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SILVA v. UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE: THE PRECARIOUS BALANCE BETWEEN STUDENT HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT CLAIMS AND ACADEMIC FREEDOM

INTRODUCTION

Sexual harassment1 of college students2 by professors is a practice as old as the university system itself.3 Only in the past two decades,4

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1 Catharine A. MacKinnon, in her work Sexual Harassment of Working Women, supplied a workable definition of sexual harassment that several courts have accepted:

   Sexual harassment... refers to the unwanted imposition of sexual requirements in the context of a relationship of unequal power. Central to the concept is the use of power derived from one social sphere to lever benefits or impose deprivations in another. . . . When one is sexual, the other material, the cumulative sanction is particularly potent.

   CATHARINE A. MACKINNON, SEXUAL HARASSMENT OF WORKING WOMEN 1 (1979); see Elaine D. Ingulli, Sexual Harassment in Education, 18 Rutgers L.J. 281, 283 & n.8 (1987).


2 Sexual harassment on college campuses includes serious assault, rape, verbal harassment, pressure for sexual activity, remarks about women’s clothing, unnecessary and unwelcome patting, pinching, and touching. See Ingulli, supra note 1, at 284. Sexual harassment in the educational context is also problematic in elementary and secondary schools. See generally Monica L. Sherer, Comment, No Longer Just Child’s Play: School Liability Under Title IX for Peer Sexual Harassment, 141 U. Pa. L. Rev. 2119 (1993) (discussing student to student sexual harassment in elementary and secondary schools).

3 See BILLIE W. DZIECH & LINDA WEINER, THE LECHEROUS PROFESSOR: SEXUAL HARASSMENT ON CAMPUS 11 (2d ed. 1990). “Sexual harassment of college students is not new. A familiar jest is ‘Where there has been a student body, there has always been a faculty for love.’
however, has the true magnitude of this problem become apparent.\(^5\)

\(^5\)\[1\]t seems likely that sexual harassment has existed as long as there have been women students and male professors." \(\text{Id.}\)

Ancient Rome adopted many Greek methods of education for young students, chief among which was the "pedagogue" system:

[T]o protect [the student] from danger, both physical and moral, [the student] was placed in the care of a trusted slave of the household, who . . . was known as [the student's] \textit{paidagogos} . . . . It was he who helped the parents to instill [sic] into the children what was right and what was wrong, all the details of proper behaviour.

\textbf{STANLEY F. BONNER, EDUCATION IN ANCIENT ROME 38 (1977).} "Pedagogues" were severely punished for any form of sexual advance towards their students. \(\text{Id.}\) at 41. "[I]n one instance, when a 'pedagogue' allowed a young girl to be seduced, the father, a Roman knight, with all the ruthless severity of early Rome, put them both to death." \(\text{Id.}\) \textit{But see} \textbf{ALAN B. COBBAN, THE MEDIEVAL UNIVERSITIES: THEIR DEVELOPMENT AND ORGANIZATION 62-63 (1975)} (describing how students at earliest known university in Bologna controlled hiring and payment of professors, and effectuated "quasi-totalitarian regime").

\(^4\) In the 1960s and 1970s both male and female students, described as "activists," demanded student representation and grievance procedures. \textit{See DZIECH & WEINER, supra note 3, at 11. While a multitude of women's issues were addressed, sexual harassment was ignored. \(\text{Id.}\).}

\(^5\) Sexual harassment of college students by their professors is still a pervasive problem. \textit{See DZIECH & WEINER, supra note 3, at 13-14} (summarizing studies on prevalence of sexual harassment of students by faculty members); L.A. Kauffman, \textit{Sexual Harassment: How Political is the Personal?}, \textbf{THE NATION}, Mar. 26, 1988, at 419.

As a 1982-1985 investigation by Ms. and other studies have shown, about 15 percent of women at American colleges and universities have been raped. More than half experience some form of sexual harassment during their academic career, ranging from verbal abuse to unwanted sexual contact, assault or rape. Between 20 and 25 percent are sexually propositioned or harassed by their professors. \textit{Id.}; \textit{see also} \textbf{MICHELE A. PALUDI & RICHARD B. BARICKMAN, ACADEMIC AND WORKPLACE SEXUAL HARASSMENT: A RESOURCE MANUAL 11-12, tbl. 1.6 (1991)} (reviewing current research on incidence of sexual harassment in public schools). \textit{See generally} Anne L. Bryant, \textit{Hostile Hallways: The AAUW Survey on Sexual Harassment in America's Schools, 63 J. SCH. HEALTH 355 (1993)} (discussing survey revealing 85% of girls and 76% of boys in secondary and elementary school have been sexually harassed); Kelly Corbett et al., \textit{Sexual Harassment in High School, 25 YOUTH & SOC'Y 93 (1993)} (discussing study of college students' recollections of sexual harassment in high school); Robert D. Glaser & Joseph S. Thorpe, \textit{Unethical Intimacy: A Survey of Sexual Contact and Advances Between Psychology Educators and Female Graduate Students, 41 AM. PSYCHOL. 43-51 (1986)} (discussing fact that approximately one-fourth of females with Ph.D. in Psychology have been sexually harassed by professors); Michelle A. Marks & Eileen S. Nelson, \textit{Sexual Harassment on Campus: Effects of Professor Gender on Perception of Sexually Harassing Behavior, 28 SEX ROLES: A JOURNAL OF RESEARCH 207 (1993)} (explaining how gender differences among perpetrators and recipients of harassment affects perception of sexual harassment).

A key obstacle to eradicating sexual harassment from college campuses remains its definition. \textit{See Ronna G. Schneider, Sexual Harassment and Higher Education, 65 TEX. L. REV. 525, 533-43 (1987)} (describing difficulties in precisely defining sexual harassment and proposing objective standard); \textit{see also PALUDI & BARICKMAN, supra, at 2-5} (reproducing several legal definitions of sexual harassment); Louise F. Fitzgerald, \textit{Sexual Harassment: The Definition and Measurement of a Construct, in IVORY POWER: SEXUAL HARASSMENT ON CAMPUS 21, 22-24 (Michele A. Paludi ed., 1991)} (listing legal definitions and categorizing them into "Type 1," general statements describing character of behavior and status of participants and "Type 2," general statements describing character of behavior and status of participants and...
Female students have refused to accept the libidinous advances of faculty members as an inevitable part of the educational process. Students confronted with "quid pro quo" sexual harassment have historically

specific, proscribed conduct).

Law review articles have addressed the analogous problem of university regulation of racist speech. See generally Richard Delgado, Campus Antiracism Rules: Constitutional Narratives in Collision, 85 NW. U. L. REV. 343 (1991) (discussing consequences of enacting rules forbidding certain kinds of campus speech and ensuing conflict of values); Charles R. Lawrence III, If He Hollers Let Him Go: Regulating Racist Speech on Campus, 1990 DUKE L. J. 431 (arguing that racist campus speech should not be protected under First Amendment).

