

**MYTHS, MESSAGING, AND THE MEDIA:  
THE MEDIA'S ROLE IN PERPETUATING SEXUAL HARASSMENT  
STEREOTYPES**

by

Natalie A. Walton

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts of Sociology with Distinction

Spring 2020

© 2020 Walton  
All Rights Reserved

**MYTHS, MESSAGING, AND THE MEDIA:  
THE MEDIA'S ROLE IN PERPETUATING SEXUAL HARASSMENT  
STEREOTYPES**

by

Natalie A. Walton

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_  
Chrysanthi Leon, Ph.D.  
Professor in charge of thesis on behalf of the Advisory Committee

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_  
Eric Rise, Ph.D.  
Committee member from the Department of Sociology and Criminal  
Justice

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_  
Lindsay Hoffman, Ph.D.  
Committee member from the Board of Senior Thesis Readers

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_  
Michael Chajes, Ph.D.  
Chair of the University Committee on Student and Faculty Honors

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my parents and my brothers for being there for me during this entire process; Dr. Chrysanthi Leon for her endless support in classes, Summer Scholars, this thesis and my leap into the world of novel publication; Atieh Babakhani for her help with coding and planning this thesis; my friends for always taking care of me, and my girlfriend for being my biggest cheerleader and making me laugh at any given moment.

An additional thanks to the Undergraduate Research Program (Dr. Lauren Barsky, Adam Grimes, and my Summer Scholars advisor, Kelsey Obringer) for their support during this process, as well as the partial funding that would've allowed me to present at the 2020 National Conference for Undergraduate Research (NCUR).

Thank you to my readers (Dr. Leon, Dr. Rise and Dr. Hoffman) for agreeing to read and listen to my research.

And, finally, thanks to the Criminal Justice and Sociology Department for helping me find direction and purpose, and for the partial funding that also went toward my NCUR presentation. Honored to be your 2020 McLuckie Award recipient.

I couldn't have done any of this without you. Thank you.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES .....	vii
LIST OF FIGURES .....	viii
ABSTRACT .....	ix
1 INTRODUCTION .....	1
2 LITERATURE REVIEW .....	6
Myths .....	8
Myths and Sexual Harassment .....	14
The Myth Framework .....	19
News .....	20
Consumer Habits and Beliefs .....	21
Newsrooms and Newsworthiness .....	25
Newsworthiness .....	26
Personal Interest .....	29
News and Sexual Harassment .....	31
A Brief History of Sexual Harassment .....	34
Implications for the Future .....	38
3 METHODOLOGY .....	40
Research Design .....	41
Sample Collection .....	42
Sample Characteristics .....	45
Coding Template .....	53
Victim Codes .....	54
Perpetrator Codes .....	55
Organization Codes .....	56
Solutions and Remedies Codes .....	57
Location Codes .....	59
Commentary Code .....	59
Article Content Codes .....	61
Reflexivity .....	62

4	RESULTS AND DISCUSSION.....	64
	How do news articles portray the contexts and consequences of sexual harassment? .....	64
	Victims .....	65
	“He’s just goofing around” .....	65
	“It was an army attacking us” .....	68
	“We aren’t going to shut up” .....	70
	Perpetrators.....	72
	“It’s McCarthyism” .....	73
	“Trumped up accusations” .....	74
	Organizations.....	75
	“That’s just the way it is” .....	76
	“A neutral stance”.....	79
	Journalists .....	82
	Does the media perpetuate myths about sexual harassment, or does it challenge them? .....	83
	Myth Exploitative .....	85
	Frames sexual harassment as a ‘moneymaker’ .....	85
	Frames sexual harassment as a financial burden .....	86
	Perpetuates potentially harmful mindsets .....	87
	Myth Accommodating.....	89
	Features the male perpetrator/female victim dichotomy .....	89
	Focuses on unbalanced power dynamic .....	91
	Describes general policy updates .....	93
	Myth Transformative.....	94
	Offers inclusive definitions .....	94
	Frames sexual harassment as a social issue.....	96
	Includes underrepresented populations .....	98
	Main Takeaways.....	99

Proposed Framework: Sexual Harassment Myth Formation, Distribution, and Dissolution Paradigm.....	101
5 CONCLUSION .....	106
REFERENCES .....	109
A HISTORICAL BACKGROUND .....	126

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1	News Organizations by State.....	46
Table 2	Number of Articles by News Organization .....	49
Table 3	Codes Organized by Category .....	53

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1	Myth Continuum .....	9
Figure 2	Research Questions .....	41
Figure 3	Article Categorization Based on Leon’s Myth Framework .....	85
Figure 4	Sexual Harassment Myth Formation, Distribution, and Dissolution Paradigm.....	102



## **ABSTRACT**

As national attention on sexual harassment continues to grow, some consideration should be placed on how the news influences what consumers understand to be true about sexual harassment. This research is centered on two questions: 1) How do news articles portray the contexts and consequences of sexual harassment? and 2) Does the media perpetuate sexual harassment myths, or does it challenge them? This exploratory research project focuses specifically on American news articles. One hundred and twenty-three articles were coded for content and language referencing perpetrator, victim and organizational responses to sexual harassment. It was found that this sample of news articles perpetuate sexual harassment myths. The main implication of myth perpetuation in the news is that it creates a narrow definition of what sexual harassment looks like and who can be a victim or perpetrator. However, it is proposed that journalists could play a role in stopping this perpetuation through the Sexual Harassment Myth Formation, Distribution, and Dissolution Paradigm.

