arranged scores of interviews at not only their own but other institutions. In addition they supplied us with a mass of policy documents, articles and papers. Material which convinced us that in certain respects we have much to learn from what has taken place in the United States.



Introduction

Should university staff enter into sexual relationships with their students? Can a university condone such relationships or ought it actively to seek discourage or forbid them? Should we view such liaisons as an inevitable result of mature adults meeting and working together in a shared environment or as examples of a misuse of power by academics or students? Questions such as these have recently attracted a great deal of attention. Relationships between academic staff and students have become a controversial issue. Articles have appeared in most national and many local newspapers; radio and television have displayed similar interest and the topic has been debated at trade union and academic conferences. It appears after decades of indifference students, academics, university administrators and the media have become aware of a problem that many are now seeking to understand. Questions are being asked regarding the impact of such relationships on the lives of not only the staff and students directly involved, but also upon their colleagues, peers and institutions. This public, as opposed to the furtive, discussion of what are often called consensual sexual relationships has generated a policy debate within numerous institutions. A debate around both the question of whether institutions should impose regulations to 'manage' such relationships and the form ordinances might take.

Our research has followed two routes. First it involved interviews with students, staff, counsellors and equal opportunities officers both in Britain and the USA. The interviews with students, especially ex-students, have often involved them re-living painful experiences. In some cases individuals approached us anxious to tell us their story, because they were still angry, often after many years, about the treatment they had received. In some cases no one had been willing to listen to them then and they were pleased that at last someone was now willing to do so. Also they were often angry that academics could abuse their authority without any apparent risk to either their career or status and that institutions felt so little sense of responsibility towards students. Others we made contact with as a result of individuals who told us they would be willing to help with our research. In the case of academic staff what has been surprising is how often we have been contacted by people who wish to recount how they have been prevented from 'doing anything about' the behaviour of colleagues. Once knowledge we were undertaking the research spread, it seemed everyone had an experience of sexual exploitation that they wished to recount. We learnt that it is often not merely the student who can become the victim. Colleagues unwilling to look the other way or who unwittingly get embroiled in the web of deception can find their working lives made intolerable or in extreme cases their careers blighted. Again people were often angry. One woman described how a student she had been humiliatingly propositioned by a married lecturer she knew was at the time having an affair with another student in the group. She recounted how that incident had made her feel uncomfortable, how his behaviour split the group and led to her deliberately avoiding an option she wanted to take. Over a decade later she explained she was now a colleague of

the same man, teaching on the same course and sitting beside him on examination boards. She knew he was still behaving in the same way; now her anger was directed not only at him and her colleagues but the University for failing to do anything about his behaviour.

Second the research involved the collection of policy documents and a postal survey of British universities designed to identify if they consider sexual exploitation to be a problem and if so what they are doing about it. The variety of responses has been significant. We believe that the adoption of a policy although helpful may not actually have a substantial impact upon behavioural norms within the institution: but more of this later.

What follows attempts to show why we think it is unacceptable for staff to be involved in sexual relationships with their students. Although we discuss both the sexual harassment and sexual exploitation of students our main concern in this research has been with the latter. The term sexual exploitation is applied to the use by a lecturer of his position of trust and power to secure sexual gratification. As with such behaviour by a doctor or nurse with patients; therapists or social workers with clients; teachers or youth workers with pupils and members over 16, it is unlikely the relationship will cross over into illegality involving as it does 'two consenting adults'. Our assessment, however, commences from a belief that such relationships can never be truly consensual. First because they invariably entail the exploitation of inequities of power linked to either age or gender but usually both. We are aware that staff-student liaisons occur between individuals of the same gender just as they also occur between women staff and male students. Also, although we never encountered any examples, they may involve an older student with a younger lecturer. It would be naïve on our part to deny the possibility of any number of permutations taking place. However, as we show in chapter two and elsewhere both the examples we encountered and those discussed by other writers indicate this is almost exclusively an issue concerning male staff and female students who are usually younger and occasionally of roughly similar age. Men can be victims, but so rare are the examples that it would be dishonest to pretend this is not another case of exploitation linked to gender. Gender is therefore a major ingredient but due to the setting within which this behaviour takes place other factors have to be granted due weight. We have to remember that the men involved are the beneficiaries and recipient of academic authority and power made 'even more effective because it is clothed in scholarly garb. It is the power of prestige, status, and the subtle coercions of others that follow these' (May 1972: 109) with which we are concerned.

Chapter One

Interfering in Private Worlds

Consensual relationships between staff and students are not new to university life. 'Sexual intrigue', has always been a feature of the campus novel (Eagleton 1988). It is also a staple ingredient of the campus film and television drama or series. Two plays in particular have recently focused attention on relationships between staff and students. The first **Prin** by Davies (1989) concentrated on the breakdown of a relationship between the Principal of a teachers' training college and her Deputy, previously her student. This 30 year attachment apparently based on love, affection and a shared commitment to education is contrasted with another between a cynical male lecturer and a marginal, disinterested student. This student describes the onset of the liaison to the Principal and Deputy. It is worth quoting first because almost alone amongst literary accounts of such relationships, and there are many, it captures how male staff can set the agenda and manage the seduction. Second unlike traditional romantic accounts, although not devoid of humour, it gives the woman a voice that is neither belittled or ridiculed.

Well eventually after one of these seminars he stopped me going out and he said he'd like a private word with me in his room. I thought, hallo, what's this then. Yes, it was hot in there. Didn't think I was breathing on him, specially. I felt a bit big for the room, you know what I mean? Anyway he said some stuff about how he was worried about how I didn't participate in the discussions, was anything bothering me, did I have any problems, he really wanted me to get the most out of the course, all that. He had this little bit of blue-tack he kept fiddling about with, he'd given up smoking. Anyway, I said the only problem I had was not being very good at English, or anything else, come to that, and then we were into oh I'm sure that's not the case it's just a matter of learning to find your own voice and articulate the what was it contradictions inherent in the life situation. Blu-tack going like mad now, right? He'd sneak a look at me every now and then, see how it was going. I thought it was nice the way he was so shy and roundabout, I mean he could have just leapt on me. He was all sweating and fiddly and nervous, and there I was just sitting there like a big lump. Everyone has problems Melanie, he said, and then of course he went straight on and told me about his. He's got an identity crisis. Well, I expect you'd know about that. And then he went on about the terrible difficulties he was

experiencing trying to be spontaneous and autonomous in an arena fraught with political contradictions relating to gender. I committed that one to memory.

She continues:

Turned out he was talking about teaching literature to an all-girls group. I thought it's not that, though really, is it, and of course if wasn't. He's not getting on very well with his wife, you see. She's gone off sex since she had the babies. He doesn't blame her, but it makes him feel insensitive and incompetent and uncaring and bloody frustrated, well that's easy enough to understand. Blu-tack, Blu-tack, Blu-tack. Very pink in the face by now. So you see, Melanie, he said, I've got my problems too. And I was just thinking, all you need really is a good fuck, I was sitting there like a big lump thinking it, which of course was exactly what he wanted me to think. I'm such a pushover, really, it's a disgrace.

The manipulation; the transference of guilt; her selection as the victim; and the exploitation of her ignorance and vulnerability were features common to the experiences recounted to us by students involved in such relationships. In the play, somewhat unusually, the lecturer loses his job but this is the result of amalgamation not as a consequence of his behaviour. The Principal who, like so many others in HE management, had previously exploited her position to form a relationship, is both unable to condemn the behaviour and incapable of conveying sympathy for the plight of the student forced to leave. Indeed she first humiliates the student and then describes her to her father as the "college bicycle". Only the Deputy, a beneficiary of the patronage of the Principal, survives and then only by breaking free from that relationship and forming a new one with the male head of department from the Polytechnic taking over the college. Davies succeeds in the course of the play in capturing so many of the under-currents that emerged from our research. In particular, the cruel and cynical indifference of management to the exploitative behaviour of staff; the long tradition of sweeping such behaviour under-the-carpet; the shame, isolation and self-loathing of so many of the students; and the cynical use by some of such liaisons to secure short and long-term benefits.

The second play has been far more controversial. David Mamet's *Oleanna* (1993) acquired according to Lawson (1993) the reputation of being one "to which you go with a friend, and come home alone". Reports told of men in the audience applauding the lecturer when he assaulted the student and couples vehemently arguing in and outside the theatre over the behaviour of the characters. Lawson recounts how, after three visits to the play, a narrative of a deteriorating relationship between a female student and her lecturer, he had never previously encountered within an audience "such an ugly atmosphere". Although not involving a physical relationship the play includes inappropriate behaviour (touching) and a

portrayal of a vulnerable student unable to understand her studies, him or the world of Higher Education. Of course it is about much more than a staff-student relationship that goes sour. Mamet wants us to consider the issue of politically correct language and the shifting balance of power between the sexes. Topics continuously providing a backcloth to debates regarding how institutions might respond to sexual relationships between staff and students. Attacks on 'political correctness' have focused on the way critics have perceived it as an attempt to control language and thought (Henoff 1991; Hughes 1993). Discussions about reading lists and language have become entangled with those around personal safety (Roiphe 1993) and student-staff relationships. Hughes for example approvingly cites Thomas, whom he pointedly informs us is black, female and a college administrator:

As for providing a non-intimidating educational environment, our young people have to learn to grow up on college campuses. We have to teach them how to deal with adversarial situations. They have to learn how to survive offensive speech they find wounding and hurtful. (ibid: 26)

This conflating of issues is not helpful and at times borders on the dishonest. Decisions about the texts on a reading list and options included or absent from a programme are matters of importance which should rightly be left to university staff and students to resolve through open debate. However discussions concerning staff-student sexual relationships and sexual harassment on campus are another matter. In this instance we are considering an abuse of power and the right of the vulnerable to a measure of protection. Universities have no difficulty in labelling as wrong the coercion of students by staff leading to the former paying money for marks or advantageous treatment. Similarly they unambiguously condemn the theft of academic property by staff from students. Institutions recognise staff may mis-use their authority to gain professional and monetary benefits. Interestingly one of the landmark American legal cases linked to the sexual exploitation of students (*Kroff v Ball State University* 1984) resulted in agreement that the University was justified in dismissing the lecturer as his behaviour had broken the code of ethics of the American Association of University Professors (Connolly and Marshall 1989) by exploiting the student "for private advantage". The sacking was upheld because the court extended the interpretation of a regulation formulated to prevent financial impropriety. What is undeniable is that both here and in the United States far more staff exploit students for sexual rather than financial reward. To quote one student officer "in all the cases I have come across the relationship involved coercion in one form or another. I now just assume that the only basis for the relationship was sexual gratification on the part of the staff". Yet students are protected from one form of coercion and exploitation they are unlikely to encounter but not from another which is commonplace.

Happy talk

In the past talk of staff-student relationships peppered both staff common room and student bar gossip. Although widely discussed they were apparently never defined as a 'problem'. Academics who had sexual relationships with their students did not perceive it as such and their colleagues looked on with envy or indifference. Interference was apparently viewed as inappropriate; a denial of an adult's right to form relationships with whom-so-ever they pleased. After all the university was not a school therefore, according to one influential text, everything must be done to discourage students from being misled by superficial similarities into believing the two were alike. Students must not think of "lecture-rooms a class-rooms, of lectures as classes, of professors and lecturers as teachers and of the Vice-Chancellor as a kind of super-Headmaster" (Truscot 1953: 53-4). To control or prohibit relationships would, it was argued, undermine the adult status of the student and entail unwarranted interference in the private life of both parties. Such an argument was closely aligned in the minds of many with the need to protect academic freedom. This is understandable for personal views and behaviour have long been employed as grounds for the removal of radical or outspoken academics. Bertrand Russell, for example, lost his post at Trinity College, Cambridge when imprisoned for his opposition to the First World War. Subsequently in 1942 his views on marriage and morals justified dismissal from City College New York where he taught mathematical logic. His son (Russell, C. 1993: 24) points out that within living memory divorce was perceived as grounds for the loss of an Oxford Fellowship. Of course such public prudery did provide a shield behind which those who obeyed the rules of the club were generally allowed to operate with a great deal of latitude. It rightly protected gay men such as E. M. Forster and Wittgenstein from the unwarranted attentions of the police. Equally though it enabled others to shamelessly exploit their status and positions of trust, to bully and coerce students into sexual relationships.