6 This Comment focuses on sexual harassment on college campuses between male professors and female students, although the writer is cognizant of the fact that other harassment scenarios do exist, such as between female professors and male students and between same-sex professors and students. See Natalie J. Malovich & Jayne E. Stake, Sexual Harassment on Campus: Individual Differences in Attitudes and Beliefs, in SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN THE EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT 127-45 (Dan H. Wishnietsky ed., 1992) (exploring difference between male and female students in frequency and effects of sexual harassment); cf. Terry Hazzard, Sexual Harassment: What's Good For the Goose is Good For the Gander, in SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN THE EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT 33-47 (Dan H. Wishnietsky ed., 1992) (discussing males as objects of sexual harassment in workplace).

7 See Kauffman, supra note 5, at 419 ("When sexual harassment first surfaced as a campus issue in the mid-1970's, feminist students defined it primarily as an abuse of institutionally conferred authority... This conception of sexual harassment provided a solid basis for fighting institutionalized sexism."); Lawrence Walsh, Law Prof Assaulted Student, Suit Says, PITT. POST-GAZETTE, Apr. 20, 1994, at B1 (discussing lawsuit brought by former Duquesne University law student against professor for sexual harassment); Navy Offers Courts-Martial in Sex Scandal, UPI, Dec. 14, 1994, available in LEXIS, Nexis Library, Wires File (reporting U.S. Navy's recommendation that four instructors at San Diego training base be court-martialed for alleged sexual harassment of 16 female students); Kenneth Jost, Questionable Conduct, A.B.A. J., Nov. 1994, at 71 (recounting University of Maine student's sexual harassment allegation against history professor, professor's subsequent termination by university, and arbitrator's reinstatement of professor); see also Rorie Sherman, School Districts Sued on Sexual Harassment by Fellow Students, NAT'L L J., Dec. 13, 1993, at 10 (describing student lawsuits against school districts that allegedly failed adequately to address student-on-student sexual harassment).

Historically, students have not sought legal redress for sexual harassment because of the university's interest in protecting faculty members. See Schneider, supra note 5, at 527-29. Other reasons include students' temporary status as students and their financial inability to pursue legal remedies. Id. Student sexual harassment victims have also been more concerned with their education than the vindication of their rights. Walter B. Connolly, Jr. & Alison B. Marshall, Sexual Harassment of University or College Students by Faculty Members, 15 J.C. & U.L. 381, 392 (1989).

8 Since little guidance exists concerning the regulation of sexual harassment in academia pursuant to Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972, the following definition of quid pro quo sexual harassment is adopted from workplace guidelines employed by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. See EEOC Guidelines on Discrimination Because of Sex, 29 C.F.R. § 1604.11(a) (1994).

Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when (1) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment, or (2) submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is
employed the statutory framework of Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972, which governs sexual discrimination in the educational context. In addition, other victimized students have sought to extend Title IX to "hostile environment" claims, which arise from more

... used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual. . . .

Id.; see MACKINNON, supra note 1, at 32-40 (describing quid pro quo harassment in employment context); Schneider, supra note 5, at 535 (addressing and defining quid pro quo harassment). Title IX prohibits quid pro quo sexual harassment but does not explicitly prohibit environmental sexual harassment. Jollee Faber, Expanding Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 to Prohibit Student to Student Sexual Harassment, 2 UCLA WOMEN'S L. J. 85, 91 (1992).

9 20 U.S.C. §§ 1681-1688 (1988). The Congressional purpose for enacting Title IX was to prevent the distribution of funds to educational institutions engaging in sex discrimination and to provide students with protection against such practices. 118 CONG. REC. 5806-07 (1972).

10 Title IX states in pertinent part that "[n]o person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance . . . ." 20 U.S.C. § 1681(a) (1988). The Office for Civil Rights ("OCR") of the United States Department of Education, the agency authorized to enforce Title IX, has passed regulations that address the sexual harassment problem and further define the statute's scope. 34 C.F.R. §§ 106.1-.71 (1994).

[I]n providing any aid, benefit, or service to a student, a recipient [of federal assistance] shall not, on the basis of sex: . . . (4) Subject any person to separate or different rules of behavior, sanctions, or other treatment: . . . (6) Aid or perpetuate discrimination against any person by providing significant assistance to any agency, organization, or person which discriminates on the basis of sex in providing any aid, benefit or service to students or employees; [or] . . . (7) Otherwise limit any person in the enjoyment of any right, privilege, advantage, or opportunity.

34 C.F.R. § 106.31(b). But see University Responses to Racial and Sexual Harassment on Campuses, 1992: Hearing before the Senate Comm. on Labor and Human Resources, 102d Cong., 2d Sess. 97-98 (1992) (statement of United States Student Association) (criticizing OCR as underfunded and inattentive to student concerns) [hereinafter University Responses].

11 For a broad definition of "hostile environment" sexual harassment in the employment context, see 29 C.F.R. § 1604.11(a) (1994). Sexual harassment in violation of Title VII occurs when verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature "has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment." 29 C.F.R. § 1604.11(a) (1994). This Comment addresses the First Amendment issues raised by faculty members' sexual harassment of students and is, therefore, more concerned with emerging judicial recognition of Title IX "hostile environment" claims than the easily defined claims of quid pro quo harassment.

12 See Dirk Johnson, A Sexual Harassment Case to Test Academic Freedom, N.Y. TIMES, May 11, 1994, at D23. At the Chicago Theological Seminary, a religion professor, Graydon Snyder, filed suit for defamation after being publicly reprimanded by the University for relating a religious story that offended a female student. Id. "In a discussion of the role of intent in sin, Professor Snyder recited a story from the Talmud . . . about a man who falls off a roof, lands on a woman and accidentally has intercourse with her. The Talmud says he is innocent of sin, since the act was unintentional." Id. The female student objected to the story because it conveyed a message that unintentional abuse of women was permissible. Id. Professor Snyder contended that he told the story to illustrate the Sermon on the Mount, that once a man looks at a woman with lust in his heart, he has committed adultery. Teacher Says Gender Correctness Won Over Free Speech, CNN NEWS, May 12, 1994, available in LEXIS. News Library. Script File: see
subtle forms of sexual harassment. The hostile environment cause of action derives from analogy to Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which regulates workplace sexual discrimination. Many professors faced with student hostile environment sexual harassment claims have responded to such allegations by asserting their First Amendment right to academic freedom in the classroom. Recently, in Silva v. University of New

20/20: The Speech Police: Is Sexual Speech Sexual Harassment? (ABC television broadcast, May 12, 1995), available in LEXIS, News Library, Script File [hereinafter The Speech Police]. A student at the California State University of Sacramento, Craig Rogers, alleged that Professor Joanne Marrow, one of his psychology professors, sexually harassed him by conducting a sexually explicit lecture on female sexuality. Id. “I came in and there were slides of women’s genitalia. Here I have this woman who has this huge vagina on the screen, and she’s stroking it in a very personal, sexual, intimate way which aroused me, and this is not something that I think should be allowed.” Id. (statement of Craig Rogers). Professor Marrow stated that she used the lecture to discuss masturbation, an aspect of female sexuality, and that before conducting the class, she warned anyone who might be uncomfortable with the lecture to leave the classroom. Id. Rogers left, but returned when he realized that the material would be on his final exam. Id. When the university refused to remove questions from the lecture from the final exam, Rogers sued the state for $2.5 million on the ground that Professor Marrow had created a “hostile and offensive learning environment” in violation of the school’s sexual harassment code. The Speech Police, supra. Rogers compared Marrow’s lecture to being raped: “I had no power. I had no control. I was being aroused and didn’t want it. I felt like I was being held down.” Id.