## **Chapter 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The story starts like this: there is a man. He is highly ranked within a specific hierarchy and carries power both inside and outside of his office. Because he is generally well-respected, the women who work for him will downplay his advances and act as though the behavior does not make them uncomfortable. Eventually, the woman—or women—decide they no longer want to pretend, and report the man's actions, identifying it as harassment. When they come forward, they are told that they are just trying to ruin a man's reputation, that they are grabbing for some extra cash. Maybe they are accused of being promiscuous or told that they had actually wanted to have a relationship with the accused all along. The man at the center of the case—as well as additional figures with stakes in the man's work and reputation—try their best to work past it, doing everything they can to make sure the women stop talking. In the end, the case disintegrates for one reason or another and very few, if any, steps are taken beyond filing a report.

Whether many victims or one, the scenario above can be viewed as a fill-in-the-blank of sorts. Any given member of the public most likely has a situation in mind that can fit into this formulaic story, whether a major case from a national news outlet or

more localized story from a smaller publication. Maybe it is a story from someone they know personally—a friend, family member. Maybe they experienced it themselves.

This particular template is modeled after a sexual harassment case involving Spencer M. Clark, a U.S. Treasury Department head who supervised an estimated 300 women (Segrave 1994:103). Although unique in its own right, there are also clear parallels to experiences frequently being shared in the news and as part of online forums, documentaries, podcasts, memoirs and the like. However, one significant detail separates this particular case from other modern examples: Clark’s case dates back to 1862 (Segrave 1994:103).

As seen in the scenario above, sexual harassment has existed throughout history and continues to exist today, occasionally highlighted by socially significant moments and movements like the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings, Bill Cosby’s trial, and #MeToo. Sexual harassment has been used as a kind of punchline in film like “The Ugly Truth” (Luketic 2009) or as a playful revenge fantasy in “9 to 5” (Higgins 1980). It has been written about time and time again in newspapers, magazines, and books. All of this exposure affects how consumers understand sexual harassment and what we believe to be true about the offense: but what exactly are consumers being told?

This thesis is dedicated to looking at the messages sent, either intentionally or unintentionally, through U.S. media. Narrowing the definition of ‘messages,’ the purpose is to look directly at how print media perpetuates and plays into myths that we have come to associate with sexual harassment, such as victims exaggerating their

claims (Lonsway et al. 2008:600) or that only men can sexually harass others. There are two main research questions:

1. How do news articles portray the contexts and consequences of sexual harassment?
2. Does the media perpetuate myths about sexual harassment, or does it challenge them?

In order to answer these questions, a framework originally constructed by the U.S. Office of Women's Health to evaluate the gender messaging of health interventions, and later adapted to myths by Dr. Chrysanthi Leon, will be used (Leon 2016). This framework, as well as specific coding parameters, is applied to a sample of articles to search for patterns on whether myths are being perpetuated, what those myths are, and how they are written about, meaning whether the articles collectively offer an exploitative, accommodating, or transformative mindset.

The articles analyzed were selected with #MeToo in mind. The reintroduction of #MeToo to the public was sparked by actress Alyssa Milano when she posted a tweet saying: "If you've been sexually harassed or assaulted write 'me too' as a reply to this tweet" (Milano 2017). While this was important in sparking a public dialogue, it should be noted that Tarana Burke initiated the movement in 2006. Me Too is a grassroots organization whose primary focus is helping Black girls and women heal after experiencing sexual violence (Me Too). When #MeToo went viral, Me Too became a global movement and inspired conversations about sexual harassment, as well as provided a space for survivors to form a community.

However, agreeing on what is sexual harassment is can be challenging when there is no true universal definition and sexual harassment is seen as existing on a continuum (Korn 1993: 1371). The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) offers what could be considered the most legitimized definition:

“Harassment can include “sexual harassment” or unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical harassment of a sexual nature. Harassment does not have to be of a sexual nature, however, and can include offensive remarks about a person’s sex. For example, it is illegal to harass a woman by making offensive comments about women in general. Both victim and the harasser can be either a woman or a man, and the victim and harasser can be the same sex.”

The definition also specifically states that the harasser and the victim can be of any combination of people—supervisors, co-workers, clients and customers. It does not have to be top-down harassment to be considered sexual harassment. However, a distinctive limitation to this definition is that it is primarily written with workplace sexual harassment in mind. Although the relationship between myths and definitions can be seen as going either way in terms of which influences the other, the fact that one of the most widely used definitions of sexual harassment is related to the workplace seems inarguably connected to American mythology.

There are two key components to why this research is significant, the first related to myths and the second related to media.

The first key component is that myths have been used to understand social phenomena. Historians have used myths as a way to understand the “beliefs and behaviors” of ancient civilizations (Grant 1998:6), and the same could be said about understanding modern civilizations as well. By understanding myths surrounding specifically sexual harassment, we can assess an influential source that shapes the beliefs of the public. This is not to say that every individual will believe them to an equal degree, but the myths are most likely known to the public in some capacity and influence individuals, even minimally.

The second key piece is related to media and the dispersion of myths. Since myths are shared through various forms of media and communication, the way that myths are talked about influence our overall understanding of sexual harassment. On one hand, and in a positive light, if newspapers post-#MeToo have shifted away from perpetuating myths, then this research will mark the progress that has been made. But if we are not aware that our collective definition or understanding is harmful, then we cannot work to dispel it and move toward a more transformative mindset.