This informal self-regulating system was generally deemed adequate for a sector comprising small intimate colleges. Seventy years ago the student population of England and Wales was 42,000 of whom 16,000 were trainee teachers predominately in single sex colleges. Universities were overwhelmingly male, often comprising small colleges where staff and students lived and studied in close proximity. Almost a quarter attended Oxford or Cambridge, a similar number were scattered amongst the Scottish and Northern Irish Universities, only London with slightly under 10,000 students was in terms of structure and size an institution approximating to what most contemporary students would find familiar. Teacher training colleges were by way of contrast predominately female, some students 'apprentices' attending a few hours per week, others virtual prisoner in single-sex retreats paroled only for teaching practice or team games. Almost all were under 21 on entry.

Now the student population exceeds a million and a quarter, nearly a third part-time, almost half female and in 1993 a majority of those who enrolled were 21 or over. The cities of Newcastle and Leeds each now have more university students than the whole of England

and Wales seventy years ago. The teacher training colleges have vanished and their regimes described by writers such as Mitchell (1942) and Tey (1946) are probably incomprehensible to the B.Ed student of today. Expansion alone made many of the old practices redundant but other changes need to be taken into account. In particular the lowering of the age of majority following the Latey Report (1967). This meant universities, apart from those in Scotland which accept seventeen year olds as students, were under no obligations to perceive themselves as standing in *loco parentis*. They may be students but like the lecturers they are voters and citizens possessing identical rights and obligations. English, Irish and Welsh universities are now under no obligation to either the student or their parent(s) to protect or care for them, they are after all legally adults. As such they enter the contemporary world of mass, usually anonymous, Higher Education. This contrasts in many ways with what went before. During the early part of this century the university shared many of the characteristics of the public school adopting their muscular Christianity 'all chaps together' ethos, which produced an over-emphasis on the value of games, cloistered living and high levels of intimacy between staff and students. It was a system based "on social interaction" that looked "primarily to the eventual social role of the graduate as a 'gentleman'", and therefore "face-to-face interaction between the student and tutor was crucial" (Barnett 1990: 105). This approach only survives in some older institutions. Expansion first produced during the 1930s to 1950s a shift towards the ethos of provincial Grammar School. Marris (1964) tells us that in the new universities appearing during this period staff/student social contact was often perfunctory. Whereas only 8% of Cambridge students reported virtually none, in Leeds it was 26% and Southampton 42%. Fewer than 20% felt they "were on terms of personal friendship with any member of staff" (ibid: 0). Since the Marris study the number of students has doubled and doubled again. Creating new institutions and re-fashioning others into something more akin to a comprehensive with a vibrant adult education programme than either a public or grammar school. In these institutions many students have minimal contact with staff. Increasingly they move anonymously between module whilst those on vocational programmes, out on placement for maybe half their course, regularly disappear from the life of the university. The student experience of the university has changed dramatically in so many respects during the last few decades. Perhaps this helps to explain why the sexual encounters between staff and students we encountered had so little in common with the romantic and scholarly attachments some told us were the norm in the past.

Barnett (1990: 8-9) identifies 12 value assumptions regarding Higher Education amongst which are the development of the student's critical abilities; the development of the student's autonomy; the student's character formation. Each requires the creation of a personal relationship between staff and student. One which as Reeves (1988: 76) points out is modelled on that of master/apprentice, not the purveyor/consumer. To return to Barnett these value assumptions place upon staff substantive responsibilities which go hand in hand

with the moral virtues that are inseparably part of the intellectual life. These include sincerity, honesty (not to indulge in plagiarism or cheating), truthfulness, the avoidance of self-contradiction... Barnett (1990: 141).

Although rarely spelt out for academics, in the way they are for nurses, lawyers, and others, these responsibilities are not optional extras. They are part and parcel of the job; a price extracted for the freedom enjoyed by the academic community (Shils 1984). In some universities these responsibilities are accorded greater prominence than others, particularly where staff are required to act as a moral or personal tutor, but whatever the degree of emphasis employed or the specific tradition of a given institution they apply to all staff.

Using authority and playing games

Staff whether acting as a tutor or as a teacher (words which it should be noted are often inter-changeable), are in an identical position of authority over the student. The relationship between the two can never be one of equals. Staff may delude themselves that students like them for the warm-hearted lovable individuals they are and that their company is sought for honourable motives but they are naïve if they do. The academic has immense power over students for it is they who award grades; set examinations papers; write references; grant or deny extensions for pieces of work; sit on Exam Boards; decide who may or may not join an option; have the ready access to other academics and university administrators; and on vocational courses assess the personality traits of individuals to decide who is or is not the 'right type' to enter a profession. Staff also possess the authority which flows from the knowledge and experience. Academics, who know their subject, have the capacity to humiliate a student in a lecture or seminar. It is an imbalance of power that makes all students vulnerable whilst helping to explain "what a heady experience it is for the student who is singled out as 'special' by a professor" (Zalk Paludi and Dederich 1990: 110).

Inequities of power contribute to an awkwardness in staff-student intercourse even in social settings. Marries(1969) found that although most students would welcome opportunities to meet staff they "felt held back by social distance" (1964: 81). Academic institutions promote an atmosphere of them and us (Parlett *et al* 1976; Bercher and Kogan 1992) which reflects the realities of the power relationships. Therefore they provide a setting which offers abundant opportunities for staff to exploit students for private advantage. As one student officer put it "the lecture hall and tutorial provide a stage. Men who would not attract a second glance anywhere else become the centre of attention. Some seem to believe the world revolves around them. It goes to their head and they exploit it like mad". Many are content to bask in the glory or simply enjoy the experience of being the centre of attention, some however opt to capitalise on the opportunity offered to indulge in less acceptable behaviour.

Those we dubbed “serial exploiters” (Carter and Jeffs 1992) with almost scientific precision abuse their position to sexually exploit students. One Equal Opportunities officer, who has dealt with a number of cases and interviewed at length male academics who operate in this way, assured us that it was only possible to understand them by recognising the extent to which they were deft operators capable of picking out the most vulnerable and receptive students within a group minutes after entering a room. Some of the men actually boasted to her of their skills and unerring success. Intuition is at times supplemented by the application of more traditional research techniques. In one university a psychology lecturer teaching a Human Growth and Behaviour course described by an colleague as a man “who seems to pick up a first year each year” began by distributing a questionnaire designed to “challenge the students prejudices and overcome their inhibitions”. Located amongst the innocuous questions were those asking if they had indulged in casual sex, did they consider it acceptable to have an affair with someone who was married and an instruction to write a short account of their most frequent sexual fantasy. A ploy adopted by another lecturer was to use at the onset of the programme an exercise entitled Human Bingo. In order to complete it the student had to find people in the group who would complete their card for them by answering questions and doing shared exercises; the questions and exercises included sitting on someone’s lap (often he was the only man in the group), tickling someone, finding someone who admitted to enjoying swimming naked, finding someone prepared to take risks, finding someone who sleeps with a teddy bear and swapping an item of clothing with someone. A third teaching a Human Sexuality option required students to keep a journal of their sex experiences complete with a drawing of themselves. All of these practices were vigorously defended as either a harmless exercise designed to break down barriers and encourage openness; or as an educational aid useful as a means of helping students to come to terms with their own learning needs.

Some might question the naiveté of students who engage in such activities, just as others might wonder why they did not make an official complaint. Such an analysis overlooks the subordinate standing of the student in a university environment and ignores the extent to which “students are beset by a good deal of uncertainty over norms and expectations” (Bercher and Kogan 1992: 125). To complain or avoid participation on the part of the student is always difficult. First because it can isolate the student from the rest of the group – set them apart as uncooperative and awkward. Secondly, because it can lead to victimisation. Not complaining is not just the easy option it may well be the wise one. As one student who had a brief relationship with her tutor that he abruptly ended prior to commencing a relationship with another found “my worst fears at the onset of what might happen could not have been worse than what did happen”. She found that other students turned against her, some refused to share a car with her and she lost her lift to college, stories of the relationship reached her placement causing such acute embarrassment she eventually asked to be pulled out. It was even reported to her that she had been branded a

liar and a cheat by a colleague of the lecturer. This is not an atypical example, one student counsellor informed us that in every case she had dealt with the student who complained about exploitation had “been victimised to some extent or another”. The isolation and victimisation of the student is not something that should unduly surprise the reader. The attitude of senior staff towards those who question the wisdom of such relationships give a good indication of what a student can expect if they complain. A student counsellor at one University introduced the topic and the possibility of some form of regulatory control to a group of predominately male heads of departments, after hearing her out in silence one remarked “there are not many perks in this job, surely you are not going to deny us this one”. A brief pause followed before laughter erupted and the Chair moved to the next business. The number of sexual relationships occurring between staff and students is difficult to gauge but research in the USA does indicate it is perhaps not surprising many staff view it as a ‘perk’. Fitzgerald *et al* (1988) found 26% of male academics in their survey admitted to sexual involvement with women students; they believed this was ‘most probably an under-estimate (ibid:338). Pope, Levenson and Schover (1979) report that a quarter of women psychologists admitted sexual contacts with their graduate professors while they were students. Whilst Benson and Thompson (1982) found 20% of students to have been sexually harassed by academic staff, a figure remarkably close to one arrived at by Allen and Okawa (1987). Although the proportion of students involved may be small, amongst staff the figure is much higher and even those who have not engaged in such activity are likely to have indulgently looked the other way in the past. Staff cannot but be conscious of the fact the student is only a temporary resident at the university whereas the colleague is someone with whom they may have to sustain a working relationship with over many years. Therefore however blatant the behaviour, it is almost inevitably excused as a one off indiscretion; brushed aside as a roguish, almost loveable character flaw, or taken as an indication of virile manhood, even viewed destined for ‘better things’. Staff will go to great lengths to protect colleagues. An ex-student described how she had been pestered at home by a member of staff with a long history of seeking to initiate relationships with students and finally complained to her tutor. The latter subsequently ambled down the corridor and was overheard jokingly telling his colleague that if he “didn’t take more care his dick would get us all into trouble” and left the matter at that. Protection can take other forms. One academic described in an interview that when his wife finally left him after learning of his most recent relationship with a student “colleagues were incredibly supportive” when he told them what had happened. In another case an Equal Opportunities Officer found when she spoke to the Vice Chancellor about a professor who had been involved with a string of students, some of whom had subsequently complained, she was informed he was a “leader in his field... an asset the university could not afford to lose”. It was then made abundantly clear to her she was employed to cool out the students and not upset the professor in the process. Attempts such as these to ignore, downgrade or suppress both sexual harassment and sexual exploitation are commonplace. It is still

virtually unknown in this country for individuals to be disciplined let alone dismissed for such behaviour. As the examples which follow show it is neither a joking matter nor should it any longer be an acceptable perk of the job.