14 Title VII states, in relevant part, that:
It shall be an unlawful employment practice for an employer—
(1) to fail or refuse to hire or to discharge any individual, or otherwise to discriminate against any individual with respect to his compensation, terms, conditions, or privileges of employment, because of such individual’s race, color, religion, sex, or national origin; or
(2) to limit, segregate, or classify his employees or applicants for employment in any way which would deprive or tend to deprive any individual of employment opportunities or otherwise adversely affect his status as an employee, because of such individual’s race, color, religion, sex, or national origin.

15 U.S. Const. amend. I. The First Amendment provides: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.” Id.
16 “Campuses across the country have been roiled in recent years by accusations that sexual harassment complaints have been used to override the free speech rights of professors who hold traditional views on the role of women.” Kenneth Jost, Questionable Conduct: There Can Be A Fine Line Between Preventing Sexual Harassment and Punishing Protected Speech. The Struggle Between Acceptable Behavior and First Amendment Rights is Straining College Campuses and Workplaces Across the Nation, 80 A.B.A. J., Nov. 1994, at 70-71; see Dennis Cauchon, Harassment, Free Speech Collide in Florida, USA TODAY, Nov. 20, 1991, at 9A (stating that First Amendment challenge is most serious threat to sexual harassment law); Anthony Flint, Speech Codes on Campus Stir Debate over Rights, BOSTON GLOBE, Mar. 31, 1991, National/Foreign Section at 1 (demonstrating growing belief that restrictions on speech limit free expression and violate First Amendment rights); Nat Hentoff, Speech Codes that Punish Speech,
Hampshire, the New Hampshire District Court held that the University of New Hampshire ("UNH") violated a professor's First Amendment right to speak out on matters of public concern by suspending him for using sexually explicit examples in a writing course.

Professor J. Donald Silva ("Silva"), a tenured instructor of communications at UNH, used two sexually-charged illustrations while teaching a technical writing class. The first was a metaphor that compared the process of "focusing" a thesis statement to the act of sexual intercourse. The second was one in which Silva compared belly dancing to a plate of jello with a vibrator underneath to illustrate the concept of "good definition." Upon hearing Silva's classroom statements, eight female...
students filed written sexual harassment complaints with UNH. Relying on a university hearing panel's findings and recommendations, the university president concluded that Silva had violated the University System of New Hampshire ("USNH") Sexual Harassment Policy. Silva

The complaints were filed between February 27, 1992 and March 2, 1992. Silva, 888 F. Supp. at 300. While six of the complaints addressed Silva's classroom speech, two of the grievances alleged sexually-charged, out-of-classroom conduct by Silva during the fall of 1990. Id. at 301-02. One student, Kate Allen, alleged that Silva asked her: "[H]ow would you like to get an A [for the class]?” Id. at 310. Another student, Holly Woodhouse, claimed that while she was on her knees looking through the bottom drawer of a card catalog at the UNH library, Silva observed her and said: "It looks like you've had a lot [sic] of experience on your knees.” Id. at 305. In addition, after one student told her classmates that she was going to "jump on a computer," Silva was overheard commenting to other students nearby, "I'd like to see that!” Id. Finally, suggesting a lesbian relationship, Silva asked two female students seeking his help on an assignment: "How long have you been together?” Silva, 888 F. Supp. at 302.

After meeting with several UNH authorities one week after he made the second classroom statement, Silva became aware of the complaints lodged against him. Id. Those authorities included: Dr. Brian A. Giles, the Director of the Thompson School; Neil Lubow, a professor of philosophy and Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs at UNH; and, Jane Stapleton, a counselor at the UNH's Sexual Harassment and Rape Prevention Program. Id.

Following the meeting, the University created “shadow classes” for those students who wanted to transfer out of Silva's class. Id. at 303. “All of the complaining students transferred out of Silva's class.” Id.

“A reasonable female student would find Professor Silva's comments and his behavior to be offensive, intimidating and contributing to a hostile academic environment.” Id. at 307. The panel conditioned Silva's reinstatement on several conditions including: (1) reimbursement to UNH for all costs associated with any and all alterations in teaching assignments necessitated by Silva's behavior; (2) participation in approved counseling sessions for a minimum of one year at his own expense; (3) a written apology to the complainants for having created a hostile and offensive environment; and (4) a promise not to retaliate against the complaining students. Id. at 307-08.

Ultimately, seven of the eight original complainants requested that their complaints be resolved under the USNH Sexual Harassment Policy. Id. at 305. The University System of New Hampshire [USNH] Sexual Harassment Policy provides:

All faculty, staff and students have a right to work in an environment free of discrimination, including freedom from sexual harassment. It is the policy of the University System of New Hampshire that no member of the University System community may sexually harass another. . . .

Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:

- such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual’s work performance or creating a hostile or offensive working or academic environment.
- submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment or academic decisions affecting that individual.
- submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment or academic work . . .

Examples of conduct which may, if continued or repeated, constitute sexual harassment are:
appealed the president's decision, and an appeals board affirmed the ruling. Subsequently, Silva filed suit in federal district court against UNH, several school authorities, and the eight students who initiated the inquiry that resulted in his dismissal. Silva sought a preliminary injunction against his suspension and a declaratory judgment that the defendants' conduct violated both his First Amendment right to freedom of speech and his Fourteenth Amendment right to due process. The court denied the defendants' motion for summary judgment on the Professor's First Amendment claim, finding that Silva was likely to succeed on the merits. The court's opinion led the trustees of UNH to settle the case.

- unwelcome sexual propositions
- graphic comments about a person's body
- sexually suggestive objects or pictures in the workplace
- sexually degrading words to describe a person
- derogatory or sexually explicit statements about an actual or supposed sexual relationship
- unwelcome touching, patting, pinching or leering
- derogatory gender-based humor

Such conduct whether intended or not constitutes sexual harassment and is illegal under both State and Federal law. Violations of this policy will not be permitted. Any faculty, staff or student who violates this policy will be subject to discipline up to and including dismissal.

Id. at 298.
25 Id. at 311.
26 Id. at 297.
27 Silva, 888 F. Supp. at 297. Silva brought this action pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 2201, 2202; 42 U.S.C. §§ 1983, 1988; and New Hampshire state law. Id. In addition to his First and Fourteenth Amendment claims, Silva sought the following: (1) a declaratory judgment that the defendants' conduct denied him his civil rights under color of state law in violation of 42 U.S.C. § 1983; (2) a permanent order enjoining the defendants from acting to prevent him from teaching at UNH or from otherwise punishing him on the basis of protected speech; (3) damages under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 for the alleged violation of his First Amendment and due process rights; (4) damages under state law based on allegations of breach of contract and breach of a contractual duty of good faith and fair dealing; and (5) an award of reasonable costs and attorney's fees pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1988. Id.
28 Id. at 317.
29 The trustees agreed to pay Silva $60,000 in back pay and damages, to pay $170,000 in legal fees, and to remove all disciplinary references from Silva's record. Professor Accused of Harassment is Reinstated, N.Y. TIMES, Dec. 4, 1994, at 35. While Silva felt vindicated by the district court's decision, many students expressed concern that the decision would lead to a "chilling effect" on students' voicing sexual harassment complaints. Id. Some students scheduled a campus protest of the decision. Id.