## **Chapter 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

As stated earlier, it makes sense to use the definition of harassment provided by the EEOC, since it shapes the legal claims that are brought forward:

“Harassment can include “sexual harassment” or unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical harassment of a sexual nature. Harassment does not have to be of a sexual nature, however, and can include offensive remarks about a person’s sex. For example, it is illegal to harass a woman by making offensive comments about women in general. Both victim and the harasser can be either a woman or a man, and the victim and harasser can be the same sex” (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission).

What makes this definition significant is that it does not specify the gender of the victim or perpetrator (Gill 1993:151). It also does not say that the perpetrator has to be ranked above the victim in an institutional hierarchy. Additionally, it recognizes that sexual harassment can involve two people of the same gender.

Although this definition influences policy, it is not perfect. It is specifically written about workplace harassment, which makes sense considering its origin and purpose, but it excludes victims who were harassed outside of the workplace. This

means victims of street harassment and students harassed at school, for example, would not technically be counted.

However, for the present circumstances, the EEOC definition works, especially when considering the dynamic of sexual harassment. Sexual harassment research typically centers on power and gender dynamics (Gill 1993:155; McDonald 2013:96), which are often most reflected in workplaces because supervisory roles are common, providing an inherent power imbalance between individuals.

Researchers have attempted to define sexual harassment more beyond just workplace harassment. For example, Till (1980) explained sexual harassment in five ways, ranging from sexist remarks and behaviors to coercion to solicitation (Gill 1993:150). These actions tend to be similar to workplace harassment.

Additionally, researchers have attempted to quantify the sexual harassment experience by categorizing based on the type of experience. For example, Strauss (1998) identified 12 specific behaviors that could be considered sexual harassment, including sexual name calling, leers, cowering/blocking movements, and pulling at clothes (Gill 1993:151).

This belief that victimization can be brought on by victim behavior is part of understanding how social norms shape public understanding of sexual harassment. Sexual harassment, like many sexually based offenses, is considered to be a ‘tool’ that is used to maintain control or power over another person on an individual level (McDonald and Charlesworth 2013:96). In the same way, it has been argued that society as a whole can use these beliefs—or myths, in the context of this thesis—can be used to



control entire populations. To elaborate, Khondaker and Barlow (2009) discovered that, in Bangladesh, violence against women and news outlet coverage of these crimes are used to scare women and "reinforce traditional gender norms" (150). Arguably, the same may be applicable to sexual harassment in the United States. In order to more fully understand this relationship between mythology and social control, we must first understand how to define modern mythology.

### **Myths**

At the risk of oversimplifying, it is helpful to start our exploration of the debates that shape our understanding of mythology, with two useful definitions: 1) myths are sacred, sometimes religious and explain natural phenomena, sometimes with a supernatural element (Heehs 1994:2; Rivers 1912:308), and 2) myths are a "common, unexamined assumption rooted...in the prevailing political or social order" (Heehs 1994:3). One interesting subpoint to this is argued by anthropologist W.H.R. Rivers, who said myths may be "preserving the memory of an actual occurrence" (Rivers 1912:312). This takes the above definition and digs into the historical element of why certain social norms or ideology might exist and persist. There are numerous approaches to the historical element of myths, essentially operating on a spectrum from not at all influenced by history to entirely influenced by history.

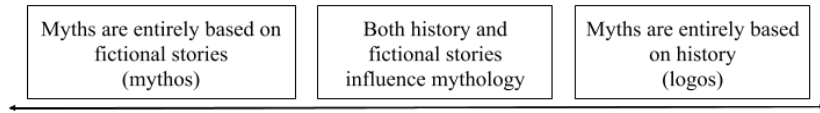


Figure 1 Myth Continuum

The more modern approach is that myths and history are intertwined and influence each other. As stated by historian Peter Heehs: “Historical narratives are made up of factual (logos) and fictional (mythos) components...the two can sometimes be distinguished” (Heehs 1994:5). This implies coexistence, with both sets of ideas influencing each other. I further explore the idea that people will use history to explain why we are how we are today and use myths to construct a more streamlined understanding of this (Heehs 1994:19) later in this chapter. Others, however, argue that myths and history are generally unrelated (see below for a discussion of Joseph Campbell’s work).

In *Myths We Live By*, Colin Grant argues that, while myths are traditionally seen as a relic of ancient history, they are still relevant today. Myths were originally used to “domesticate” the world (1998:7) and still hold the same power in modern society. However, instead of focusing on natural phenomena, like weather, myths today are

generally based on social phenomena; they are used to help explain social structure and experiences, and then, as we are inclined to do with all information, “manipulate them so that they work as efficiently as possible” (Grant 1998:9). As Grant explains, “The claim being made is that there are unavoidable perspectives and priorities that give shape to life today, and that these represent the mythic horizons that define reality for us” (1998:13). Regardless of whether these myths are true or not, there is a point when they become “unavoidable<sup>1</sup>,” and so ingrained into our public consciousness that they are hardly questioned anymore (Grant 1998:16).

Applying this framework to sexual harassment makes sense when considering the historical context to sexual harassment. As explained in the anecdote in chapter one, our modern understanding of sexual harassment can be applied to at least one case dating back to 1862. However, as historians have shown, there have been many more throughout not only U.S. history, but world history as well. For example, sexual harassment is synonymous with *powerful man harasses subordinate woman* because it has been deeply instilled in our culture through these historical experiences.

