Chapter 3: Baking It In

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According to Claire Cain Miller, who won a Pulitzer Prize writing about sexual harassment, "The best way to avoid sexual harassment and ensure that it's reported when it happens is to *bake it into company culture* [emphasis added]" (2017, para. 23). This chapter, and this book, is built on that premise—that sexual harassment prevention needs to be baked into the culture of higher education, but more specifically for this book, baked into the culture of writing studies programs.

Institutional culture, a shared system of beliefs, values, and assumptions, is malleable, but cannot be changed by a one-shot inoculation. Baking sexual harassment prevention into a culture demands a multifaceted approach. This approach is a "transactional" one that requires leadership that Elaine P. Maimon (2018) described as "more focused on relationships, more open to multiple interpretations, more adaptable to new situations, more flexible in adjusting to new environments, readier to multitask, and capable of paying attention both to the goals themselves and to the process for achieving those goals" (p. 5). To promote transactional culture-changing this chapter considers three approaches to sexual harassment prevention: 1) Hiring and promoting more women, 2) Creating a culture of reporting, 3) Instituting effective sexual harassment training through active bystander training and interactive scenario training. These approaches are not the only ways to tackle the problem, but are ones that have strong potential to work, especially in writing studies.

Hiring and Promoting More Women

High profile people from Cheryl Sandberg to Barack Obama have argued that having more women in positions of power will make women less vulnerable to sexual harassment. In a 2017 Facebook post, Facebook CEO Cheryl Sandberg wrote, "Ultimately, the thing that will bring the most to change our culture is the one I've been writing and talking about for a long time: having more women with more power" (para. 16). Speaking at a 2017 Paris gathering, former President Obama opined that more women were needed in positions of power because "men seem to be having some problems these days" (Mazza, para. 2). There is no doubt that Sandberg's interest in cultural change is appropriate, and Obama's observation is undeniably accurate. However, research into this approach has not always shown positive results. In their research, McLaughlin, Uggen, and Blackstone (2012) concluded, "For women who become bosses, their positions create a paradox of power in a gender system that continues to subordinate women.

In taking on positions of authority, they also take on a greater risk of sexual harassment" (p. 642). This same research argued, "Women supervisors, who hold authority over some men, directly challenge the presumptive superiority of men" (p. 627). Sexual harassment is too often used as the equalizer against women in positions of power.

Harassment is more likely if a woman is outnumbered in power situations. The promotion of a few isolated women as part of the baking-it-in-to-the-culture remedy is likely to be an ineffective solution. The remedy lies partly in having enough women in positions of power and authority to have collective power. McLaughlin stated, "I do think that there is safety in numbers" (Zillman, 2017, para. 12).

Numbers favor women in writing studies. Combined numbers of the Two Year and Four Year Studies of The National Census of Writing (2014) survey found all types of writing programs at both 2-year and 4-year institutions were led by women by a 2/1 margin (633 leaders of writing programs identified as female; 323 identified as male, and 6 identified as other). Sadly, these numbers do not always guarantee less sexual harassment or timely action when incidents are reported. Recently, Michelle Graber (2018) argued, "Female administrators, too, can be complicit in the acceptance of harassment" (p. 197). Female writing studies administrators may find themselves needing to "prove" themselves to the largely male administrative upper echelons. Gaining acceptance in these levels may demand that women enact "hegemonic masculinity" which researchers assert "operates through collective practice" (McLaughlin, et al., 2012, p. 636). Instead of working against hegemonic masculinity, female administrators may find themselves co-opted by it. Becoming part of this misogynistic culture can give female administrators *entrée* to a power status that fighting against this culture denies.

In the academic world, the concept idea of safety in numbers may not always hold in feminized disciplines like writing studies. Safety will come when the male-dominated upper administration is more fully gender-equal and when the bonds of hegemonic masculinity are broken. All those working in writing studies (women and men alike) can demand a voice in hiring discussions and suggest and amplify women candidates, especially in hiring at higher administrative levels where more women are sorely needed. Women who move from writing studies to other administrative positions can stay aware of hegemonic masculinity and work to undermine it, not be tempted by the power that cooperating with it may bring.

Creating a Culture of Reporting

"Baking it in" is an impossible goal without changing the current culture of non-reporting. The 2016 EEOC "Task Force on the Study of Harassment in the Workplace" showed that "Roughly three out of four individuals who experienced

harassment never even talked to a supervisor, manager, or union representative about the harassing conduct" (Feldblum & Lipnic, p. 6). In addition, the report concluded, "anywhere from 87% to 94% of individuals did *not* file a formal complaint" (p. 23).

In her 2018 article about sexual harassment, feminist scholar Margaret E. Johnson laid out additional information on sexual harassment non-reporting maintaining, "barely 1 in 4 ever do [report]" (para. 4). Johnson indicated three legal barriers to reporting including 1) limited legal definitions of sexual harassment, 2) employers being legally shielded from liability in these cases, and 3) legal complications surrounding retaliation. Other research has noted that in addition to the legal concerns, victims fear they will face disbelief, inaction, blame, or societal and professional retaliation.