Thomas Carnaselli, a UNH English professor stated: "This case involves a classroom speech by a teacher, and the speech he used was relevant to the subject matter of his course. The stuff [was] relevant. Maybe it was somewhat misguided . . . . Some people are offended by any reference to sex, but that's . . . their problem." Professor is Suspended, supra note 19. Moreover, Chris Bawling, a UNH Physics professor added: "[I]n the case of Professor Silva,
Ruling on Silva's First Amendment claim, the court initially concluded that Silva's classroom examples were "not of a sexual nature" and promoted the valid educational objective of explaining concepts related to his course. Then the court stated that the university's sexual harassment policy was unconstitutional because it failed to provide Silva with adequate notice that his conduct was prohibited, and was not reason-
ably related to the legitimate pedagogical objective of maintaining a harmonious academic atmosphere. Finally, the court applied the "Connick-Pickering" test, articulated by the Supreme Court in *Connick v. Myers* and *Pickering v. Board of Education*, and held that because the content, form, and context of Silva's statements implicated matters of public concern, his statements were constitutionally protected under proscripted.

*Id.* at 604 (citation omitted).

34 Silva, 888 F. Supp. at 312-13. Conduct prohibited by the University's sexual harassment policy includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and repeated derogatory or sexually explicit statements about actual or supposed sexual acts. See supra note 24. It is submitted that since UNH partially based Silva's dismissal upon his out-of-classroom conduct and since the USNH Sexual Harassment Policy arguably provided Silva with notice that his out-of-classroom speech and conduct was prohibited, the court's consideration of those incidents should have led to a different result.

35 Silva, 888 F. Supp. at 313. In reaching this conclusion, the court used the First Circuit's test for determining the legality of state regulation of an educator's classroom speech. *Id.* at 313 (citing Mailloux v. Kiley, 448 F.2d 1242, 1243 (1st Cir. 1971)). The district court considered several factors obtained from *Mailloux*: the age and sophistication of the students, the relationship between the instructional technique used and the educational objective, and the context and manner of demonstration. *Id.*

36 *Id.* at 314-16. Under the *Connick-Pickering* test, a government employee's speech is protected by the First Amendment if: (1) the speech is a matter of public concern; and (2) the employee's interest in expression on the matter is not outweighed by any injury the speech could cause to "the State, as an employer, in promoting the efficiency of the public services it performs through its employees." *Connick v. Myers*, 461 U.S. 138, 142 (1983) (quoting *Pickering v. Board of Educ.*, 391 U.S. 563, 568 (1968)).

The court noted that the First Circuit did not use the *Connick-Pickering* test to determine whether a public school teacher's classroom speech is constitutionally protected. *Silva*, 888 F. Supp. at 315 n.16. Although the court followed the First Circuit's approach in applying the *Connick-Pickering* test, it did so without deciding whether the *Connick-Pickering* test was applicable to the classroom speech. *Id. But cf.* Blum v. Schlegel, 18 F.3d 1005, 1010-11 (2d Cir. 1994) (applying *Connick-Pickering* test to speech of state law school professor).


39 "Whether an employee's speech addresses a matter of public concern must be determined by the content, form, and context of a given statement, as revealed by the whole record." *Connick*, 461 U.S. at 147-48. The Court further noted that this is a question of law, not fact. *Id.* at 148 n.7.

40 Silva, 888 F. Supp. at 316. The court noted: Silva's classroom statements were not statements "upon matters only of personal interest," but rather were made for the legitimate pedagogical, public purpose of conveying certain principles related to the subject matter of his course. Further, the content, form, and context of said statements demonstrate that they are directly related to (1) the preservation of academic freedom and (2) the issue of whether speech which is offensive to a particular class of individuals should be tolerated in American schools. Accordingly, the court finds and rules that Silva's classroom statements were related to matters of public concern.

*Id.*
the First and Fourteenth Amendments.41

It is submitted that the Silva court erred in holding that Silva's speech was related to matters of public concern and constitutionally protected under the First and Fourteenth Amendments. This Comment suggests that the court failed to determine whether the nature of Silva's conduct, and the context in which the alleged offenses took place, constituted harassment "sufficiently severe or pervasive"42 to create a hostile academic environment for his students. Part I submits that Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972 contains an implied "hostile environment" cause of action analogous to Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and argues that Silva created a hostile environment through his sexual illustrations. Part II analyzes the notion of academic freedom in the classroom and explores Silva's contention that his sexually-charged classroom speech was protected under the First Amendment. Finally, Part III uses Silva as a benchmark from which to differentiate constitutionally protected faculty speech that is the product of an audacious pedagogical approach from unprotected speech that truly harasses and injures students.

I. TITLE IX HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT SEXUAL HARASSMENT

A. Hostile Environment Sexual Harassment

Although the Supreme Court has never explicitly decided whether Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972 contains an implied hostile environment cause of action,43 it has twice addressed the issue in

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41 The court concluded that Silva's First Amendment interest in his classroom speech was "overwhelmingly superior" to UNH's interest in prohibiting it. Id. Placing a high value on academic freedom, the court liberally quoted from the discussion of this principle in Keyishian:

"Our Nation is deeply committed to safeguarding academic freedom, which is of transcendent value to all of us and not merely to the teachers concerned. That freedom is therefore a special concern of the First Amendment, which does not tolerate laws that cast a pall of orthodoxy over the classroom. . . . The classroom is peculiarly the "marketplace of ideas." The Nation's future depends upon leaders trained through a wide exposure to that robust exchange of ideas which discovers truth "out of a multitude of tongues, [rather] than through any kind of authoritative selection."

Id. at 314 (quoting Keyishian v. Board of Regents, 385 U.S. at 603 (1967)) (alteration in original) (citation omitted).

42 See Meritor Sav. Bank v. Vinson, 477 U.S. 57, 67 (1986) (noting that to establish violation of Title VII based upon hostile work environment, harassment "must be sufficiently severe or pervasive 'to alter the conditions' of workplace") (quoting Henson v. City of Dundee, 682 F.2d 897, 904 (11th Cir. 1982)).

43 In two decisions, the Supreme Court discussed the remedies available to students under Title IX. In Cannon v. University of Chicago, 441 U.S. 677 (1979), the Court held that an implied private right of action under Title IX exists, even though the statute does not specifically provide for one. Id. at 708. Additionally, in Franklin v. Gwinnett County Pub. Sch., 503 U.S.
the employment context under Title VII. In *Meritor Savings Bank v. Vinson*, a former bank employee claimed that she had been subjected to continuous sexual harassment by her supervisor during her four years at the bank. The Supreme Court agreed that a hostile work environment claim was actionable as a violation of Title VII if the basis for the claim was "sufficiently severe or pervasive 'to alter the conditions of [the victim's] employment and create an abusive working environment.'" This determination is made by examining the nature of the sexual advances and the particular context in which the alleged events took place.