<sup>1</sup> The use of “unavoidable” should be understood as having limitations. In this context, “unavoidable” does not necessarily fit the general sociological, trauma-informed understanding of sexual harassment. The connotation of unavoidable aligns too closely with the historic belief that sexual harassment is, essentially, inevitable, particularly when men and women work together. It is important to separate that understanding from this definition. Instead, *unavoidable* should not be considered in applying Grant’s understanding of mythology to specifically sexual harassment. A more ideal form might be that there are ‘some’ or ‘certain’ perspectives that shape the world around us.

What is important to Grant's framework is that it allows for grey area. Grant offers an explanation of what he calls the "journalist sense of myth," which is based on an all-or-nothing attitude where something is either true or it is not (1998:8). There is no sense of ambiguity. This is risky when considering the reality of myths, which is that myths established by modern society might not always be entirely true or entirely false. Similarly, myths can "preserve" what was *once* true and may still be true, at least in part, today (Rivers 1912:312).

Defining myths based on certainties leads to exclusion of victims—in the case of sexual harassment—who might not perfectly align with the myth. To simplify, by attempting to construct clear cut definitions, we create a checklist of expectations of what victims and survivors quote-unquote 'will' be. When victims do not check all of the boxes, they are then excluded and not considered to be 'real' victims. For example, there are women who are harassed by their male bosses, and there are men who have been harassed by their female bosses. Although one is what we immediately call to mind and the other is not, both are still valid experiences.

Additionally, the idea of categorizing based on falsity is risky because the experience is not false to those who are living it (Grant 1998:3). While Grant explores this in relation to writer's block, it also directly lends itself into the conversation about sexual harassment where the argument of *I have not seen it and have not experienced it, so it is not true* is common.

This leads into one of the limitations of myth discourse explored by Grant. In the process of identifying myths, Grant argues we place inherent weight on the

definition provided by the person who ‘exposed’ the myth (Grant 1998:5). There are multiple ways defining myths could occur, including through the process of news writing and through the establishment of definitions. In applying to sexual harassment, this means that the first people who explained what sexual harassment is —and is not— could be considered in control of myth. This is already seen in the definition provided above by the EEOC, which is the most widely used and relevant definition, notably in relation to law and workplace policy. The EEOC specifically defines sexual harassment as occurring in the workplace, which immediately excludes harassment experienced anywhere else.

It is also worth considering that those who typically identify myths, at least in the two contexts provided above in newspapers and formalized definitions, hold some type of power. This could be based on race, gender, socioeconomic status, education level, and the like. In the context of this thesis, most journalists are white and male (Grieco 2018) meaning that definitions of sexual harassment put forward by the media will represent their understanding of sexual harassment.

Despite these caveats, Grant’s understanding of myths is fitting for modern society and the context of specifically sexual harassment myths. Even when looking at Joseph Campbell’s work—Campbell being one of the leading scholars in comparative

mythology<sup>2</sup>—Grant’s recognition that myths are based in the everyday experiences of people aligns with this thesis.

<sup>2</sup> Campbell (1972), in his book *Myths to Live By*, argues that myths “are of the nature essentially of dream” (253). He believes that myths are related to the psyche and are a reflection back, just in a symbolic, story-like way (Campbell 1972:253; Campbell 1972:258). Additionally, since—in Campbell’s view—myths are seen as originating from the psyche, he specifically mentions that myths cannot be used as a reference to “historic events or personages” (Campbell 1972:253). This essentially means that any relation between myths and events or people are entirely coincidental, thus ignoring the influence of said historical events on individuals.

While Grant *recognizes* connections between myths and religion, Campbell appears to *focus* on myths through the lens of religion and a connection back to finding overall purpose. For example, in *Pathways to Bliss* (2004), Campbell explains that there are four functions of myth: metaphysical, cosmological/scientific, sociological, and pedagogical/psychological. Although different, all four have a basic purpose of trying to understand where an individual fits into the world around them. Focusing on sociological, for the purposes of this thesis, Campbell states that the sociological function of myth is no longer a “problem” because we exist in a secular world where politicians and bureaucracy have a say over a god (Campbell 2004:10; Campbell 2004:25). It is also important, Campbell argues, to consider that social structure is constantly evolving, so to use past myths to try and explain the future does not work (Campbell 2004:25). This argument, that society is constantly evolving, is still relevant today, as it arguably always will be. Even though Campbell believes sociological myths evolve too frequently to be considered ‘true’ myths, this mindset that social beings frequently shed past ideas can still be applied.

Collectively, this can be understood to mean that Campbell’s perspective does not align with the basis of this thesis. He relies on a more theological/philosophical basis, meaning the definition does not expand to fully understand myths that are not related to figuring out the purpose of mankind. Grant’s perspective, however, allows for an understanding grounded in what could be considered myths generated through the formation of society. To elaborate, Campbell’s understanding and definition of myth could exist without a proper social structure; Grant’s definition could not. Thus, since this thesis is focused on the formation, perpetuation, and impact of myths through the lens of sociology, Grant’s work is a better fit.

## Myths and Sexual Harassment

Although defining and understanding myths in the context of this paper is important, it is also key to connect these ideas directly back to what we know about sexual harassment. Grant's definition is fitting for a broad conceptualization but is also still somewhat abstract. Other literature, related more directly to the overlap between sexual offenses and myths, can provide some insight into how to ground myths in the real world.