Chapter Two

Love on Campus

The story of true love in the academy is now a familiar one. It has been told and retold many times as the debate about the appropriateness of staff/student romantic relationships has taken shape. The story goes like this. Student and lecturer find, during the course of their very proper professional relationship, that they are made for each other, their shared intellectual interests having laid the foundation for a relationship which is deeply emotionally fulfilling. Since they are both adults it is of course beyond question that this relationship be allowed to flourish. Male lecturer demonstrates his maturity by declaring the nature of this relationship to his colleagues and head of department. Administrative adjustments are made to teaching and marking schedules; then all freely celebrate this new relationship born in their midst. This romance has its finale in marriage, the stability of which is attested to, by the story being told several years later. Just occasionally one catches a glimpse of inconvenient first (or second) wives or aggrieved boyfriends. Once or twice there is a hint the story may have been repeated several times. But in general we are led along such a familiar path that we have few reasons to doubt the formula.

Falling in love again

The stories we have heard bear little resemblance to this cosy and familiar narrative. Sadly they reveal a much sleazier side to academic sexuality. The relationships we are concerned with here are different in several crucial ways from the story of ethically responsible romance. First, there is a great deal more deliberate and conscious action than happy accident on the part of teaching staff. As one mature student put it, "I could not believe what was going on. I gave up a good job to come here for training. I was shocked to find lecturers regularly using their power to seduce students". That such behaviour contains a strong element of planning is borne out by these comments from a university equal opportunities officer:

When lecturers ask students to go out with them, or meet them informally, students think this is to do with building a good professional relationship or to discuss work. They may be pretty naïve but they sometimes go along two or three times before they confront the reality – that the intentions of the lecturer are anything but professional.

But it is the serial nature of the relationships on the part of staff that is their most damning indictment. If we were to see them as 'the happy flowering of true love' we would not expect lecturers to have several of these liaisons in one year. Students who are persuaded to engage in these relationships often become isolated from their peers and this offers a degree of protection against multiple relationships being exposed to public scrutiny. On some courses such practices are built into their routines. We have heard of course teams where tutors choose their tutees from mugshots, a process accompanied by a more or less openly acknowledged system of knowing each others 'type' and allocating students accordingly. It is often common knowledge that such relationships are rife in residential weeks. One ex-course leader described how his head of department insisted on attending such events for no other discernable purpose. Complaints about his behaviour ensured that after the first year he was always allocated the end bedroom so that his activities caused the minimum disturbance to others. Another lecturer explained how her head of department was always invited along to the residential by the course leader, ever anxious to ingratiate himself with the man-in-charge. It was his 'perk' and the head of department would from the onset openly proposition students in the bar and during the first night social; if 'unsuccessful' he went home not to reappear, if not he would stay for the whole weekend. This and similar behaviour suggests we are well away from true love territory. What is particularly striking is the gap existing betwixt the image portrayed of life in particular departments and such routine, often well-known, practices. Over and over again ex-students have echoed the words of one who said "I couldn't believe what when on right from the start". Disbelief at what is tolerated by staff and other students often leads some to adopt a collegiate version of streetwise behaviour. As a youth work student from a former polytechnic explained, "eventually you learned to work around it, who to avoid being alone with, how to chat up certain people to get good material for essays and so on". Not all learn to use the system to get what they can. Some may be forced to leave courses, have abortions, become ill; are isolated from others; or experienced ravaged personal relationships with staff, course or departmental cultures of this type can have a surprisingly negative effect. One equal opportunities officer told us that she had become involved with two department where such practices were commonplace:

In both cases there were an awful lot of family upsets. With one set of students there were two divorces, marriage break ups. The women said that their men had thought they must have been doing something. It broke the trust in their relationships.

At best, even when they are not personally involved in these kinds of liaisons, students on courses where these are commonplace become cynical and complete their experience of higher education full of bitterness and disappointment. High expectations and ideals are replaced by insight into a system that looks pretty corrupt from the inside. As another ex-student explained everyone knows he wrote her dissertation". This kind of common knowledge about, and within, certain departments was evident in almost all of the

institutions we had contact with, creating a pervading sense of injustice amongst students. Even though these departments were the exception rather than the rule it suggested there were a considerable number of cases where staff do not make re-arrangements to their teaching and assessment duties to fit in with their personal relationships with students. We heard jokes more than once along the lines that 'X would never have to do any work at all if he declared all his involvements'. Again this contradicts with the story of honest professional behaviour.

Power and sexuality in higher education

At first sight the assertion that staff and students in higher education are all adults and can therefore relate to each other in whatever ways they wish is a persuasive one. If we accept this premise then any attempt to control such relationships is clearly an act of repression. It looks as though two sets of beliefs and values are in collision with each other. On the one hand liberal notions concerned with people's rights to choose, particularly in the field of personal and sexual relationships. On the other hand the puritan forces of control and denial. We believe that, as we examine these positions in greater depth, the apparent opposition between them is a false one deployed in this instance to disguise abuses of power. To understand this case we must first say something about the nature of sexuality within organizations.

Those who study organizations believed for a long time that sexuality only existed at home and there it was mostly contained within the (marital) bedroom. People were meant to leave behind their emotions, bodily needs, personal worries and their sexuality when they arrived at work. This way of thinking about organizations and workplaces has now been fundamentally challenged. It has taken a while for theories of organizations to catch up with what the rest of us knew all the time: namely we do not leave our sexuality at home with our bedroom slippers. In recent years a number of studies have shown the extent to which sexuality is central to any meaningful understanding of organizational life (Burrell, 1984; Hearn and Parkin, 1987; Hearn et al 1989; Pringle, 1989). Initially Hearn and Parkin's claim, to "Enter most organizations and you enter a world of sexuality" (ibid:3) may take us by surprise but a moment's thought will usually produce knowing smiles from most readers. Most of this sexuality does not of course take the form of sexual intercourse; gone are the days when we believed that this was the only real 'it' of sexuality (Wise and Stanley, 1990). The sexuality of the workplace is more likely to take the form of looks, jokes, talk, desires and touches, but it is nevertheless a major dynamic in all organizational life.

There are two subtly different ways of understanding organizational sexuality (Savage and Witz, 1992). The first sees sexuality as added on to organizational life, as something we have to take account of in understanding what happens at work, but not part of 'real' organizational life. The other approach sees sexuality as much more central to organizational life; it needs to be added in rather than on to our view of organizations. In

this second view sexuality is not some natural force which finds its unruly way into the university. Rather it is daily reconstituted within the routines of organizational life. Who we are as sexual beings arises in part from who we are at work. The clothes we wear while we work; who we have authority over; who we have to defer to; the physical positions and stances we adopt; how we are expected to talk and /or listen; all these shape and construct us as sexual beings. Our sexuality is not separate from these processes, it is part of them, given meaning through, and by, them. It is not difficult to see from this that sexuality and power are closely intertwined, each flowing from and shaping the other. It is this view of organizational sexuality and power which best fits with the picture of academic life which emerges from this study.

Our research does not indicate a series of romances which are only accidentally located within universities and colleges. Rather these relationships arise out of the particular configurations of relationships within those settings. Residential weekends, tutorial relationships, the power to praise or diminish, connecting sexual favours to assessment grades all indicate the linkages. Sexiness and sexual desire arise from the way in which these encounters are conducted. The thrills and spills of scholarly interactions can be in themselves sexualized events. Male academics are not unusually sexy either in terms of attractiveness or desire, as a student officer contemptuously put it “no one would give them a second glance in the street”. Rather their position with all its cultural and social signs and symbols, gives them a special kind of power and allure vis-à-vis students, even when those students are their peers in terms of age. Knowledge, power and sexual attractiveness are closely bound up with each other. Sometimes power is invisible in the early stages of staff/student relationships, but becomes more overt if students hesitate before taking things further. For example a student union women’s officer described a situation she had encountered several times:

The assumption at the beginning was that they were not being chatted up. It was much more at the level of unspoken assumptions about work and relationships. So maybe there would be two or three visits to the pub or restaurant or to their homes before they’d think, ‘hang on this is not about work or building relationships’. Even when they said ‘no’ it would carry on, ‘will you come away for the weekend’. Women would get very distressed feeling they’d been deceived.

Another described how:

He was much more helpful than the rest. Always willing to help with your essay and that sort of thing. He took a real interest in my work and was very encouraging. I suppose in some ways I was his star student. Soon discovered he had one every year didn’t I.

It is not always academic knowledge that provides the basis of power. Within some courses emotional support can be the currency. One ex-student described disclosing to her social work tutor the fact that she had been sexually abused as a child only to find that his comfort consisted of inappropriate touching: a soothing hand on her knee. Another described how her tutor had encouraged her to express her feelings in poetry as a way of handling her anxieties about the course. Eventually they were exchanging poetry of a romantic and exceedingly intimate kind which served as a prelude to a brief relationship.

The opposition between freedom and repression which we highlighted as a false distinction at the beginning of this section is based on the notion that those who challenge the *status quo* in sexual relations are anti-sex and/or denying 'reality'. This is a common accusation and one which must be countered. We are not seeking to deny sexuality within academia nor killjoys attempting to reduce people's pleasure and enjoyment. Foucault's (1981) argument that power and sexuality are inseparable is important to acknowledge in this context. Not least because it obliges us to question, possibly challenge, routinely exploitative power relations through naming them as such and supporting resistance to them. We do not believe we can obliterate sex within the organizational setting so that people can get on with their work. This would be a vain hope and an undesirable goal. Instead we endorse Pringle's position in her study of organizational sexuality:

Rather than simply denying existing pleasures, desires or fantasies and driving sex from the workplace (thus, I would argue reinforcing men's power) it may be possible to move beyond the current patterning of relationships and to transform pleasure and power. (Pringle 1989: 264)

We are not advocating the seemingly impossible task of extracting sex from power nor are we arguing that power can be forever eradicated. But this does not mean that engaging in sexual politics and resisting exploitation is pointless. As Pringle shows this will involve recognising the patriarchal nature of organizational power.

Academic romance: a male sexual narrative?

Among the cases which have been described to us only one has involved a female staff member nor have there been any cases involving gay men or lesbians. It is possible this may be a product of our research method. We constructed our sample through a snowballing method and it could be argued that it is not surprising therefore that we received only cases which fitted the picture we were constructing. However, we do not believe our picture is totally distorted by this method. Despite the recent popularity of suggesting that women are just as likely to sexually harass men as vice versa (Crichton 1994) this does not seem to be borne out by any of the numerous studies of sexual harassment undertaken in recent years (eg. Industrial Society 1993; Curtis 1993). In part this pattern results from the gendering of organizational hierarchy. Women are most often at the bottom of

organizational hierarchies. Men are usually paid more and accrue greater power and status. Since power is a key component of sexual harassment, and of the kind of sexual exploitation we are describing here, it is hardly surprising men are typically the perpetrators.