In *Harris v. Forklift Systems*, the Supreme Court expanded the "abusive work environment" standard articulated in *Meritor*. *Harris* involved a company president's alleged sexual harassment of a female manager of the company. The Supreme Court reversed the lower court's finding that the president's conduct did not create a hostile work environ-

60 (1992), the Court provided that monetary damages are an available remedy for students victimized by individuals and schools that intentionally violate Title IX. *Franklin*, 503 U.S. at 75 n.8.

Although the Supreme Court had limited courts' jurisdiction over Title IX cases, see, e.g., Grove City College v. Bell, 465 U.S. 555 (1984) (holding that receipt of federal money by one school program does not create jurisdiction under Title IX), the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987 expanded this jurisdiction. 20 U.S.C. § 1687(2)(A) (1988); see also Carrie Baker, *Comment, Proposed Title IX Guidelines on Sex-Based Harassment of Students*, 43 EMORY L. J. 271 (1994) (noting that Supreme Court has narrowed jurisdiction over Title IX cases).

Id. at 60. The supervisor's alleged harassment included repeated demands for sexual favors, resulting in actual intercourse between the victim and her supervisor. *Id.* Ultimately, the behavior allegedly led to forcible rape. *Id.*

Id. at 73.

*Meritor*, 477 U.S. at 67 (quoting Henson v. City of Dundee, 682 F.2d 897, 904 (11th Cir. 1982)). The Court held that because the victim's allegations in *Meritor* included not only extreme harassment, but criminal conduct, she sufficiently stated a claim for "hostile environment" sexual harassment. *Id.*

Id. at 69 (quoting EEOC Guidelines, 29 C.F.R. § 1604.11(b) (1985)).


*Harris*, 114 S. Ct. at 369. A Magistrate found that during the complainant's tenure at Forklift, her superior directed gender-based insults at her and subjected her to repeated, unwanted sexual innuendos. *Id.* The president said to her several times, in front of other employees: "You're a woman, what do you know?" *Id.* He also suggested that they both "go to the Holiday Inn to negotiate [her] raise." *Id.* On various occasions, he threw objects on the ground in front of the complainant and other women and asked them to pick up the objects. *Id.* at 369. He also asked the plaintiff and several other female employees to get coins from his front pants pocket. *Harris*, 114 S. Ct. at 369.

See also *Supreme Court to Rule on Second Sexual Harassment Case* (NPR radio broadcast. Oct. 13, 1993), available in LEXIS, News Library, Script File. Theresa Harris, the plaintiff in *Harris v. Forklift Sys.* detailed the effects of her superior's harassment: "I hated to go to work . . . I cried every day at work and I cried every day when I went home. There were a lot of days [when] I would sit in my office and literally shake." *Id.*
ment because it did not seriously affect the plaintiff's psychological well-being.\textsuperscript{51} Adopting an objective standard,\textsuperscript{52} the Court emphasized that Title VII provides protection long before an employee's psychological health is seriously affected.\textsuperscript{53} A violation of Title VII occurs when the work environment can reasonably be perceived as being abusive or hostile, and is in fact perceived as such.\textsuperscript{54} In assessing whether an employer has created a hostile environment, a jury must consider all relevant facts and circumstances\textsuperscript{55} including: (1) whether the harassment was frequent and severe; (2) whether the behavior was physically threatening or humiliating; and (3) whether the conduct interfered with an employee's work performance.\textsuperscript{56}

Courts\textsuperscript{57} and commentators\textsuperscript{58} have recognized an implied Title IX

\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{51} See Harris, 114 S. Ct. at 371.
\textsuperscript{52} See id. at 370 ("This standard, which we reaffirm today, takes a middle path between making actionable any conduct that is merely offensive and requiring the conduct to cause a tangible psychological injury.").
\textsuperscript{53} Id. at 370-71. The majority stated:
Title VII comes into play before the harassing conduct leads to a nervous breakdown. A discriminatorily abusive work environment, even one that does not seriously affect employees' psychological well-being, can and often will detract from employees' job performance, discourage employees from remaining on the job, or keep them from advancing in their careers.
\textsuperscript{54} Id.
“hostile environment” claim by using Title VII as an analogous standard.\textsuperscript{59} This interpretation of Title IX more effectively promotes the

1560. 1563 (N.D. Cal. 1993) (recognizing Title IX hostile environment claim of junior high student sexually harassed by other students); Patricia H. v. Berkeley Unified Sch. Dist., 830 F. Supp. 1288, 1293 (N.D. Cal. 1993) (recognizing student plaintiffs’ right to state claim for hostile environment sexual harassment under Title IX); Moire v. Temple Univ. Sch. of Medicine, 613 F. Supp. 1360 (E.D. Pa. 1985) (allowing medical student’s Title IX hostile environment claim to be asserted against university but not against individual or medical clinic, neither of which received federal funds), aff’d, 800 F.2d 1136 (3d Cir. 1986).

But see Seamons v. Snow, 864 F. Supp. 1111, 1118 (D. Utah 1994) (“Title IX does not expressly create a cause of action based on negligence for hostile environment. It would be inappropriate for this Court to import the doctrine of hostile environment sexual harassment from Title VII into this Title IX action.”); Bougher v. University of Pitt., 713 F. Supp. 139, 145 (W.D. Pa.) (declining to use Title VII as standard for Title IX action), aff’d, 882 F.2d 74 (3d Cir. 1989).

\textsuperscript{58} See generally Baker, supra note 43, at 293-318 (proposing standards under federal law for sex-based harassment of students based upon Title VII guidelines); Ingulli, supra note 1, at 285-96 (outlining federal statutes and cases pertaining to sexual harassment in educational context and analogizing Title VII’s operation to that of Title IX); Schneider, supra note 5 (exploring scope of Title IX and difficulties students face when bringing Title IX action); Kimberly A. Mango, Comment. Students versus Professors: Combatting Sexual Harassment Under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, 23 CONN. L. REV. 355, 360-90 (1991) (discussing legislative history of Title IX, its interplay with Title VII, and arguing that statute includes remedy for environmental sexual harassment of students).

\textsuperscript{59} In the wake of the Meritor and Harris decisions, at least two circuits have accepted Title IX hostile environment claims using Title VII as an analogous standard. See Lipsett v. University of P.R., 864 F.2d 881, 901 (1st Cir. 1988) (recognizing Title IX hostile environment claim brought by female medical school student against University of Puerto Rico, several administrators, and director of residency program); Mabry v. State Bd. of Community Colleges & Occupational Educ., 813 F.2d 311, 316 (10th Cir. 1987) (holding that under doctrine of issue preclusion, trial court’s failure to find Title VII sex discrimination against fired instructor collaterally estopped plaintiff’s Title IX claim), cert. denied, 484 U.S. 849 (1987). “Because Title VII prohibits the identical conduct prohibited by Title IX, i.e., sex discrimination, we regard it as the most appropriate analogue when defining Title IX’s substantive standards . . . ." Id. at 316 n.6.