Researchers have found similarities between sexual harassment myths and myths surrounding other sexually based offenses, like sexual assault. Researchers believe that, not only are the myths similar, but the implications of believing these myths are similar. Acceptances of these myths hint at overlapping "attitudes toward gender, cultural roles, and violence" (Lonsway, Cortina, and Magley 2008:604). It has also been found that those who believe sexual harassment myths are more likely to believe other sexist myths, notably rape myths (Lonsway et al. 2008:608). Myths about sexual harassment and sexual assault tend to be measured in similar ways, although researchers have constructed many different scales and models to achieve this. One example is the Illinois Sexual Harassment Myth Acceptance (ISHMA) scale (Lonsway et al. 2008:611). This scale is made up of 20 different attitudes or feelings which can indicate if an individual believes sexual harassment myths. These can be myths based on the victim, including that the victim is lying, the victim deserved it, or that the victim asked for it (Franiuk, Seefeldt, and Vandello 2008:790). There is also the myth that victims will make up or exaggerate their claims (Lonsway et al. 2008:600; Lonsway et al. 2008:611).

They can also be based on the perpetrator, which are usually framed to excuse the actions of the offender, like that they couldn't help themselves, or don't seem like they type who would commit a sexual offense (Franiuk et al. 2008: 791).

Some researchers hypothesize that myths about sexual offenses act as a protection from the reality of a situation, also known as social distancing (Franiuk et al. 2008:791). For example, individuals who believe victims asked for harassment by dressing or acting a certain way can more easily comfort themselves in believing they, and their loved ones, will never be a victim. Additionally, believing negative events can be controlled are part of believing in a 'just world' where bad things do not happen to 'good' or undeserving people (Franiuk et al. 2008:791). These claims directly connect back to Grant's previously stated idea that myths are "manipulated" to benefit those who create or follow them. In this case, myths are used to form two groups—those who have been victimized and those who have not—and paint victims as having done something wrong, rather than accepting the reality that anyone could be a victim.

Overall, rape myths have proven to have "severe consequences" for victims in society (Franiuk et al. 2008:790). Endorsement of rape myths is associated with hostile attitudes toward women, supporting stereotypical roles for men and women, and less sympathy for victims of sexual violence (Franiuk et al. 2008:791). Men are also more likely than women to believe that women lied about experiencing assault or exaggerated their experience (Lonsway et al. 2008:610). Additionally, research shows that jurors who believed rape myths were less likely to convict accused offenders and more likely to give shorter sentences to convicted rapists (Franiuk et al. 2008:791). Similarly,



individuals who believe rape myths are at increased risk of committing a sexual offense if they believe they will not experience consequences (Franiuk et al. 2008:791). This is notable when considering that men were found to be influenced the most by rape myths perpetuated in the media (Franiuk et al. 2008:797) and that men are statistically the most likely to commit sexual offense (Lonsway et al. 2008:600; Lonsway et al. 2008:610). This, combined with a half-hearted approach to punishing perpetrators, could potentially lead to even higher numbers of sexual offenses and even less support for victims. What is interesting about this, however, is that there were minimal gender differences between those who believe sexual harassment myths and those who have “sexist, hostile, and traditional attitudes toward women” (Lonsway et al. 2008:611). This means that both men and women can and have accepted and perpetuated myths related to the sexual harassment at similar rates.

Myths about sexual offenses, like sexual assault or harassment, can also work to make it more difficult to hold perpetrators accountable. Franiuk et al. (2008) found that rape myths allow men to separate themselves from perpetrators, pushing the 'not all men' narrative (791) that has become increasingly popular in efforts to counteract the buzz of #MeToo. This mindset is also seen in the myth that only “deviant” men sexually assault or harass women (Lonsway et al. 2008:600). By constructing this image, it, again, creates two groups, one of men who are perpetrators and the other of men who are not. It inherently creates an ‘other,’ which allows for complete disengagement and disinterest in the population of perpetrators. However, Lonsway et al. (2008) found that even participants in their study who believed other sexual harassment myths did not

consider sexual harassment to be a deviant event (611). This indicates that there might be some societal ideological shifts either already occurring or about to occur in the future.

One of the myths central to the current study is the concept of the 'perfect' victim. As explained by Franiuk et al (2008),

"The more a sexual assault fits the 'vicious attack by a stranger' script, the more a victim is believed and offered sympathy and the more anger that is generated against the perpetrator. Conversely, the more a sexual assault deviates from the prototypical assault, the more the victim is disparaged and questioned and the more sympathy and benefit of the doubt the perpetrator receives" (791)

Exposure to rape myths reinforced men's and women's prototypical notion of "real rape" (Franiuk et al. 2008:798). This leads to people being dismissive of those who do not fit this formulaic victim. By perpetuating the idea that there are victims who are inherently more believable than others, we begin to shift into a society that expects victims to fall within certain criteria. By excluding those who were not assaulted by a stranger—which is, statistically, the majority—society says that certain variations of the same crime are worse than others and certain victims deserve to be supported more than others. The myth of the perfect victim leads to victims being less likely to identify their own experiences as being sexual assault because they believe they did not experience “real rape” or real harassment (Franiuk et al. 2008:798).