Academic organizations and institutions report similar levels of non-reporting. The 2017 *AAU Campus Climate Survey Report* concluded that 25% or fewer of "even the most serious incidents are reported to an organization or agency (e.g., Title IX office; law enforcement)" (p. 50). A 2017 University of Texas Report, *Learning and Safe Environments*, found "The majority of victims of sexual harassment, stalking, dating/domestic abuse and violence and unwanted sexual contact (72%) did not disclose to anyone about the incident prior to taking this survey." Of the 28% who disclosed at all, only 8% of those reported to someone at a UT institution. (p. 57)

In addition to the legal complications in reporting, the 2017 AAU report indicated that for students "the dominant reason [for non-reporting] was that it [the harassment] was not considered serious enough" (p. xxi). The report went on "Even for penetration involving physical force, over half (8.6%) of students gave this reason" (p. xxi). Other significant reasons for non-reporting included embarrassment, shame, or emotional difficulty. And not surprisingly, many students claimed they "did not think anything would be done about it." (p. 50). The Texas report found that of the students who had disclosed sexual harassment before the study itself, only 6% had disclosed to any university institutional office (p. 52).

To promote a culture of reporting, the process of reporting needs to be a known rather than a worrisome unknown. In the AAU Report, 25.8% of students knew where to make a report of sexual harassment. In contrast, however, only 11.4% knew what happened after a report is made (p. 47-48). The overall lack of knowledge about the reporting process deters reporting.

Two human resource (HR) professionals who participated anonymously in research for this chapter weighed in on reporting. Respondent A (personal communication, November 2018) stated, "There should not be fear of reporting. That often requires a culture shift and someone who is trusted being in the position to be the intake person." In addition, this respondent acknowledged, "All complainants should understand what will happen once they make a complaint. This procedure should be clearly stated on a website and/or in a pamphlet, etc." Respondent B (personal communication, January 2019) confirmed

this, adding, "It is important that higher ed. organizations create a culture of reporting. . . . Organizations must encourage all their employees that even when in doubt any incident reported to them should be brought to the attention of the leaders."

In order to build a culture of reporting, both of these HR professionals strongly encouraged reporting. Respondent B urged, "Report it immediately. Even when in doubt, report it." Respondent A was equally emphatic, saying, "Do something about it. Talk to a trusted person to move forward with a complaint about the situation. It will not go away on its own."

The American Association of University Women (2019) provides a "What Should I Do Next" guide that suggests steps for reporting sexual harassment. Briefly, those include 1) consulting your institution's guidelines, 2) reporting the behavior to a supervisor or other trusted person in the institution, 3) confiding in family, friends, and coworkers, and 4) contacting the EEOC (if desired). Embedded in these actions is another crucial step in the process, "Take immediate notes on the harassment and be specific in your details — note the time and place of each incident, what was said and done, and who witnessed the actions" (Step 1). AAUW strongly promotes a culture of reporting, emphasizing the bravery it takes to so do, "The courageous act of reporting can change your employment culture and help to create more inclusive social norms at work" (Sidebar 1).

Instituting Effective Sexual Harassment Prevention Training

Sexual harassment prevention training is widespread throughout U.S. higher education largely because law requires it. According to a 2018 report, *Sexual Harassment of Women* by the National Academy of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, "Too often, judicial interpretation of Title IX and Title VII has incentivized institutions to create policies and training on sexual harassment that focus on symbolic compliance with current law and avoiding liability, and not on preventing sexual harassment" (Johnson, Widnall, & Benya, p. 2). Readers who have experienced institutional sexual harassment training can validate that many training programs provide just enough to limit an institution's liability, but not enough to create meaningful cultural change.

The same report noted that studies of sexual harassment training effectiveness are "sparse," but the ones that have been done found "trainings can improve knowledge of policies and awareness of what is sexual harassment; however, trainings have either no effect or a negative effect on preventing sexual harassment" (p. 151). In other words, exposure to the legal ramifications of sexual harassment is not enough. The report concluded, "effort seems better spent on developing and using sexual harassment trainings aimed at changing people's behaviors rather than on their attitudes and beliefs" (p. 151). Two approaches to training that have shown promise in promoting cultural change are Bystander Training and Interactive Scenario Training.

Bystander Training

In the popular vernacular, a "bystander" is witness to an event but does not participate in the event. Criminology and social psychology research, however, has developed theories that split bystanders into categories. The "passive bystander" is the witness who does not participate in an event. According to MIT's Active Bystander website, "an active bystander takes steps that can make a difference" (2004, para. 3).