In Lipsett, the plaintiff alleged the existence of a particularly egregious hostile environment. 864 F.2d at 886. For example, she claimed that the chief resident, under whom she worked, stated in the presence of the plaintiff and six male patients that he wanted to engage in sexual intercourse with a nurse who walked by. Id. at 887. In another instance, as the plaintiff was performing a rectal examination, the chief resident remarked to the patient that the plaintiff was about to give the patient “pleasure.” Id. Furthermore, the supervisor assigned the plaintiff trivial tasks, commenting that women should not be surgeons because they were unreliable while menstruating or while “in heat.” Id.

The plaintiff also alleged sexual harassment by her male resident peers. Id. at 887-88. This included hanging Playboy centerfolds upon the walls of the men’s rest area, posting a list of sexually offensive names for the female residents and posting a sexually explicit drawing of the plaintiff’s body on the bulletin board. Lipsett, 864 F.2d at 888. The plaintiff and other female residents could not avoid the offensive, sexually charged exhibits because all of the residents went to the men’s rest area during the day to receive and check for notices and to discuss administrative matters. Id.
statute's central purpose: the elimination of both sexual discrimination and sexual harassment from public schools.60 Such a reading is justified because teachers have a unique influence on students' lives.61 This power, when coupled with students' youth and inexperience, seems to make students potentially more vulnerable than employees to the abuse of authority that is the hallmark of sexual harassment. Therefore, it is imperative that students receive the same hostile environment protections under Title IX as employees are afforded under Title VII.62

60 See supra note 9.

61 See PALUDI & BARICKMAN, supra note 5, at 101-02 (describing nature of power possessed by faculty members). "Professors give grades, write recommendations for graduate schools . . . and can predispose colleagues' attitudes towards students." Id. at 102. A professor's greatest power lies in his or her ability to affect a student's self esteem and to motivate or discourage a pupil's learning through feedback and interaction with the student. Id.; see OFFICE OF CIVIL RIGHTS, U.S. DEPT. OF EDUC., SEXUAL HARASSMENT: IT'S NOT ACADEMIC (1991), reprinted in EDUCATOR'S GUIDE TO CONTROLLING SEXUAL HARASSMENT, Appendix II (1991). The OCR's Guidelines state that sexual harassment may lead a student to receive undeserved grades in important courses, force changes in courses of study, cause transfer to other colleges or universities, impede the ability to secure important job referrals and contacts, and foster emotional problems. Id.

A professor may manipulate this power to obtain sexual gratification in a number of ways. See DZIECH & WEINER, supra note 3, at 122-24 (naming "counselor-helper," "confidante," "intellectual seducer," "opportunists," and "power broker" as roles played by harassing professors seeking manipulative relationships with students). Rather than taking advantage of chance opportunities or openly negotiating with his or her control over grades or jobs, a teacher/harasser will often play one of these roles in an attempt to gain sexual favors from a student. Id.

62 Most colleges and universities have detailed complaint procedures designed to encourage students to report cases of sexual harassment. See University Responses to Racial and Sexual Harassment on Campuses, supra note 10, passim (addressing problems of racial and sexual harassment on college campuses and discussing university responses to harassment in context of proposed "Freedom of Speech on Campus Act"); see also EDUCATOR'S GUIDE TO CONTROLLING SEXUAL HARASSMENT, Appendix V (1993) (reprinting selected sexual harassment policies and procedures of Cornell University, Howard University, Middlebury College, Rice University, University of Iowa, University of California, Santa Barbara, University of Minnesota, and University of Wisconsin-Madison).

Some universities are considering proposals banning all student and faculty romantic involvements. See Sonya Live: Student Affairs (CNN television broadcast, Apr. 7, 1993), available in LEXIS, News Library, Script File (discussing proposals and alternative plans to combat sexual harassment on college campuses). One commentator has suggested a "Model Campus Conduct Policy" that addresses potential First Amendment issues. See John T. Shapiro, Note, The Call for Campus Conduct Policies: Censorship or Constitutionally Permissible Limitations on Speech, 75 MINN. L. REV. 201, 229-37 (1990). The model policy incorporates a definition of campus "hostile environment" that combines the Meritor standard adopted from Title VII with time, place, and manner restrictions. Id. at 229-31. "A single harassing act may be so severe or pervasive as to constitute a hostile environment in violation of this Policy." Id. at 231.
B. Silva's Speech and Conduct Created a Hostile Environment

When the Meritor and Harris Title VII hostile environment standards are applied to Silva's classroom examples, it is obvious that a hostile environment was created. Clearly, Silva's students interpreted his words as more than mere instructional tools. Furthermore, it is submitted that the court ignored key facts which showed that Silva manifested a preoccupation with sex both inside and outside the classroom. In addition, these facts support the conclusion that a reasonable female student would have perceived Silva's speech and conduct as a severe, recurrent, and degrading pattern of sexual harassment directed towards women. Moreover, the frequency and severity of Silva's sexual harassment would have led reasonable jurors to conclude that such conduct would interfere with a student's academic performance.

II. ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT

When professors are accused of hostile environment sexual harassment they often justify their behavior by raising an academic freedom, First Amendment defense. This concept of academic freedom is rooted in
the belief that the university is a "marketplace of ideas" committed to the largely unfettered flow of opinion and information. Admittedly, teachers and students must be free to reason, think, speak, and disagree in a tolerant educational environment that inculcates the values of a modern society without unduly restraining individual autonomy or freedom. Thus, the freedom of expression sought in a "marketplace of ideas" occasionally requires tolerance of provocative speech or conduct which may offend many in the university community.

First Amendment rights, applied in light of the special characteristics of the school environment, are available to teachers and students. It can hardly be argued that either students or teachers shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate. This has been the unmistakable holding of this Court for almost 50 years. Id.; see Keyishian v. Board of Regents, 385 U.S. 589, 603 (1967) ("Our Nation is deeply committed to safeguarding academic freedom, which is of transcendent value to all of us . . . . [It is] a special concern of the First Amendment . . . ."); see also Shelton v. Tucker, 364 U.S. 479, 487 (1960) ("The vigilant protection of constitutional freedoms is nowhere more vital than in the community of American schools."); William A. Kohlburn, Note, The Double-Edged Sword of Academic Freedom: Cutting the Scales of Justice in Title VII Litigation, 65 WASH. U. L.Q. 445, 446 (1987) (arguing that Supreme Court analyzes classroom First Amendment issues separately from academic freedom, and that "academic context" merely "heighten[s] the Court's concern" in such cases).

69 "The classroom is peculiarly the 'marketplace of ideas.' The Nation's future depends upon leaders trained through wide exposure to that robust exchange of ideas which discovers truth 'out of a multitude of tongues, [rather] than through any kind of authoritative selection.'" Keyishian, 385 U.S. at 603 (citation omitted); see Terrence Leas & Charles J. Russo, Waters v. Churchill: Autonomy for the Academy or Freedom for the Individual, Dec. 1994, available in WESTLAW, JRL Database ("In fact, compared with their colleagues in public elementary and secondary schools, faculty in higher education have significantly fewer limitations on their academic freedom . . . [due to] their search for truth as researchers coupled with their work involving adult learners . . . .").