The societal cost of this is high; as noted by feminist attorney Catharine MacKinnon (1979), sexual harassment can leave women feeling “humiliated, degraded, ashamed, embarrassed, and cheap, as well as angry” (Korn 1993:1366). It has also been found that victims experience a “loss of self-confidence and disillusionment” after being sexually harassed (Korn 1366). Additionally, Jane Byeff Korn (1993) explained in her law review article *The Fungible Woman and Other Myths of Sexual Harassment*:

“Sexual harassment also may cause increased unemployment, absenteeism, and poor work performance...[it] also causes insomnia, depression, anxiety, high blood pressure, eating disorders, nausea, and headaches” (1367).

Health effects and stress can be amplified by telling women to ‘avoid’ working somewhere with a hostile environment rather than eliminating the hostile environment. This attitude can prevent women from getting certain jobs—because the industry or workplace is not ‘fit’ for female employees—thus leading to increased unemployment (Korn 1993:1393).

These effects of sexual harassment go beyond the individual and can affect the healthcare industry, the overall state of the American workforce, and government programs like welfare and unemployment benefits. This is not to disregard the significance of every individual’s lived experience; rather, it is to shine a light on how interconnected each part of American society is. The combination of these effects can

lead to further enforcing myths about women being unable to handle the pressures of working

Additionally, the societal cost of perpetuating rape myths is high for the simple fact that myths, when unchecked, continue to exist. Overall, it is believed that “rape myths in the media teach rape myths to those who do not already hold them, strengthen rape myths in those who already do, and trigger rape myths in those who are ready to use them” (Franiuk et al. 2008:798). While it is not certain if these results can be generalized to include all sexually based offenses, it is important to consider in relation to the power of mythology.

### The Myth Framework

This article applies Leon’s Myth Accommodation Framework, developed from the Gender Integration Continuum created by the Interagency Gender Working Group (IGWG) and promoted by the U.S. Office of Women’s Health. Its purpose is to categorize approaches to gender-integrated programming to either note potentially harmful programs and trainings for improvement, or to share programs that appear to be doing beneficial work (IGWG 2017:2).

There are three major categories to the Continuum, going from least to most beneficial: exploitative, accommodating, and transformative. Exploitative refers to policies that reinforce or perpetuate gender-based stereotypes. Accommodating policies and programs work around these gender differences, neither perpetuating nor stopping

them. Transformative refers to programming that is taking steps toward, or achieving, a fairer and more equitable society (IGWG 2017:18). The overall goal is for programs to create better outcomes for individuals and society as a whole.

Leon adapted this framework to specifically relate to rape myth literature in what she calls “myth accommodation” (Leon 2016:997). More specifically, she defines myth accommodation as, “The use of rhetorical strategies that minimize the existence or significance of sexual misconduct itself as a way to present threats to the institutional status quo” (Leon 2016:997). In other words, she examines whether policies exploit, accommodate, or transform societal understandings of rape myths.

As a continuation of that project, this thesis will be using a similar continuum, focused on sexual harassment myths instead of rape myths. Additionally, the framework will be applied to specifically newspaper articles rather than institutional policy, expanding it from beyond studying institutional status quo onto a broader, nation-wide scale.

## **News**

Since news media is part of the “larger web of intertextuality in society” (McDonald and Charlesworth 2013:97), journalism is often involved in either intentionally or unintentionally perpetuating myths. Journalists can play a role in how an issue is viewed in the public eye, through how it is written about and how often it is written about it (McDonald and Charlesworth 2013:97). In this way, news media can offer an unofficial definition of sexual harassment by featuring specific types of victims,

perpetrators, and scenarios. This process can work to marginalize or exclude victims from a particular social issue (McDonald and Charlesworth 2013:97). Because of this, it is absolutely necessary to understand the innerworkings of a newsroom and the journalistic process, as well as who primarily makes up newsrooms.

To formulate an understanding of how professional news media works, I used Steven M. Chermak's (1995) *Victims in the News: Crime and the American News Media*. This particular book stood out because it focused on how newspapers operate and choose their stories, how people come to understand crime based on these choices, and how these choices can affect victims. Although it does not explicitly connect back to the idea of mythology, it inherently relates to the idea that newspapers are sharing ideas which consumers then perpetuate, which then influences a cultural understanding of a certain issue.

### Consumer Habits and Beliefs

As stated above, consumers are generally believed to be affected by the media they are consuming (Lamb, Sharon, and Keon 1995:213). As Chermak explained in *Victims in the News*, "All individuals have their own 'socially constructed reality' which they use when interpreting, reacting to, and being exposed to messages in the media. The reality is shaped by personal experiences, interactions with other individuals, interactions with groups, and exposure to different media" (1995:5). In fact, one study found that there is a direct correlation between the amount of media an individual consumes and their likelihood to believe what they are being told, including stereotypes

(Meloy and Miller 2009:29). Considering that Americans spend an average of 40% of their leisure time consuming media (Meloy and Miller 2009:29), it is important to understand what consumers are exposing themselves to and how this media is affecting them.

In 2018, Pew found that the plurality of surveyed Americans (49%) *often* get their news from television, but the second highest category get their news from online news sources (33%) (Shearer 2018). This tells us that many Americans still like to consume articles; they just tend to prefer it over a phone screen or computer screen rather than a physical print newspaper. In fact, out of all five categories featured on the survey (television, news website, radio, social media, and print newspapers), print newspapers were the lowest percentage at 16%. Although readership and general circulation of newspapers has decreased over time (Pew 2019), readership of online versions of these same newspapers has continued to increase. Since 2014, monthly unique visitors to the websites of the top 50 American newspapers has increased by over three million (Pew 2019).