Academic institutions are no exception to this hierarchical pattern encountered elsewhere. But the ways in which male sexuality is woven into their organizational life is unique, is perhaps more complex. Wise and Stanley (1990) describe the “taken-for-grantedness of a ‘drive reduction’ model of male sexuality as biologically based, penetrative and unstoppable once aroused” (ibid, 1990: 16) within most discussions of sex at work. This model is contained within the larger picture of a culture which assumes and supports heterosexuality. It is these expressions of sexuality which are endorsed and supported within organizational life. The power of male academics arising from their status and perceived expertise is clearly important. But this kind of position power is integrally shaped by the cultural support for a specific kind of predatory heterosexual masculinity. Because sexual power cannot be simplistically reduced to hierarchical power, men can and do, sexually harass and pursue women who ostensibly possess more power than they have. Wise and Stanley identify the not uncommon sexual harassment of female nurses and social workers by male patients and clients as examples of this (ibid). So, although it is possible for women to abuse their position and sexually exploit those who have less organizational power than them, this kind of behaviour is not given the same kind of endorsement as the male equivalent. Similarly gay men and lesbians might abuse their power in this way. But the pervasiveness of homophobia in most organizations, including universities is such that instances are likely to evoke strong disapproval rather than knowing smiles. It is this tacit approval and acceptance of relationships between male lecturers and female students, their categorisation as natural, which was of greatest concern to some of those responsible for student welfare whom we interviewed. One student union equal opportunities officer believed the number of men who abuse their position to be a small, but often well protected, minority. She noted how:

There were several names that came up time and time again. I’m not saying it was every male lecturer, but if it was just a few then why would other people not take responsibility for doing something about it. Why weren’t other men prepared to stand up and question it and question the attitudes that go with it. Instead if you complained you got the attitude that ‘you are the problem, if students don’t like it they can go somewhere else’. To me they were accepting this as being okay behaviour.

It is this acceptance of sexual exploitation as ‘okay behaviour’ which applies to the male sexual narrative but not to independent, active and visible sexuality on the part of women or homosexuals. At one level it could be argued this is irrelevant since any policy would apply to everyone regardless of gender or sexual orientation. This argument has a certain validity,

but if we are to use policy as a vehicle for cultural change within organizations then the social context must be understood.

It appears then, that although there is support for, and a lack of disapproval of potentially exploitative relationships, only a minority of people actually engage in them. We need therefore to address the question of whether these men, and the students they have relationships with, are special in some way.

Is exploitation ordinary?

It is not yet possible to quantify the extent of sexually exploitative relationships in British institutions of higher education. Our own research has used a qualitative approach in order to identify and explore the dynamics and impact of these relationships. We perceived that it was too early in the process of 'naming' this behaviour as problematic to attempt to measure it in this country. Research in U.S. universities has been able to go further since sexual harassment and this related problem has been seen as a public issue for much longer. Findings from American studies are useful and have already been quoted. However it is worth noting at this juncture how Fitzgerald and Weitzman (1990) encountered only one man in their study who admitted to ever having sexually harassed a student. This contrasts with the six percent of the sample who believed they had been sexually harassed by students. This sub-group was significantly more likely to have been sexually involved with students, often more than once, than the rest of the male academic population.

There are a number of ways in which this American study appears to fit with our own qualitative findings. First, there is the denial of their power on the part of many male academics. This is a version of 'we are all adults'. Secondly, although those who engage in such relationships are in the minority it is nevertheless a large enough grouping to have a very considerable impact. What is more, these men do not appear to be significantly different from other men. As a group they included representatives drawn from every subject, discipline, department, age group and they were as likely to be married as single.

Although this study identifies these men as unexceptional in most respects there have been some attempts to describe the type of man who is particularly prone to this kind of behaviour. Dzeich and Weiner (1984) identify what they call public and private harassers. The public harasser engages in extravagant jokiness, 'articulate, glib, sarcastic and/or funny' (ibid: 120), and spends lots of time with students. He is very informal and seen as the opposite of his more distant and authoritarian colleagues. The very visibility of his behaviour defies challenge. The authority to demand sexual favours of students. Other types of harasser are also identified: the counsellor-helper; the confidante; the intellectual seducer; the opportunist; and the power broker. Zalk (1990) sees these not simply as personality types but as different ways of using power in specific situations.

One significant strand in the literature and research regarding sexual harassment, and sexual abuse more broadly, seeks to identify the problem as a product of masculinity itself (Pringle 1993). While this appears to be rather a sledgehammer approach to understanding the dynamics involved it is important to recognize we are dealing with patterns of gendered behaviour which are very familiar to those involved and those who observe. One student, who had an affair with a male lecturer nearly 30 years older than herself, said, "I thought this was the way men and women behaved. Nobody took me seriously in any other way. Nobody thought I had a brain". The sexual dynamics between male professionals and women clients and what happens when trust is abused have been explored by Rutter (1990). He describes this as relationships in 'the forbidden zone' and argues that we will not stop these exploitative relationships unless we understand the enormously powerful feelings which make them so significant. While identifying the deep seated nature of the feelings involved he does not see these relationships are inevitable. Rather he suggests ways in which men and women can avoid such encounters and the damage which frequently results from them. Clarity over sexual boundaries and appropriate relationships on behalf of institutions and professional groups are fundamental to achieving this. Most importantly he argues that, since it is the man who holds the power in such relationships, it is his responsibility to ensure he does not cross this boundary however tempting and 'right' it feels to him to do so at the time. A central aspect of this is honesty about, and recognition of, his responsibility in this respect. In Fitzgerald and Weitzman's 1990 study a substantial minority of male academics saw women students as having initiated the relationships. It is this form of dishonesty regarding the imbalance of power existing between lecturer and student which needs to be tackled.

Are women students powerless?

Women do not always feel powerless in relationships of this nature. They may well see themselves as having initiated it just as the men in Fitzgerald and Weiner's 1990 study believed they had. One woman who had an affair with a lecturer had very contradictory thoughts and feelings about it:

He took my flirting seriously. No one else did and once you were taken seriously I thought it was your responsibility to act on it 'cos I was the one who was leading people on. I didn't see it as exploitation at the time, not at all. If anything I felt I was exploiting. I had the power over any man. But I never initiated it. That's where the abuse came in. An older man in charge of a group of students should never have singled one out to have a relationship with.

As a sexy young woman in a university she had felt very powerful. But it was she who had to leave to escape the affair and she who had to drastically change educational direction. Although she felt responsible, the classic 'prick tease' accusation, she later discovered he had had previous relationships with students, "although he took a year to tell me about this, he

told me I was better than the rest. I was hooked in that way. I felt important. I felt in charge". The fact that he described her as different from the rest was an important counterbalance to any accusation of exploitation: "He was cynical about it. This is another student I can get. But I had to be special".

Falling in love, treating someone as special, is clearly an important way of legitimating these kinds of relationships. Special can be defined in many ways: the most able student in the group; the most attractive; the one with the most empathy; even the oldest or youngest; being interesting because of some difference, race or class for example. It is also a way of sharing responsibility with another person where rightly it ought to belong to one person. The contrast between the claim that this particular student is special and the reality of trying several others first is striking:

I can spot them a mile off (laughs). And they're oh, so sincere... you're one of my five favourite people... I nearly fell for it. But I have a few friends that he said the same things to, and we counted up and there were more than five!

There is often a contrast, particularly in relation to sexuality, between women's feelings of power and their actual power. Undoubtedly male lecturers can feel deeply hurt in such situations but it was invariably the women who had to leave; change courses; miss out on valuable educational opportunities; and endure other personal costs. One ex-student told us that is was only when she met a male lecturer who did not respond do her flirtations that she really began to learn about her chosen subject. Hollway and Jeffereson (1994) argue that women in higher education often experience ambivalence about being seen as too intellectual. They are all too familiar with a more sexualised personae. What is troubling is the extent to which male lecturers collude with this uncertainty for their own gratification.

It does not appear to us that women who get into these relationships are somehow different from others. In terms of age and background they replicated the contemporary age and background profile of the student population. Importantly most of the people we talked to certainly did not perceive of themselves as different from the 'normal student'. One women's officer stressed to us how she had all kinds of examples: "young, mature, straight out of school, black students, mature students from middle class backgrounds, older working class women". Many did describe the students in question as being particularly vulnerable, but this vulnerability came about for all sorts of reasons: lack of confidence; youth; lack of previous sexual experience; very ambitious; abandoned by previous partners. Black young women it seems may often be subjected to particular forms of sexist and racist attention. In many respects vulnerability seems to arise purely from being a woman student in higher education. As we noted earlier, some lecturers appear skilled at picking the vulnerable and available. Selecting the right student is not to do with spotting some unchanging salient personality characteristic for there are many antecedents of, often

temporary, vulnerability. As with the male lecturers we have not found it useful to ascribe particular psychological characteristics to the women involved, but rather to point to the limited repertoire of behaviours which are available to women in academic institutions. One question which does arise is whether women are particularly vulnerable to exploitation in certain disciplines and departments.

Departmental differences

Sexual relationships between staff and students, with all the associated problems, were thought to be more commonplace in some departments than others. This applied across several institutions and although these should not be taken as the only settings for these patterns of behaviour they appear to be worthy of identification not least because they help to cast some light on the cultural practices which support them. We have discussed elsewhere particular features of professional training in youth work and social work which lend themselves to the development of these kinds of relationships (Carter and Jeffs 1992). In addition to these courses others named frequently are: arts, drama, sociology and languages. Although there are variations between them what they have in common are some or all of the following: emphasis on feelings and relationships; a very informal culture; a majority of women students; small group and tutorial teaching; placements which mean staff and students are outside the institution together. In addition in some of these courses students are expected to discuss and explore sexuality. Emphasis on the personal, which should be an important and valuable aspect of the university experience, seems all too easily to provide opportunities for exploitation. Engineering courses were often depicted as the polar opposite with formal, impersonal relationships. These might serve to keep students out of problematic relationships but they were never seen as desirable. Engineering had other ways of keeping women in their place, as one equal opportunities officer explained, "engineering has belonged to men forever". What is unacceptable is that it is in those subject areas where women students predominate that the levels of harassment and exploitation are often the most frequent and public. It seems they have in some way to be punished for intruding into a world not made for them.

Chapter Three

Counting the Cost and Measuring the Damage

Sexual relationships between academics and student occur within a wide community. Most commence in secret, many remain so, others do not. For the serial exploiter secrecy and subterfuge are crucial ingredients ensuring long-term success. Exposure creates the risk of an unpleasant backwash impacting predictably on partners and family; colleagues and student peers. Exposure is also one of the ways in which a private problem becomes a public issue; “when it finally came into the open, I was amazed... the room was full of women who had been victimized, and almost none of us had ever told anyone but a few close friends” (Till 1980: 27). The reverberations upon departments and courses of this entry into the public realm are rarely as dramatic as the incidents just recounted. Usually it seems knowledge of a lecturer’s activities surface slowly allowing gatekeepers or allies such as close associates, heads of departments and friends to set in motion damage limitation procedures designed to ensure as few as possible learn about what has occurred and knowledge of the events are expunged from the collective memory of the institution with the minimum of fuss. Despite the ‘best efforts’ of these gatekeepers the impact of their behaviour remains pernicious often permanently damaging working relationships; sabotaging the learning experience of students; and besmirching the reputations of departments even institutions. It is to these aspects that we now turn.