Bystander training was mandated in the 2013 Campus Sexual Violence Elimination Act which requires programming that teaches "safe and positive options for bystander intervention that may be carried out by an individual to prevent harm or intervene when there is a risk of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking against a person other than such individual" (Section 2 (dd)). This Act covers all types of sexual harassment. Not surprisingly, passage of this Act created a flurry of Bystander Training development as well as research into those programs. To meet the requirements of this Act, many institutions use one of two proprietary programs: Green Dot and Bringing in the Bystander®. Both programs seek to involve communities and encourage cultural change— both steps in "baking it in."

According to their online promotions, Green Dot programming seeks change in institutional culture, stating their "ultimate goal" is to "shift community norms that support the violence that is occurring" (n.d., para. 3). Similarly, Bringing in the Bystander® advertises that their training "uses a community of responsibility approach" (2019, para. 1). Other than the webpages that promote their products, Green Dot and Bringing in the Bystander® exist behind proprietary walls.

Rather than use a proprietary, packaged program, some institutions have developed their own approaches. The Massachusetts Institute of Technology's institutionally based program appears to be one of the best and is freely available online. MIT's Active Bystander resources include nine links to extensive information from "Assessing Situations," to "Strategies," to an "Advice Column." Given its extensive resources and open access, MIT's resources are ideal for bystander training review before readers consider the scenarios in Chapter 4.

The most in-depth study of bystander training effectiveness was completed in England. Looking to implement bystander training in UK universities, Public Health England completed a "Review of Evidence" in 2016. The authors noted that most of the evidence included came from the United States in the years 2014-2015 (p. 5). It concluded that "Emerging evidence suggests that if implemented at scale, over time, bystander programming in university contexts can lead not only to positive attitudinal and behavioural [sic] change at the individual level, but also, to a reduction in perpetration and victimisation [sic] at the level of the whole community" (Fenton, Mott, McCartan, & Rumney, p. 57).

The Active Bystander movement is not without detractors. In a scathing critique, Lauren Chief Elk, a Native American Women's advocate, and Shaadi

Devereaux, an advocate for trans women of color, argued, "In a culture of violence, both victim and intervening bystander have little support to rely on and are likely to be re-victimized after the original assault. In this light, bystander intervention appears less as a weapon in the fight against sexual assault and more like an evolved form of victim blaming. Minimizing the difficult work of challenging the institutions that support violence, it shifts the responsibility of ending violence to those most vulnerable to it" (2014, para. 8).

Interactive Scenario Training

The authors of this book believe that the use of scenarios that can be analyzed and discussed is particularly appropriate for those in writing studies since much writing studies pedagogy is based on rhetorical approaches to problem-solving. Findings in the *National Academy Report* strongly support the kind of training that can take place using the Scenarios in Chapter 4. Those findings concluded that positive effects of sexual harassment training are more likely when it

- lasted more than four hours,
- was conducted face to face,
- included active participation with other trainees on interdependent tasks,
- was customized for the audience, and
- was conducted by a supervisor or an external expert (Johnson et al., p. 152).

The scenarios also provide the "customized training" that Victoria Lipnic, a co-chair of the EEOC's Select Task Force on the Study of Harassment, has encouraged. Rather than having employees sit through "a boring and impersonal online training session," she promotes training that is "live, in-person and customized to your workplace" (Foltz, 2016, para. 13). More about the use of scenarios in sexual harassment prevention training can be found in the introduction to Chapter 4.

Concluding this chapter by making sweeping claims is tempting. The desire to provide a "fix it" recipe to eliminate sexual harassment is strong, but eliminating sexual harassment is not a quick-fix situation because the problem is so deeply embedded in our culture. Cultural change happens slowly as Steve Denning (2011), a senior contributor at *Forbes* pointed out. An organization's culture, he argued, is "an interlocking set of goals, roles, processes, values, communications practices, attitudes and assumptions" (para. 1). None of these elements stand free of the others, but "fit together as a mutually reinforcing system and combine to prevent any attempt to change it" (para. 2). Although Denning was writing about change in the business world, transformation in the academic world functions similarly.

But change is possible, and writing studies is fertile ground for the cultural changes needed. Elaine Maimon pointed to her work as a writing program administrator as the place where she learned how to lead (14). Working on the "periphery" gave Maimon, "a crash course in developing focus, peripheral vision,

and strategic thinking" (16) all of which are needed to promote cultural change. The rhetorical background of many in writing studies can also be instructive as vigorous moves to eliminate sexual harassment are put into place. A rhetor sensitive to *kairos*, "takes into account the contingencies of a given place and time, and considers the opportunities within this specific context for words to be effective and appropriate to that moment" (*Kairos*, para. 1). Taking these contingencies into account needs to be carefully considered, but not necessarily slow. The work of Eric Charles White (1987) is especially helpful when employing *kairos*. The word, he explained, means "the right moment" or "the opportune" and in archery, he continued, *kairos* refers to an opening or a "long tunnel-like aperture through which the archer's arrow has to pass" (p. 13). This requires that the arrow be fired both accurately and with enough power for it to breach the target. The *kairotic* moment has arrived for change in cultural attitudes and behaviors on sexual harassment. The time is right to "bake it in."