Narrowing down on the content of these newspapers, it has been found that crime makes up a fairly large portion of what is covered in the media (Warr 1994:28). For specifically newspapers, one study found that crime made up 22% to 28% of articles published by three major news outlets (the *Chicago Tribune*, *Daily News*, and *Sun-Times*) (Warr 1994:28). This may not sound significant, but this was found to be almost three times as much coverage as the state of the government or the economy (Warr 1994:29). It is especially important when considering how many people choose to

consume these stories; in 1981, 44% of survey respondents reported having read at least one crime story on the previous day (Warr 1994:29).

In relation to specifically news and crime, 95% of survey respondents in 1980 said that they used “mass media” to learn about crime and criminal justice (Chermak 1995:3). Newspapers, and any offshoot of a newspaper, such as online publications, would fall under the category of mass media in the 2010s and 2020s.

Consumer habits are important in relation to crime because, if an individual does not have personal experience to rely on, they tend to use media to form opinions (Chermak 1995:3). Indeed, other studies appear to confirm this finding (Dowler 2002; Clifford, Jensen III, and Petee 2009:136). Meloy and Miller (2009) are among this population, stating that “although some individuals may experience crime or violence directly, most Americans look to the media as the primary storyteller” (29). This is generally important to note, especially if media outlets are not representative. Consumers then risk having a single-sided idea of what crime looks like and who victims tend to be.

This is not the only perceived downfall of newspapers being the primary source of information related to crime. As Chermak explored, there have been many concerns raised by researchers about the risk of media “shaping public opinion” (Chermak 1995:4). For example, in 1976, crimes against the elderly in New York City were being widely reported. This made individuals believe there was a “crime wave” and caused panic that these crimes were increasing in frequency; in actuality, rates had not changed (Chermak 1995:4).



This plays into another major myth related to newspapers. Although not a myth heavily focused on in this thesis, there are parallels between the myth that crime is on the rise and sexual harassment myths. For example, Donald Trump made crime a major focus of his presidential campaign platform despite crime in the United States having notably decreased over the last twenty-five years (Gramlich 2019).

Trump is not the only person who has believed that crime is increasing over time, however. Since 1993, public opinion that there is more crime than the year before has consistently remained above 50% (Gramlich 2019). It should be noted that current rates (60%) are not as high as they were in 1993 (87%) (Gramlich 2019). However, there was more overall reported crime in 1993—over three times as much as in 2018—than there is today (Gramlich 2019), which could provide at least some understanding as to why crime was such a concern to the public at that time.

These public beliefs, regardless of if they are based in reality or not, are generally considered significant and influential. For example, if the public believes that there is an increase in crime, they might begin to push their political representatives toward a more crime-focused and punitive approach. One study found that a belief of increased crime led to public pressure to increase policing (Dowler 2002). This can be associated with the widely-researched concept of ‘consumer fear’ (Dowler 2002; Warr 1994:33; Shi, Roche and McKenna 2018; Callanan 2012:93; Chermak 1995:4; Meloy and Miller 2009:30), which is that those who hear or read about crime disproportionately believe they are more likely to become a victim and that there is more crime than there actually is.

This is important in understanding sexual harassment reporting because articles provide a lens for readers to understand sexual harassment. The way that sexual harassment is reported could set the stage for how readers respond to sexual harassment; if they believe perpetrators should be punished more or less harshly, for example, or if they believe sexual harassment is rare and can only ever involve a male boss and female employee.

Some researchers are not convinced that the news is as influential as believed, however. Vincent F. Sacco (1982) found that in Alberta, Canada, consumers were not affected by the crime media they were consuming (487). Additionally, it was believed by Cumberbatch and Beardsworth (1976) that researchers “overestimated” the media’s influence on consumers (Chermak 1995:5). It was also found that an investigative reporting series focused on rape did not lead to any new policies (Chermak 1995:5), meaning that the general public, and thus politicians, could have been unaffected by the details of the reporting.

#### Newsrooms and Newsworthiness

The process of how stories are turned into articles is a main focus of Chermak’s work. He shadowed a newspaper to see how editors, reporters, and other key players, such as police officers, played a role in deciding what to write. Although “crime is consistent and abundant” (Chermak 1995:13), researchers believe that crime reporting is disproportionately low, meaning that what is presented in the news is already a small population of the crime actually occurring. This is important when considering the

earlier point that crime makes up nearly one-quarter of the number of articles published in newspapers. Even though the percentage is fairly high, it still does not cover every crime that has been committed, especially in relation to unreported crimes.

### **Newsworthiness**

A primary factor in deciding what to publish, and an important key term related to this topic, is newsworthiness. Newsworthiness is a “news filtering process” (Chermak 1995:18) that includes deciding if a story has enough ‘razzle dazzle’ to justify writing about. As found by Chermak, “News organizations focus on the extraordinary, the unusual, and the deviant because such stories are more entertaining and more likely to be of interest” (Chermak 1995:32). These are crimes that typically offer elements of “shock, humor, or surprise” that read as almost too absurd to be true (Chermak 1995:28). As one reporter told Chermak, even though the newsroom was aware of an accident that had occurred, it lacked the necessary “death, blood, and bodies” to justify being written about (Chermak 1995:15).