All boys together

Public knowledge of a lecturer-student relationship may divide a staff group but frequently it appears, at least publicly, the opposite occurs. During an interview with a university equal opportunities officer she asked herself “why do the men always seem to adopt a camaraderie around the issue?”. Her initial response was that this took place because the student was deemed a temporary member of the community, staff therefore opted on the grounds of self-interest to either rally round and support the lecturer concerned or to treat such behaviour by a colleague with indifference. We certainly encountered a number of cases where backing appeared to be founded upon naked self-interest. In one of these, a notorious serial exploiter was finally challenged by a student who reported his behaviour to the head of department. The latter sought to persuade her to let the matter rest and then prevaricated; eventually after further complaints by the student to more senior staff an enquiry was instigated. During this, liaisons involving other staff and examples of harassment by those individuals and others going back many years, became public

knowledge. We were informed that in a department of fewer than 20 full-time staff, possibly as many as six male staff had been involved in relationships with students or were the subject of complaints. The ethos of the department was summed up by a local practitioner who had been responsible for supervising student from the course for over a decade: “[it] is notorious. I have always assumed that being a sexual harasser was a qualification for a job at that place”. The motives of the head of department in seeking to cool the student out in the hope she would conclude, given it was her final year, that the matter was not worth pursuing, do not require elaboration. Nor do those of the staff who had been or currently were involved in liaisons; had listened to the complaints of students but for various reasons had chosen to do nothing; and who had social and professional links with the male staff facing exposure. All these predictability opted to vigorously advocate the cause of the accused. Although some fell within more than one of these categories they collectively constituted a majority capable of exerting substantial pressure on the residue. Eventually all, male and female alike, including some who described themselves as feminists or affiliates of the ‘men’s movement’ signed a letter supporting the accused. One, a new member of staff, when challenged as to why he has signed merely shrugged then replied “You know, I have to work with him in the future”.

Apart from self-interest, the equal opportunities officer previously mentioned, maintained that the camaraderie flowed from implicit assumptions regarding gender roles. Interpretations of these were not fixed. They might be variously interpreted, for example that the men were victims of predatory students; that they were victims of temporary madness by succumbing to natural biological urges they normally controlled; that it was unfair that quintessentially private and consensual conduct between mature adults had, through some misfortune been wrongly diagnosed as unacceptable; or that they were being sacrificed on the altar of political correctness in order to placate a rampant puritanical feminism determined to turn all men into oppressors and women into victims; “the big sister state where feminists are in positions of power” as described by one American academic recently (Heart of the Matter, BBC Television 13th November 1994).

Whatever the interpretation the end product was a sanctioning of the behaviour, an acceptance that predatory male behaviour was part of the natural order of things and therefore excusable. One tutor described the experience of one of her students who complained. A married lecturer initiated an affair which she thought was serious but he somewhat abruptly and publicly ended it prior to starting another relationship with a different student. She was extremely upset and complained to the professor about her treatment, but was pointedly told that as head of department it was none of his business what the students and staff got up to in their private lives and furthermore she should be ashamed of her involvement with a married man. He then accused her of only complaining because her marks had dropped and she wanted an excuse for preferential treatment. The tutor checked out the account given by students and found it to be correct. As a result she

now believes students can expect no support whatsoever from the university hierarchy if they decide to make a complaint about the behaviour of such men.

Irrespective of the basis upon which the defence is based the result generally appears, from the evidence gathered during the course of our interviews, that in almost every instance the student who complains can expect to benefit from scant, if any, support from academic or administrative staff (see also for example Till 1980). The predictable result according to one survey is that the overwhelming majority of students who have been sexually harassed or exploited opt to either minimise, to the best of their ability, contact with the perpetrator or try to have a third party intervene to ensure they are not unduly disadvantaged. Only a minority want sanctions to be applied to the offender because they can see little prospect of an affirmative answer emerging to the question "how can the institution guarantee to protect her against retaliation, often subtle but deadly?" (Robertson, Dyer and Campbell 1988: 801).

Whatever the reason given, staff who disapprove of the antics of colleagues tend to avoid expressions of public condemnation. Only a tiny minority appear to be willing to intervene to lend support to those being sexually harassed or coerced. The bulk chose either to ignore their colleagues' behaviour or espouse strategies which ensure they are not embarrassed by it. This absence of support for the 'junior female partner' often continues even in circumstances where it becomes impossible to overlook the ramifications of the liaison and some form of external intervention is required. This, of course, is hardly a behavioural feature unique to the academic setting. Research undertaken by Quinn (1977) into liaisons between men and women employees in other workplace settings found the women were twice as likely to lose their job usually because the man, as in the university setting, was of a higher status and therefore deemed less dispensable.

This assumption that colleagues will support them if something goes wrong and 'everything comes out into the open' provides an inducement for male staff to engage in such behaviour. In many universities individuals are encouraged by the knowledge that in the past the senior administration has done everything possible to protect those who engage in such activities. Likewise the promotion and success of those who formerly (and often still continue) to sexually exploit students or sexually harass junior staff provides public confirmation that this type of behaviour is acceptable and maybe even a desirable characteristic. At one university, a man with a long history of sexually harassing and fazing administrative staff found that such behaviour provided no impediment to his steady climb to the pot of pro-vice chancellor, the acquisition of honours or subsequent appointment to prestigious national bodies. Eventually following a legal intervention by the union on behalf of his current secretary his superiors decided his behaviour was potentially so damaging to the institution that instructions were given that his new secretary must be an "older more mature women" of sufficiently plain appearance to provide no temptation.

Widespread knowledge of his behaviour, despite energetic attempts to hush everything up, along with the undeniable fact it was always his secretaries who departed or 'moved sideways' could not fail to encourage a sense of well-being amongst other predatory staff. This situation is not unusual, according to one American survey 18 per cent of women academic and administrative staff reported physical advances from male staff (Goodwin *et al* 1989). Sadly we have encountered little evidence to indicate that the situation in the UK is any better. Few universities have yet acquired a climate wherein the sexual exploitation of students is something male academics feel nervous about recounting. The following incident is one some may find familiar, however, few in Higher Education would be confident it would be unlikely to take place in their own university:

It was the reception for the new head of department. Before long he was surrounded by a group of male staff leaving me, a female colleague and the unsuccessful internal candidate (who happened to be male) on the outside. After a few drinks he began to tell his new colleagues about how he met his wife. She had been a student of his at his previous university and it appears they had enjoyed an athletic relationship in his office for sometime before going public. He described all this in graphic, not to say disgusting, detail to the 'guys'. They lapped it up and didn't even notice we left early.

As noted, those engaging in behaviour can and do occupy positions of authority, posts requiring them to deal with complaints from students or staff concerning the conduct of male staff. Such are the reputations of many in authority that often individuals who, in other circumstances, might complain assume it is not worthwhile. A university student affairs officer described one department as "notorious" and the head of a department as a man "with a shocking reputation" who was "openly hostile" to her and "refused to cooperate at any level... he (the head of department) sees his top line responsibility as protecting his staff... I get complaints about a number of the staff, I know what is going on, but none of the students will every make a complaint". Regarding another similar department one ex-lecturer told us that:

It was not a happy department. One man had an awful reputation, an endless string of relationships with students and a very unpleasant attitude towards women who didn't respond. But given that the Professor had the nickname of 'Bonker' rightly so, you had little expectation that things would improve. Two of the secretaries had made a complaint about one incident they had interrupted involving the Professor - you can guess what they saw - but it was hushed up and nothing happened. He was, so they say, given a warning by the Vice Chancellor but nothing appears to have changed from what I hear.

Additional complications occur when a senior member of staff is involved with a student for whom others, further down the pecking order, may have a teaching or pastoral responsibility. This can not only damage working relationships but also disrupt the lives of colleagues. In this following case the member of staff contemplated resignation:

The head of department who taught on the course started an affair with one of the students. She told me, and he must have found out I knew. Later I saw them together miles from here by sheer accident. From then on it was difficult to put your finger on it but he was difficult to work with and obviously trying to catch me out. It got me down to the extent that I decided to leave but then thought better of it. Why should I move? Instead I resigned as course leader but working relationships are terrible.

At a more mundane level, working relations can deteriorate to the point where even sharing an office becomes intolerable:

He was impossible. He married a student on placement with him before he became a lecturer then left her and move in with another student shortly after arriving here. Within a few months she was out and he took up with yet another. He married her. It was his third wife but nothing changed. The problem was the latest, and often the last one, was always hanging around. It is a small office with a shared phone. They were always calling by on some pretext, help with an essay, problem over a placement etc. Also you'd come into the office after a lecture and know you were interrupting and there would be an uncomfortable silence. I got fed up with it and when the new wife started phoning all the time, I reckon checking up on him, that was it. I went to the head of the department and demanded he was moved out. They found him a room on his own. He was delighted as you'd guess.

This illustrates how staff-student liaisons have a deleterious impact on the relationships between other staff and their students. The lecturer quoted also found it difficult to work with students whom she suspected or knew to be involved with her roommate, explaining how it felt uncomfortable being in their presence. In lectures she has felt a gnawing suspicion that her input was carried back and criticised; in tutorials and consultations concerning placements a belief that nothing was confidential and any discussion regarding the suitability of an agency or supervisor had to be handled with unnatural delicacy. Normal staff-student dialogue was frequently impossible as all parties became incapable of behaving naturally. In this instance the atmosphere of deceit permeated the whole department affecting to various degrees all those professionally linked to the lecturer and the students with whom he was involved.

Can't we be friends?

Attending university is a profound social experience. It involves joining a bustling community which, as Reeves (1965: 109) reminds us, means for many when they arrive “the greatest fear of the student experience is loneliness; the greatest desire is for relationships”. Friendships and social exchanges with other students are crucial but there is also a justifiable expectation on the part of most students that (i) staff will display a measure of interest in them as individuals; (ii) staff will not treat them with indifference but seek to use informal as well as formal methods of teaching; (iii) time and resources will be set aside for tutorials, seminars and conversations which will allow the student to more directly manage their own learning, allay fears and pose and formulate questions relating directly to their specific learning needs; (iv) they are treated, at least in some measure, by the staff as individuals and their teachers recognise and validate the values and understanding they have brought with them from other realms of their lives. Included in this will inevitably be a residue of knowledge culled from school days. Within the school environment they will have learnt how some, if not all, staff employed informal contact to generate and sustain pupil learning (Burley 1990). How, beyond the classroom such teachers organised events, such as trips and study visits, or capitalised on an enthusiasm for sport or drama, for example, to develop relationships with pupils designed to build self-confidence and generated opportunities for informal teaching and instruction. Exploitation of those transactions by teacher for sexual advantage although not totally unknown are not tolerated by employers or colleagues, neither are they justified and defended by professional bodies [in 2003 this became a criminal offence]. In the school setting the guidelines and limitations are known to all parties and rigorously adhered to. Such certainties do not apply in the higher education sector. Students can find it difficult to know how far staff can be permitted to intrude into their lives. They are conditioned for twelve or more years to believe that teachers are nurturing and benevolent, so it is easy to regard an intimate conversation, a physical gesture, or an invitation to a private meeting as an extension of that caring. (Dziech and Weiner 1984: 42).

The more anxious and unsure the student often the greater the vulnerability. Although school work and that encountered by some non-traditional entrants within Access Programmes may be tested on an individual basis, learning nevertheless predominately involves a great deal of group work and the completion of shared exercises. Mass lectures and anonymity of the university is alien to most newcomers. To overcome this writers from an earlier age suggested the creation of venues for staff-student interaction. Truscot (1953) and Herklots (1928:87) discuss the establishment of ‘outposts in the county’; houses where staff and students would go each term to meet, eat and debate in a congenial but scholarly atmosphere. Glover (1965: 117) opts for the cheaper option of more “bars and common rooms where staff and students can meet casually and without protocol”. Initiatives such as these like a residential to kick-start the course and help staff and students to gel ‘from the word go’ are not popular, if they ever were, with those balancing the budget. Informal staff

and student exchanges are now largely left to chance and often to the persistence of the student. In such an environment those seeking to coerce students into sexual relationships employ a range of techniques and strategies. For example they are often the most accessible seeking to appear

Always available, always approachable. He spends enormous amounts of time with students – in his office, in the halls during breaks, in the student union or at a nearby bar during weekdays or weekends. His informality is a welcome contrast to the authoritarian style of most of his colleagues. (Dziech and Weiner 1984: 120)

Alternatively they may make themselves available for counselling or support, again offering a special, out of the ordinary, relationship. Setting themselves up as the self-appointed departmental counsellor; as one lecturer explained:

I was always so impressed by the amount of time X devoted to helping the students with personal problems or who were struggling to come to grips with the course. He taught group work and counselling so I assumed that he was just using his skills in a practical way. X often mentioned that he had had a 'heavy counselling session' with a student, or been late leaving because a student needed to see him about a special problem, or visited an upset student at home. It never occurred to me that it was all a load of bull. Then one day a furious husband turned up at the home of another lecturer. He was very threatening and made all sorts of allegations. He'd actually got the wrong bloke, but it all came out and one or two of us felt pretty stupid for not noticing what had been going on for a long time under our noses.