70 "[A college campus], at least for its students, possesses many of the characteristics of a [traditional] public forum . . . . The college classroom with its surrounding environs is peculiarly the marketplace of ideas." Widmar v. Vincent, 454 U.S. 263, 267 n.5 (1981) (citation omitted) (quotations omitted); see Abrams v. United States, 250 U.S. 616, 630 (1919) (Holmes, J., dissenting) ("[T]he ultimate good desired is better reached by free trade in ideas—that the best test of truth is the power of the thought to get itself accepted in the competition of the market . . . . [W]e should be eternally vigilant against attempts to check the expression of opinions that we loathe and believe to be fraught with death . . . .").

71 "Our Nation is deeply committed to safeguarding academic freedom, which is of transcendent value to all of us and not merely to the teachers concerned. That freedom is therefore a special concern of the First Amendment, which does not tolerate laws that cast a pall of orthodoxy over the classroom." Shelton, 364 U.S. at 487; Keyishian, 385 U.S. at 603.

72 Colleges and universities have increasingly addressed the dilemma of maintaining a free and tolerant academic environment when confronted with campus speech, expression, or conduct that students, professors, or administrators find objectionable. See generally Craig B. Anderson, Political Correctness on College Campuses: Freedom of Speech v. Doing the Politically Correct Thing, 46 SMU L. REV. 171 (1992) (addressing conflict between "political correctness" and First
This freedom, however, is not boundless. Courts must balance the university's interest in regulating teachers' speech and conduct with academic freedom and the professors' right to speak on matters of public concern.\textsuperscript{73} A "matter of public concern" encompasses "any matter of political, social, or other concern to the community,"\textsuperscript{74} but does not

[Image 0x0 to 507x722]
In addition, a professor's interest in expressing herself on a matter must be weighed against any injury that her speech could cause to the public university's ability to promote the educational services it provides through its faculty employees.

management of their offices “without intrusive oversight by the judiciary in the name of the First Amendment.” Id.

Recent in Waters v. Churchill, 114 S. Ct. 1878, 1882 (1994), the Supreme Court addressed whether the Connick test should be applied to something the government-employer thought the employee said, or to what the fact-finder ultimately determined had been said. The Court emphasized the difference between the government’s roles as sovereign and as employer, as well as the resulting First Amendment implications of each, noting:

The key to First Amendment analysis of government employment decisions. . .[is that] the government’s interest in achieving its goals as effectively and efficiently as possible is elevated from a relatively subordinate interest when it acts as sovereign to a significant one when it acts as employer. The government cannot restrict the speech of the public at large just in the name of efficiency. But where the government is employing someone for the very purpose of effectively achieving its goals, such restrictions may well be appropriate.

Waters’ impact on faculty speech was recently demonstrated in a Second Circuit case. Jeffries v. Harleston, 21 F.3d 1238 (2d Cir.), vacated, 115 S. Ct. 502 (1994). In Jeffries, Leonard Jeffries, a black studies professor at the City College of New York was removed from his position as Department Chairman after giving a controversial speech on the bias he perceived to exist in New York State’s public school curriculum. Id. at 1241. During the off-campus speech he made a number of statements disparaging members of several groups, particularly Jews. Id. at 1242. The court held that by reducing Jeffries’ term as chairman the defendants—the president, chancellor, and trustees of the City College of New York—violated Jeffries’ First Amendment right to free speech. Id. at 1241. The Supreme Court remanded the case for reevaluation in light of Waters. Harleston v. Jeffries, 115 S. Ct. 502 (1994).

Connick, 461 U.S. at 142 (citation omitted). An inquiry into the “manner, time, and place” of the conduct is also relevant. Id. at 152. The Connick Court noted that “[w]hether an employee’s speech addresses a matter of public concern must be determined by the content, form, and context of a given statement, as revealed by the whole record.” Id. at 147-48 (footnote omitted). In Mount Healthy City Sch. Dist. Bd. of Educ. v. Doyle, 429 U.S. 274 (1977), the Supreme Court added a causation requirement to the Connick-Pickering test, making it more
It is suggested that the Silva court employed circular reasoning in reaching its decision that Silva’s “focus” metaphor and “vibrator” simile related to matters of public concern. Rather than ascertaining whether the statements themselves implicated matters of public concern, the court affirmatively categorized them as part of a larger, “academic freedom” controversy. It then determined that the illustrations necessarily related to matters of public concern. Therefore, the district court erred by focusing on the preexisting debate over academic freedom as a justification for its conclusion concerning sexual harassment. It is submitted that this type of circular analysis effectively converts any type of faculty speech, no matter how outrageous or injurious, into a “matter of public concern” due merely to its controversial nature. Sexual harassment, however, like difficult for teachers to assert their First Amendment rights.

For a case examining the limits of the public concern test, see Rankin v. McPherson, 483 U.S. 378 (1987). In Rankin, a data-entry employee in a county police office was fired for remarking to a co-worker, after learning of an attempt to kill the President, “‘[i]f they go for him again, I hope they get him.’” Id. at 381. The Court emphasized Connick’s context factor and noted that the conversation involved the policies of the President’s administration which is a matter of public concern. Id. at 386-87. After completing the Connick-Pickering analysis, the Court held that the employee’s discharge violated her First Amendment right to freedom of expression. Id. at 392.

See supra notes 30-42 and accompanying text (discussing rationale of Silva court).

Silva, 888 F. Supp. at 314. “[T]he preservation of academic freedom is a matter of public concern.” Id. at 315.

Id. at 316. The court determined that Silva’s statements were related to matters of public concern because in “content, form, and context [they] directly related to (1) the preservation of academic freedom and (2) the issue of whether speech which is offensive to a particular class of individuals should be tolerated in American schools.” Id.

See id. at 314.

other forms of unprotected speech, does not become a matter of public concern, and shall not acquire First Amendment protection, solely because it is controversial and has been well-documented.83

III. SEXUAL HARASSMENT VS. OFFENSIVE SPEECH

Although in many cases teachers' sexual harassment of students is unequivocal and easily recognizable,84 there is often disagreement over what constitutes "inappropriate" behavior.85 This ambiguity endangers


83 "It is not always enough that the subject matter of a communication be one in which there might be general interest, ... but that what is actually said on the topic is the crux of the public concern content inquiry." Wren v. Spurlock, 798 F.2d 1313, 1317 n.1 (10th Cir. 1986) (emphasis in original) (citations omitted), cert. denied, 479 U.S. 1085 (1987); see Egger v. Phillips, 710 F.2d 292, 316-17 (7th Cir.) ("In assessing whether the speech touches upon a matter of public concern, it is important not to equate the public's curiosity about a matter with a matter having societal ramifications."); cert. denied, 464 U.S. 918 (1983); Hullman v. Board of Trustees of Pratt Community College, 725 F. Supp. 1536, 1545 (D. Kan. 1989) ("Plaintiffs cannot bring constitutional light to their personal grievances by bootstrapping them onto issues of public concern by general references to the manner in which public institutions are conducted.") (citation omitted), aff'd, 950 F.2d 665 (1991).