This abuse of the pastoral role leads some students to become rightly distrustful and cynical regarding the motives of all staff and the tutorial system. Those seeking to exploit students tend to take advantage of particular circumstances which put them at an advantage. For example one equal opportunities officer described a number of cases involving staff on assessment visits to students on overseas placements. The latter were often homesick and invariably isolated from the support of college friends. Many were also short of money and therefore delighted to enjoy the hospitality offered by a lecturer with an expense account. Some staff, she believed, deftly manipulated this situation to exploit students. In similar vein we encountered a number of examples of practice teachers who abused their position. They had real, if temporary, power over the student. Practice placements are often a period of particular stress for students. Again they are usually separated from their peers. Also they are in unfamiliar surroundings working in an environment that may appear hostile with staff who inevitably perceive them as less than equals. They are also being constantly appraised according to criteria that are vague and outside those normally applied within Higher Education; they will be judged on their openness to new ideas, friendliness and cooperativeness; they must avoid at all costs being perceived as stand-offish, a poor team

player and devoid of a sense of humour. Especially in relation to those on placements linked to the 'caring professions'; trainees are expected to demonstrate an ability to display empathy towards others including, it often turns out, towards their placement teacher.

A common pattern amongst those who sexually exploit is the manufacturing of dependence. One student found that her tutor, who at first gave the impression of being exceptionally helpful, became more and more attentive as the course proceeded. She admitted she had difficulty with academic work and her first placement had been "something of a disaster". He seemed to go out of his way to help, but after a while she noticed that apart from the unwelcome touching she had to endure continuous phone calls at home often very late in the evening. These were trivial matters and annoyed both her and her husband. In the end she had to insist that under no circumstances would he again contact her at home.

Subsequently she learned that other students had complained about his behaviour and that he had a history of relationships with students. Behaviour of this type leads some students rightly to perceive professional and personal involvement with staff as risky, best kept to a minimum, and the pastoral role as a discredited lottery. The two-fold result is that some students are deprived of the support and assistance they have a right to expect. Whilst amongst other staff it can generate a reluctance to engage informally with students i.e. eschew friendship across the divide and curtail collaboration, as one explained:

Given the behaviour of a fair number of my male colleagues you have no alternative but to put a fairly solid barrier up between you and the students. I now make it a rule never to socialise unless I am accompanied by my partner or an outside friend. It is a pity that one can't have informal contacts with students.

Such informal contacts cannot often be so easily avoided and this sort of solution is not, in the final analysis, helpful. What is required is a climate that allows staff and student to mix informally. Such an environment will only be achieved when institutions take the action required to create an organizational culture that denies protection to those who engage in any form of sexual harassment or exploitation.

Marks and measures

Failure to control the activities of serial exploiters inevitably creates an ambience within a department or institution. It helps to convey the impression that favoured treatment for a student flows from engagement in an amorous relationship with staff thereby encouraging a belief that "sexual receptiveness is expected" from female students or employees (Chamallas 1988: 856). The majority who recoil from such involvement may nevertheless begin to perceive that their opportunities for learning are curtailed by the prevalence of such behaviour. Fitzgerald (1992) found almost 20 percent of female students avoided taking at least one module or unit because of the behaviour of a male lecturer and 5 per cent had left

an option. The existence of liaisons between staff and students may not only perpetuate a particular view of a course but often produce disquiet regarding their favoured treatment amongst other students on it. The result is that third party complaints about such behaviour are common in those institutions where pertinent rules and regulations have been introduced. The nature of the complaint can vary but this is a fairly typical case in some respects but quite exceptional in another as the member of staff was a woman. The student officer handling the case explained:

Two students complained that they were being unfairly treated. It appears that the lecturer had been going out with one of the men on the course. He, so I've been told, broke off the relationship and began going out with a student in the group. After that the two students noticed that the lecturer was behaving in a hostile fashion towards them - you know sarcastic and putting them down in class, and ignoring them outside. What led them to come to see me was that their marks suddenly dropped and they were convinced that they were being discriminated against because they knew about the failed relationship.

At the time of the interview this case had not been resolved and it is doubtful if it ever will be to the satisfaction of those who complained. The confidential nature of examination procedures and the dynamics of inter-student relations mean that it is difficult, sometimes impossible, to refute or sustain accusations of bias. The only protection against them is the establishment of clear guidelines regarding the conduct of lecturers and examiners. An ex-student interviewed described an example of what she perceived to be clear favouritism. For her the last year of the course had been marred by the behaviour of a group of students. Looking back on the course she felt her own achievement in passing had been devalued and that the staff team, many of whom she had previously respected, had colluded in covering up unacceptable practices:

It was odd during the course, but three of them seemed to be really relaxed about it all. A number of us got fairly angry over the way they, in particular, seemed to get extensions whenever they wanted. Anyway this one woman who was absolutely hopeless passed and one of her two friends was allowed to re-submit work she had failed. All was explained after the term ended when we learnt that the hopeless one was pregnant and the course leader was the father. He left his wife and she left her husband and they are now living together. Apparently it had been going on since the first year.

This accusation may be unwarranted but it is inevitable when such behaviour is tolerated that the impartiality of assessment procedures will be called into question. As the example below indicates it is not solely students who believe this occurs:

Lecturer X never seems to fail to form at least one relationship with a student in every intake. He seems to have an unerring ability to select vulnerable students, a fact that has led to problems on examination boards. One year he bullied and pressured the board for almost half an hour to allow a student to re-take two papers even though the regulations only made provision for a single re-sit. With the support of a number of colleagues the board agreed even though another student dealt with earlier had been thrown off the course. On appeal she was allowed back, but the injustice of the case was glaring.

Examples such as this may occur as a result of friendship between staff and student. We would certainly not wish to argue that bias is solely the end product of sexual liaisons or the desire on the part of staff to initiate such relationships in the future. It is important to recognise that all friendships with students pose a difficulty for staff. Even quite innocent interactions may be misinterpreted by a third party. What is essential is that friendship and other relationships must not lead to a loss of detachment on the part of the lecturer or to abuse by either party. It is probably the case that the ideal model for staff-student relationships is that described by Audi (1990: 126) as “professional closeness combined with emotional distance”. Staff should certainly not use their position to ‘purchase’ the friendship and company of students. However, whilst holding onto that point we do believe that while such behaviour is not to be encouraged, it is not of the same order as the sexual or financial exploitation of students. It is unlikely the discovery that the ‘friendship’ was not genuine will cause the sort of hurt and anguish expressed by students who have been sexually exploited by staff. This is not to see them as victims, although some are, but it is to recognise that the scale of the betrayal and deceit involved is of a different order. A point recognised by most writers on this topic including Audi (1990: 128) who is uneasy about friendship between lecturer and student because it can grow “into love, as it often and naturally does”. Friendship with or sympathy for a given student may erode the sense of detachment that is a cornerstone of the assessment structure, this has to be recognised and checks and balances sought to minimise the impact, clearly such feelings cannot be exorcised from the milieu of the university. However, as Chamallas (1998) suggests, where friendships threaten to translate into a romantic involvement this needs to be recognised because:

We lose little in the way of sexual liberty by prohibiting this class of asymmetric encounters. Potential lovers usually have the alternative of taking steps to reduce a direct conflict of interest. For example, a professor who wants to date a student can wait until the student completes the course. (Chamallas 1998: 858).

The debate regarding the place of friendship within the academic setting is worthy of careful consideration like that relating to ‘romantic attachment’ should not serve to distract us from dealing with the far more severe problem posed by the activities of serial exploiters. We have, of course, encountered examples of the latter such as the irate lecturer who demanded

of one of the authors they must “tell me what I did wrong in marrying one of my students’ 20 years ago”. Yet such phenomena both from our findings and those of others appear to be the exception used to justify the more sleazy norm. Friendship does not demand deceit or subterfuge; and genuine attachment can survive the necessity of being held in abeyance until circumstances alter.

Chapter Four

Dealing with the Problem: Is there an answer?

Our task in this chapter would be easier had we discovered the all-time best policy for dealing with the problems discussed here. Most policies in this arena, as in others, emerge through compromise, contingency and sometimes by reinventing the wheel. To a considerable extent policies are expressions of what is happening formally and informally in any particular institution at any one time. It could not be otherwise. Policies are not simply technical solutions which can be sticky-taped on to an institution without disturbing vested interests.

By definition policies regarding sexual harassment, and this related area of sexual exploitation, are intended to challenge taken-for-granted ways of behaving. Those responsible for creating and implementing policies in the equal opportunities field, as well as those active in arguing for change, will recognize this context. Policies are not simply legalistic devices, although they have to take notice of laws, nor do they exist in a social vacuum. People are likely to start from very distinct positions vis-à-vis policies attempting to deal with problematic staff/student relationships. They will bring with them different experiences, ideas and beliefs. There will be no straightforward political divide. Even those strongly committed to other equality issues may not, at least initially, see this as an important dimension. What is also certain though is opinions can change. We have been surprised by the fluidity of opinion on these matters. Some people are apparently more open to persuasion and argument on this than other issues. When we first began to talk about the problem we met with considerable hostility. But this has increasingly given way to recognition that it is time these things were opened up. We soon found ourselves in situation where people did not need to be convinced that these things were happening. They had lots of examples of their own. This does not of course mean that everyone will be won over. Chipping away at invisible and unaccountable sources of power will always meet with resistance.

In many cases the need for appropriate policies has become clear because something has gone wrong. Complaints of sexual harassment have revealed examples of lecturers having lots of affairs, leaving many students alienated and unhappy until one plucks up the courage to complain. Or other staff or students refuse to tolerate the effects of a particular lecturer's behaviour any longer. What emerges at this stage is that the lecturer in question denies that he realised there was a problem and what is more there are no rules of conduct

which appear to fit the case. Staff and student opinion is then drastically and destructively divided as people take sides. Some will see the student as victim; others the lecturer. Trade unions will not know who to support and will usually, in this rule and policy vacuum, fall back on the only principle which appears to fit the bill; they will defend their member, the lecturer. It is this kind of scenario which has led on many occasions to institutions and unions struggling to locate suitable policies and remedies.

Most institutions in the UK appear to be following two main policy direction in this arena: codes of conduct; and enhanced sexual harassment procedures. These need not remain separate from each other and indeed we would argue that relationships between the two need to be planned and articulated. We would add to these two a third avenue which has been explored less in this country than in the US: educational and preventive measures. Before proceeding to an analysis and evaluation of all of these it is necessary to set out our beliefs about the purposes of policies in relation to staff/student relationships. Articulating the purposes of policies allows us to see the kinds of values which should inform them and ought to prevent us seeing policies as ends in themselves. On many occasions during this study people have expressed disillusionment with sexual harassment policies which 'are only on paper' and which appear to have lost sight of the goal. It is important to avoid generating such despondency and disillusionment, therefore those advocating reform must argue for a policy which is sustainable within a given institution.

What should policies aim to achieve?

The first and most obvious purpose of policy in this context is a reduction in the kinds of behaviour described in this text and therefore of all the ill effects people have talked to us about and which we have documented here. It must be acknowledged that many of those involved in administering sexual harassment procedures are forced to use them only for counselling purposes because their organizational context is unsympathetic or even hostile to those who bring complaints. While this may well be a realistic assessment of some situations it is, at best, a partial solution. One sexual harassment officer described her concern that counselling failed to deal with the issue: "I aim to eliminate harassment. The purpose of the whole policy is stop it happening".

A second purpose is to strengthen the position of students. The policy should be framed and implemented in such a way that they are able to perceive themselves as having more choices than those presented to them by those lecturers who make a practice of abusing their power. The whole area should be less shrouded with secrecy and taboo. Talking about these relationships can reduce some of their allure. One student who had an affair with a lecturer which she later regretted said "I liked the risk. I liked the trying to keep it quiet bit. Everybody would know really but you hadn't got to make it too public. I wouldn't have gone along with it without the excitement". Of course it could be argued that policies may

in themselves serve to enhance the illicit pleasures. This is a risk which must be taken seriously but cannot be used to subjugate us into inaction.

A third purpose is to nurture the disapproval of these relationships which, in fact, already exists among many lecturers and students. While some higher education teachers will always protect each other from any perceived external criticism there are many others whose sense of professional accountability to students pushes them to be less unswervingly loyal in the face of bad practices. They must be protected and supported in taking such a position. Institutional disapproval of these relationships can help to reinforce this possibility. Trade unions can also provide a forum within which serious discussion about our shared responsibility for professional conduct can take place. Revised informal norms as well as formal rules regarding appropriate sexual relationships can also extend to placements, where similar problematic relationships occur.

A fourth purpose of specific policy initiatives should be to enhance and build on other equality policies. These problems arise out of, and are to a large extent created by, inequality between men and women. An institution within which the equal opportunities agenda is imaginative and seeks to go further than minimalist legalistic requirements is more likely to create an effective policy regarding staff/student relationships. Such an institution will also take responsibility for making sure that it does not support a culture of approval for such conduct. For example there is little point in attempting to close off staff exploitation of students whilst allowing bullying and coercion of secretaries and other staff by managers and academic staff. What is required is a portfolio of policies which aim to challenge the various hierarchical and segregated relationships within which gender inequalities are wrapped.

These then constitute a set of far-reaching purposes against which specific policy initiatives can be judged. They are not a short term fix. Instead they link this particular set of problems to broader social and cultural changes. In her study of the practice of equal opportunities policies in four organizations. Cockburn (1991) talks about needing both structural and cultural changes in order to break down the barriers to sex equality:

The institutional impediments include structures, procedures and rules. Cultural impediments arise in discourse and interaction. They influence what women and men feel, think and do. The two levels are interactive. (Cockburn, 1991: 45)

Her study also reveals the fact that managers and activists often differ in the length of their agenda in relation to equal opportunities. Managers will tend to have relatively short agendas whereas those who are part of a broader movement for equality will have a much longer agenda in terms of the extent of social transformation which they desire. We are deliberately linking our suggestions about policy to a more far reaching vision of gender

relations in higher education. We recognise that most institutions will only be cajoled into going a few steps down this path at present. Policies will probably fall short of what many of us want to see. Nevertheless it is important to look further ahead, in Cockburn's terms to build a longer agenda concerning the kind of sexual conduct which will contribute to greater gender equality.

Codes of conduct and rules for behaviour

These constitute the basic first step taken by many institutions and trade unions. These have to decide what to make rules about and how they are to be implemented. In the early stages of this debate many institutions described themselves as having 'unwritten rules' concerning the inappropriateness of staff/student affairs. These gentlemen's agreements did not however stand up to being tested in sexual harassment cases or in the face of complaints from parents, husbands, boyfriends or students themselves. The first question then is whether to ban all such relationships. Some universities have gone for this total ban, either for all staff/student relationships across the institution or, more commonly, where there is a teaching or assessment connection. All staff are then issued with information regarding this rule, including an explanation which illuminates the power relationship involved. Breaking such a rule can make a member of staff liable for disciplinary action. For example:

No faculty member shall have an amorous relationship (consensual or otherwise) with a student who is enrolled on a course being taught by the faculty member or whose academic work (including work as a teaching assistant) is being supervised by the faculty member. Faculty members exercise power over students, whether in giving them praise or criticism, evaluating them, making recommendations for their further studies or their future employment, or conferring any other benefits on them. Amorous relationships between faculty members and students are wrong when the faculty member has professional responsibility for the student... voluntary consent by the student in such a relationship is suspect.

Two arguments are usually made against such a stance even by those who support the idea that some kind of policy is necessary. First, there is concern the ruling would affect the 'genuine case', the situation where two people simply fall unintentionally in love. In defence of the 'no sex between teacher and student under any circumstances' rule those who advocate this position would maintain that even the most authentic of relationships are suspect given the context. They would argue that responsible partners would be prepared to wait and/or change jobs or courses. Others suggest a decent employer could, in any case, always make exceptional arrangements where necessary and desirable.

The second argument against this blanket ban on relationships is that it is completely unrealistic and cannot feasibly be implemented. It will drive these relationships underground making them even more potentially destructive. Our own explorations of

these policies suggest that in some contexts they may well not be taken seriously, although it is of course almost impossible to say how many relationships would have taken place in the absence of the rule. Like other policies this kind of rule may, in certain circumstances, have a part to play, for instance where there is a fair degree of support for it and where other policies which challenge taken-for-granted sexual norms, harassment policies for example, are actively enforced. In other words an organizational culture which has thought through its responsibilities to women students may well find a firm rule on this is an important part of the package.

The bulk of educational institutions and unions in this country are at the present time reluctant to go this far. Their 'rules' are cast in a much more advisory tone, although sometimes this is strongly worded to suggest a considerable degree of disapproval. For example:

The relationship between teacher and student is special in which trust and confidence are important elements. In order to protect these relationships, staff, especially teaching staff, are advised not to enter into sexual/romantic relationships with students. This is particularly important when they are in a position of assessing students performance.

Or,

University Senate policy concludes that a relationship between a faculty member and a student should be considered one of professional and client in which sexual relationships are inappropriate. Although the policy does not specifically forbid sexual relationships between individuals where a professional power differential exists, it actively discourages even apparently consenting sexual relationships between faculty and student...

Such policies may well encounter similar problems to those which aspire to a total ban whilst acquiring the added difficulty of ambiguity. Those who advocate them defend these as more realistic than blanket 'no sex' rules. Our study suggests that, as with firmer policies, the crucial questions concern the seriousness of intent behind policy development and the organizational culture within which it operates. Sometimes these advisory policies arise in contexts where management does not want to rock the boy's boat. In such setting the rules themselves may well become the target of ribald mockery and flagrant violation. In other cases the intention may be very serious indeed. For example the second of the above examples was followed by the statement:

A faculty member who enters into a sexual relationship with a student where a power differential exists must realize that if a charge of sexual harassment is

subsequently lodged, it will be exceedingly difficult to prove immunity on the grounds of mutual consent.

And they mean it. Sexual harassment is a serious misdemeanour in that institution. We will return to the possibility of combining sexual harassment and advisory policies in the next section.

The reason many stop short of 'total ban' rules is concern for the sincere, responsible relationship. Many people operate in these debates with a sharp distinction between the exploiter and the putative husband. On the basis of this dichotomy policies are geared towards enabling the latter to bloom. Many policies therefore devote considerable attention to declaration systems. Rules and policies regarding the declaration of relationships can be more or less firm regarding the question of whether declaration is essential or merely advisory. For example,

...in the event of involvement in a relationship with a student, particularly where it is a sexual or romantic one, the member of staff is required to declare it to an appropriate supervisor or to one of the persons designated by the University for the purpose...

Presumably the word 'required' here is intended to suggest that staff members could conceivably be subject to disciplinary action if they do not comply with it. Such declaration systems often group together sexual and romantic relationships with others which many provide the basis for accusations of bias and unfairness, family ties or where staff seek to secure financial benefit from a student for example.

Critics of these 'declaration' policies cite a number of potential weaknesses. First, the preoccupation with protecting the purportedly genuine minority has meant we have lost sight of the goal, the prevention of exploitation. Negative comment about such relationships evaporates in the welter of efforts to defend the legitimate few. Secondly, some would argue still more strongly that these declaration policies in themselves lend respectability to what are, in some people's eyes, always dubious relationships. In other words they question the distinction on which these policies are based. One equal opportunities officer told us that she didn't believe there was a separate more responsible category of relationship: "It should not happen full stop. For me, even asking is a form of harassment. You've still got to ask somebody who might want to say no". We share the view that these kinds of policies on their own can easily drift into cynical misuse unless backed by more vigorous efforts to change those attitudes and assumptions which permit abuses of power to flourish. If, as is usual with these policies, heads of department hold key responsibilities, we need to ensure they take these seriously in the spirit of discouraging inappropriate relationships. This

would require a major shift in some institutions. A woman's officer who had occasion to discuss complaints of harassment with heads of department told us:

Some were okay, or okay to my face and others were extremely hostile. It's the only way I can put it. I got some very snotty letters. Absolutely snotty, how dare you question the professionalism of my staff. I wasn't questioning their ability to the job, but I was questioning their ability if it encompassed harassing students. It was really 'keep off it's not your business'.

Without devising opportunities for heads of department and others to explore their conflicting responsibilities in the context of clear values and direction, a 'declaration policy may be merely a way of making sure staff do not get caught'. They may allow secret deals to be done. Advisory and declaration policies may be a starting point in the sense of Cockburn's (1991)'short agenda' but those with a real concern to change the sexual cultures within organizations need to work towards a longer agenda.

It is important that these problems are beginning to be addressed in the terms of professional codes of conduct. Many of us would distrust policies which were simply imposed from above management. Exploring the meaning of university and college teaching in the language of professionalism appears to us to be an important element in defining appropriate conduct. Trade unions are becoming more aware of the necessity for this kind of thinking, a development that is to be applauded. But codes do not in themselves prevent exploitation. A sceptic might well argue the codes are likely only to have an effect on those who, in any case, already behave responsibly. To be effective they need to be implemented energetically. For example, the General Medical Council makes it very clear that sexual relationships and indecent behaviour towards patients is unethical. This does not prevent some people from breaking the code: sexual misbehaviour is involved in a significant number of serious misconduct cases dealt with by this body (Nicholson 1994). Nor, it has to be admitted, do similar regulations appear to have been successful in eliminating such behaviour within the field of therapy (Russell J. 1993). However as with court cases in the United States concerned with the sexual exploitation of students they do set boundaries as to what is and is not acceptable behaviour: they inform those who do not wish to respect those boundaries that they ignore them at their peril.

In the absence of professional self regulation systems university and college lecturers have to rely on managers to act for them. Managers may behave in more or less collegial ways. Those that do not routinely act in democratic, accountable, fair and sensitive ways are likely to produce still more resistance, cynicism and anti-management stances from trade unions and staff. It is possible to envisage an alliance between management and staff unions regarding these issues and this appears to be happening in some instances. Unions can play a part in airing these issues and establishing the ground for principled policies. From our

research this is more likely to happen when unions themselves have some elements of meaningful participative grass roots democracy, ideally with opportunities for women and minority groups to explore and articulate their particular needs.