Even assuming that Silva's speech implicated matters of public concern, it is submitted that his First Amendment interest did not outweigh UNH's interest in promoting a harmonious academic environment. See Hanton v. Gilbert, 842 F. Supp. 845, 851 (D.N.C.) (holding that university employee's interest in First Amendment rights were outweighed by damage to morale and efficiency in biology department), aff'd, 36 F.3d 4 (4th Cir. 1994). Indeed, Silva used two sexually explicit examples when there were numerous other ways to teach the same concepts. See Shub v. Hankin, 869 F. Supp. 213, 215 (S.D.N.Y. 1994), aff'd, 66 F.3d 308 (2d Cir. 1995). The district court dismissed the procedural due process complaint of a professor who was suspended from teaching after allegedly engaging in several inappropriate behaviors towards female students, including: inviting several female students for drinks, commenting on a student's perfume, requesting home telephone numbers from students, and touching a female student while asking her questions about her personal life. Id.; see In re Kozy, 371 S.E.2d 778, 782 (N.C. 1988) (affirming lower court judgment against professor who sexually harassed several female students). In Kozy:

Claudia Williams observed [the professor] fondling a necklace Daisy Morales was wearing around her neck which was hanging between her breasts . . . . [Morales] also complained . . . about [the professor] repeatedly putting his arms around her and leaning against her while examining her classwork. [The professor] testified that he had a habit of frequently placing his arms around students but did not feel that his behavior was offensive or intimidating.

Id. at 781.

84 See Mann v. University of Cin., 864 F. Supp. 44 (S.D. Ohio 1994) (denying partial summary judgment to student who claimed that professor created hostile environment by asking her to sleep with him); ROIPHE, supra note 1, at 90-91 ("The clarity of the definition of sexual harassment as a 'hostile work environment' depends on a universal code of conduct, a shared idea of acceptable behavior that we just don't have. Something that makes one person feel uncomfortable may make another person feel great.").

Under Catharine A. MacKinnon's broad definition of sexual harassment, it is possible to
the free exchange of views and pedagogical experimentation in the "marketplace of ideas," which ultimately hinders the educational process itself. The facts and circumstances in Silva highlight this ambiguity.

Students have the right to be free from an abusive educational environment; there is, however, no similar constitutional right to be free from offensive language. Too often, affronted students confuse "hostile

argue that Silva imposed an unwanted element of sexuality into his classroom, a place where he enjoyed power and influence over his students. See supra note 1 and accompanying text (stating MacKinnon's definition of sexual harassment); see also Schneider, supra note 5. at 534-35 ("[T]he question of legally cognizable sexual harassment in any setting turns on abuse of power in relationships . . . . Sexual harassment of a student by a faculty member, like that of an employee by an employer or supervisor involves the exploitation of a power relationship.") (footnotes omitted). According to these definitions of sexual harassment, each of Silva's students would have a claim of sexual harassment against the Professor. Yet, if one employs the Meritor and Harris definitions of hostile environment sexual harassment, Silva's speech would have constituted sexual harassment only if it had been "sufficiently severe or pervasive" to transform the students' educational environment into one reasonably perceived as being abusive or hostile. See supra notes 44-56 and accompanying text (discussing the Meritor and Harris decisions). Although the students in Silva who suffered harassment outside of class could satisfy this requirement, it is doubtful that any of the students who merely heard the illustrations in class could meet this test.

"[The fact that society may find speech offensive is not a sufficient reason for suppressing it."

ROIPHE, supra note 1, at 92-93 (citing FCC v. Pacifica Found., 438 U.S. 726, 745 (1978)); see Papish v. Board of Curators, 410 U.S. 667, 670 (1973) ("[T]he mere dissemination of ideas . . . no matter how offensive to good taste . . . on a state university campus may not be shut off in the name alone of 'conventions of decency.'"); see also Street v. New York, 394 U.S. 576, 592 (1969) ("It is firmly settled that under our Constitution the public expression of ideas may not be prohibited merely because the ideas are themselves offensive to some of their hearers.") (citations omitted).

In an interview with Playboy Magazine, Nadine Strossen, the President of the ACLU discussed the implications of offensive speech:
environment” with “offensive speech” and sue on the basis of the latter. As the Silva court noted, such claims should not be rewarded with a remedy since it is presumed that college students possess a certain level of sophistication and maturity. When professors like Silva, however, create an abusive academic environment by implementing an unnecessary and unwanted element of sexuality into the classroom, faculty speech evolves from constitutionally protected, offensive speech into unprotected sexual harassment.

CONCLUSION

Uncertainty over where the line should be drawn between an experimental or audacious pedagogical approach and sexually abusive speech continues to plague the courts. Silva may have intended his sexual illustrations to be a legitimate, instructive tool for his technical writing class. For many of his female students, however, Silva’s behavior was simply an attempt to obtain personal sexual gratification at the cost of creating a hostile educational environment. The Silva Court incorrectly ratified Silva’s effort to disguise his purpose by wrapping himself in the blanket of academic freedom. Professors who truly deserve the vital safeguards of academic freedom do not require the protection of a selective

Controversial subjects are subjects on which people have deep feelings and therefore are likely to be offended. Constitutional law is filled with controversy. If I am to fulfill my responsibility to expose my students to all points of view, everybody should be offended by something that’s being said. . . . The notion that an idea or work of art should not offend anybody who happens to hear or look at it is absolutely appalling. Dorothy Atcheson, The Playboy Forum: Defending Pornography Face-to-Face with the President of the ACLU, PLAYBOY, Feb. 1995, at 108.

See supra notes 11-12 and accompanying text (defining “hostile environment” and discussing the Snyder and Rogers cases).

See Silva, 888 F. Supp. at 313 (quoting Mailloux v. Kiley, 448 F.2d 1242, 1243 (1st Cir. 1971) (per curiam)). Free speech does not grant teachers a license to say or write in class whatever they may feel like. . . . and . . . the propriety of regulations or sanctions must depend on such circumstances as the age and sophistication of the students, the closeness of the relation between the specific technique used and some concededly valid educational objective, and the context and manner of presentation.

Id.

See Donna Prokop, Note, Controversial Teacher Speech: Striking a Balance Between First Amendment Rights and Educational Interests, 66 S. CAL. L. REV. 2533, 2540 (1993) (“[C]ourts generally uphold disciplinary action against a teacher for in-class speech if there is a rational relationship between the speech and a legitimate pedagogical goal. Avoiding disruption of the classroom almost always suffices to provide the court with such a goal.”) (footnotes omitted); see also Clark v. Holmes, 474 F.2d 928, 931 (7th Cir. 1972) (“[A]cademic freedom is not a license for uncontrolled expression at variance with established curricular contents and internally destructive of the proper functioning of the institution.”), cert. denied, 411 U.S. 972 (1973).
interpretation of facts. Such interpretation ignores faculty conduct which substantially contributes to a hostile classroom environment. Although the notion of academic freedom should protect faculty members who sincerely push the boundaries of pedagogical convention, it should not serve to shield those who use their position to harass and degrade their students.

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