Student unions have a role to play but cannot be expected to take the major responsibility. Their task is to publicise, campaign and where necessary provide practical and legal support for students who want to resolve problems arising from harassment and exploitation. An effective policy would recognise that universities have a duty and responsibility to provide students with the requisite support and representation. Students do not have the responsibility either individually or collectively to solve these problems. It is staff behaviour and organisational structures which need to change.

Sexual harassment: a new dimension?

Are the behaviours which we have described in this book and named as sexual exploitation a version or extension of sexual harassment? Could they be most usefully dealt with by sexual harassment policies and procedures?

The answers to these questions depend on how we understand sexual harassment. In itself this is a term with no precise meaning in terms of behaviours and symptoms. It is defined in relatively fluid social and legal contexts. There are pseudo-legal definitions and empirical definitions, the latter depending on what people perceive as sexually harassing incidents. Most policy statements contain both kinds of definition: semi-abstract description and examples of particular behaviours (proactive remarks, displaying pornography, foul language and verbal abuse, inappropriate touching etc). In some respects there is a shared aetiology between sexual harassment and sexual exploitation. The key element shared between them is that both often involve abuses of power - only people who are more powerful than others in a whole range of different ways can harass or exploit them. Sometimes the kind of power is not noticeably overt: It may be very disguised - the over friendly boss or tutor. It may not, as seen in earlier chapters, be hierarchical power. But sexual harassment tends not to take place between those who are equal in respect to all salient characteristics including for example organizational and financial position, gender, age and race.

Sexual harassment is not simply a set of behaviours. It is about unequal power relationships and the myriad ways in which these are conducted and maintained. Inevitably there is a constant struggle over definition. Most incidents involve denial and disbelief on the part of the perpetrator and a long, emotionally draining process on the part of victims to establish the validity of their experience and its meaning for them. Studies show that "men are likely both to operate with a narrower notion of sexual harassment and to have a lower estimate of the incidence of sexual harassment on campus than women do" (Davis 1990). Sexual harassment is a mode of interaction which helps to maintain gender segregation at work and

in itself constitutes a form of sex discrimination (Stanko 1988). It is important to see sexual harassment not as an arena in which definition is clear but therefore one which can simply be extended to encompass this newly discovered form. Instead the question of whether and how these two relate to each other does not merely involve technical comparisons. We will see that the relationship between the two is frequently obscured not because they are unrelated phenomena but because extending the definition of what might be legitimately depicted as sexual harassment involves further challenges to already volatile gendered power relations.

The line between sexual harassment and many of the relationships we are describing here rests on the notion of consent. Central to most discussion about sexual harassment is that, whatever it is behaviourally, it is unwanted by the recipient. At first sight this appears clear. It gets us over the difficulty which many discussions surrounding sexual harassment involve: the question of whether all sexual behaviour at work is taboo and might constitute harassment. However, what this wrongly assumes is that the sexuality of the workplace is largely conducted via equal relationships. We have shown in earlier chapters this is often not the case. In addition, as Wise and Stanley (1987: 115) have argued, “most sexual harassment comes in shades of grey and beige: and more often than not it’s entirely ambiguous behaviour that could be sexual harassment, but could equally well be seen differently”. ‘Unwantedness’ may also appear decidedly beige especially to a man who perceives himself as inherently desirable and believes women always say ‘no’ to begin with and only need persuasion. Within the apparently more clear-cut arena of rape the issue of what is unwanted and what constitutes consent is a central question often resolved by giving men the benefit of the doubt (Morris 1987; Los 1990; Guardian 1993; Lees 1994).

Basing sexual harassment (and exploitation) policies on the notion that there is a clear line between wanted and unwanted contact is therefore deeply problematic. Unless university authorities and those who administer policies recognise this context then sexual harassment policies are likely to defend perpetrators more often than victims. Our research certainly indicated that this was the case. A number of institutions with apparently prominent policies were seen as unsympathetic to victims even by those who operated the policy systems. One woman with an apparently classic case and plenty of witnesses in an institution with a well written policy and carefully formulated procedures told us how she was disbelieved and subject to abuse for months after taking the case forward. She told us that the harasser had more protection than she did: she said “I was really bitter about the whole thing and I got to the stage where I couldn’t bear to go to work in the morning”.

Even if one were able to persuade people in institutions such as this, that the kinds of cases on which this text is based are a version of sexual harassment it is unlikely that tacking a new clause relation to the dangers of staff/student relationships onto an already ineffective policy would achieve much.

In the university whose code we cited earlier entering into even an apparently consensual relationship with a student may subsequently be seen to constitute harassment. Sexual harassment policies were pursued energetically. They included the application of a wide and increasingly imaginative range of sanctions against perpetrators (fines, loss of honours and privileges, loss of travel and research money and ultimately dismissal). Similar sanctions were also used against managers who failed to listen to complaints about sexual harassment and who did not make it clear to their staff that certain boundaries had to be protected. They also had to take notice of third-party complaints, which are likely to increase dramatically once the institution displays a determination to address the problem. In the context of the higher maximum awards for damages in sex discrimination cases in this country, more vigorous action is feasible. This does not mean, of course, there will be no resistance to more robust policy implementation on sexual harassment. Countervailing forces are currently very evident. It is quite possible educational institutions will become more cautious about exercising internal disciplinary procedures following the case of a male student accused by a fellow student of having sexual intercourse without her consent (Times Higher Educational Supplement, 1994). This resulted in the male student, with the help of his tutor, insisting on a full police investigation. He was charged with, and subsequently cleared of rape.

It seems unwise then to put all our eggs in the sexual harassment policy basket. Nevertheless we should seek to expand these policies and to ensure they are adequately resourced in terms of trained and committed staff with a clear idea of their role and of the purpose of policies. Policies should also be monitored and evaluated to ensure victims are protected and that perpetrators confront spirited action to discourage them. Details of cases and outcomes should be made public in appropriate form. In some American institutions college newspapers and notice boards provide details of the outcomes of hearings and where applicable the names of those who have transgressed the policy and the actions taken against them.

Those concerned about sexual exploitation of students certainly need to engage with sexual harassment policies and must seek to rid them of simplistic notions of consent and unwantedness. Policies must stop pretending that these are self evident categories and should instead establish procedures which are seen to be fair and conducted with high standards of professionalism.

Educational and preventive measures

Retributive approaches are not sufficient. The goal is always to change behaviour and whatever means are appropriate should be used for this. To achieve the cultural shift that is necessary it is essential to involve a wide range of actors including staff and student unions, women's and men's groups, staff in their various professional roles, student welfare services and those who manage student residences. In short all of the various communities and

groupings which might be concerned with what happens to students in the course of their educational experience. Universities are after all educational institutions, with, one assumes, a belief in the value of education as a way of achieving beneficial change. In a number of American institutions we visited all students were involved in an induction programme that required they examine, consider and debate issues relating to staff and student relationships as well as discriminatory practices, safety, health and well being. Many of these programmes were taught by students. Strategies to pursue the aims identified earlier in this chapter include making sure students choices are expanded, students and staff talk more openly about these issues and that this is done within a broader context of building greater equality not only between the sexes, but in challenging racism and working towards equality for disabled people, lesbians and gay men. All these other instances of institutionalized inequalities and silences serve existing power relations. Some institutions are now extending their harassment policies to recognize that all kinds of power relations give rise to the potential for harassment. Different kinds of harassment are often woven together to the extent it becomes impossible, perhaps, for a black woman to name her experience as either sexual or racial harassment. A number of institutions have now collapsed these different categories into generalized personal harassment policies to address the issue of bullying. Nobody would wish to defend bullying. However, conflict is integral to the achievement of change. It is unacceptable that the soft spoken mealy mouthed apologist for the *status quo* should be, for example, cocooned and protected against just and rightful anger.

In particular, policies need to recognize men's lower threshold of awareness on these matters. This is particularly important in relation to staff/student and regular affairs with students in totally different categories. One student told us, "I could not believe X. I saw him at a conference condemning sexual harassment, but he chatted students up relentlessly even though he was married. He also traded essay grades for sex". Some such characters may be totally cynical. But others may well genuinely not recognise the impact and meaning of their own actions.

We must acknowledge there are complex linkages between private and public lives. Challenging the effects of power differentials is unlikely to come about only through bureaucratic and procedural means, although we might seek to use these as allies where we can. For that reason it is essential to continue the development of new and imaginative policies. But unless these are linked to educational programmes and where required, disciplinary measures, it is unlikely current levels of exploitation and harassment will fall although they may become less overt.

Conclusion

Our starting point in undertaking this research was and remains a belief that exposing exploitation is important and in this respect educational institutions must be scrutinised in the same way as others. In the past academics have exhibited considerable reluctance to cast a critical eye over the ways in which they and their organisations treat students. If a fraction of the attention paid to discriminatory practices occurring in schools, for example, had been devoted to researching similar practices in Higher Education the latter would probably have already changed significantly for the better. In helping to name a problem and in giving a voice to some who believe it to be a problem we hope that a new and better culture can in some way be encouraged.

From the onset we have been nervous that we might be providing an endorsement for the negative labelling of student who are, or have been, involved in liaisons with staff, especially serial exploiters. We have no wish to portray these as dupes nor as the naïve victims of male duplicity. Anxiety to avoid this interpretation stems largely from the knowledge that all those we interviewed re-coiled from perceiving themselves in that way. Possibly the most widely circulated student guide of nearly three-quarters of a century ago argued it was the duty of the university teacher “to make himself dispensable” (Adams, 1919: 7). Although we might falter over the phrasing we would heartily endorse the sentiment. Indeed we believe that staff who sexually exploit students invariably repudiate that requirement by seeking to create dependency to further reduce student autonomy by adding domination of the body to control over the mind. We have no desire to further constrain the freedom of a student to behave in ways that do not adversely impinge on the right of others to exercise the same freedom. Therefore we find ourselves agreeing with Roiphe (1993: 84) when she argues that “it is the denial of female sexual agency that threatens to propel us backwards”. Rejection of crude victimology and a positive recognition of the sexual autonomy of women are not however incompatible with the sort of reforms we have advocated or with the placing of restrictions on the behaviour of staff. Students can offer staff gratuities or free holidays in return for higher marks, they may even offer them sexual favours. That is their right. What we argue is lecturers cannot accept those freely offered gifts and remain academics. Nor can they solicit such favours or employ pressure to secure them. In other words academics like other professionals cannot be allowed to abuse their power.

In any discussion of academic power we must not in our desire to extend or acknowledge student autonomy overlook the obvious. The relationships we have described take place within certain parameters that cannot be wished away. Staff in higher education are granted a great deal of power over students irrespective of whether the latter are male or female, young or old. Some, perhaps the bulk, of that power flows from the authority vested in them as lecturers, but some is inherited from outside the institution where patriarchy seeks to elevate men above women whilst the family and education each energetically teaches the young to defer to the old. Fuse those elements together and it becomes apparent that the university must seek to ensure that all students are protected from exploitation. Protected from staff seeking to abuse the authority and power they inevitably have over students. We believe extending student autonomy, developing the range of educational programmes on offer and allowing students a far greater role in the management and decision-making process are the best ways of eroding those inequities which enable sexual exploitation to continue largely unchallenged. In calling for such reforms we are not transmuting female students into victims. Neither are we doing so by stressing that in all but two cases we encountered it has been heterosexual male lecturers seeking sexual relationships with female students younger than themselves; and that those who indulge in such behaviour once seem to do so repeatedly. All we ask is for universities to ensure that the authority they delegate is properly exercised and they recognise that they like others must engage in an educational process which can help to make sexual harassment and exploitation as unacceptable as plagiarism and bribery.

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