Meloy & Miller (2009) also explore the concept of newsworthiness in their research on how newspapers write about gendered violence. Generally, Meloy & Miller’s findings are similar to Chermak’s; Meloy and Miller (2009) argue that crimes that are serious in nature, sensational in some way, and involve a prestigious person are inherently newsworthy (30). They also found that pushing for establishing newsworthiness makes reporters more willing to sensationalize and place the ‘wow factor’ over accuracy (Meloy and Miller 2009:30).

An understanding of how powerful newsworthiness is in newsrooms led Chermak to constructing a four-step process of establishing newsworthiness.

The first step is the newsroom staff finding a crime story, usually from a source of some kind, such as the police or a citizen (Chermak 1995:19). The process begins as early as the first step because the source sharing the story is already filtering out crime stories due to a lack of knowledge that the crime occurred. For example, if a crime is not reported to the police, the police do not know about it and cannot provide information to newspapers.

Following this is when the newsroom staff decide if they want to use the information provided by the source. This decision can be based on potentially two different issues.

First, issues like deadlines, available content (for example, a full news article typically cannot be written if no one wants to talk about it or share details from it) affects if a story is presented in the news (Chermak 1995:31). This is believed to be a slightly less exploitative approach since it does not rely on categorizing stories based on how ‘interesting’ they would be to readers; instead, it focuses on the mere fact that journalists sometimes are not able to write about something due to lack of cooperation or information.

The second issue is directly related to newsworthiness. This is when reporters and editors filter out certain stories because they are not sensational enough for one reason or another. As Chermak found, victim and perpetrator characteristics play a major role in this. Information such as the “age and occupation” of the victim and/or the

perpetrator can either make or break the decision to pursue the story (Chermak 1995:25). For example, stories involving people with a “high amount of responsibility to the public,” like politicians, clergymen, and individuals who work with children, tend to receive a significant amount of media attention (Chermak 1995:25).

The third step is related to the concept above of availability of information. Reporters decide what is worth mentioning in the stories that they write, including looking at if age, occupation, previous history of violence, relationships with friends and family, and the like are relevant to the crime at hand (Chermak 1995:19). If reporters do not know this, they cannot write about it. Additionally, particularly in relation to crime reporting, there are laws surrounding the release of names or identifying information without permission from the victim.

Finally, the fourth step is related to the idea of newsworthiness. After the article is written, it must compete with other articles of a similar nature (Chermak 1995:19). In order to stand out from the crowd of crime news, the story must have something exceptional to offer.

Another piece that may establish newsworthiness in the mind of a journalist is if other newspapers are covering a similar topic. This is what Chermak refers to as “salient crimes” (Chermak 1995:28). In *Victims in the News* (1995), it is explained that, reporters tend to look for themes and if certain types of crime begin in a notably large number, then it is considered worth writing about.

This mindset could be applied to sexual harassment. Although sexual harassment has been written about somewhat frequently over the years—most notably

around major cases involving public figures like Clarence Thomas and Bill O'Reilly—stories also picked up speed around the time of Harvey Weinstein's article and the reemergence of #MeToo. This makes sense when it is considered that "cross-linking between events" is believed to be part of a journalist's job in understanding the full context of a situation (Kitzinger 2000:66). Attention on sexual harassment became so widespread that, in 2017, *Time Magazine* named the "Silence Breakers"—those who came forward as victims of sexual violence—the Person of the Year (Zacharek 2017). Even if sexual harassment had not been something on the mind of the average journalist, it would have become visible to them after an influx of articles related to the subject.

### **Personal Interest**

In addition to establishing newsworthiness, reporters may have their own personal investment into writing about a certain topic or issue area. As Chermak found, certain reporters will increase the likelihood of certain stories being written about simply by their presence in the newsroom and advocating to write about a specific crime (Chermak 1995:25). What is important to point out about this is who makes up the majority of the journalist population. Reporters tend to have similar political leanings, educational backgrounds, and demographic characteristics (Chermak 1995:25) which means that they most likely have similar interests and access to certain information. This factor also comes into play with what is considered newsworthy; for example, if a newsroom was primarily made up of men, a crime where mostly women are victims—

such as sexual harassment—may not receive much coverage because it is deemed unimportant.

In fact, 77% of reporters are non-Hispanic white and 65% are male (Grieco 2018). Nearly half—45%—are both non-Hispanic white *and* male (Grieco 2018). Men collectively make up 61% of all newsroom employees (Grieco 2018). Additionally, nearly 80% of newsroom employees have a college degree, and 41% of journalists for online publications live in the northeast region, which includes major cities like New York City and Washington D.C. (Grieco 2019). The average age of a newsroom employee is 41 years old (Pew 2006). This means that most newsrooms are composed of white men around forty years of age who have at least a college degree.

People tend to prefer to interact with those who either are, or are just perceived to be, similar to themselves (Montoya, Horton and Kirchner 2008). Because of this, certain sources may not feel comfortable disclosing to a journalist because they feel as though they are not similar enough to each other to be inherently trusted. If sources are not comfortable sharing information, then certain stories may not be featured, and these stories may be ones that the average journalist does not consider because it is not relevant to them. In fact, the high percentage of men in newsrooms may provide an explanation as to why up to 95% of reported offenses against women are not written about in newspapers (Meloy and Miller 2009:31).

Reporters may also have their own sources with whom they have formed a relationship and consistently rely on for information. One reporter told Chermak that “it takes years of being on the job to build up trust” (Chermak 1995:26). This may also

connect back to the earlier idea of journalist demographics and trust; in order to build a rapport, there must be a common understanding between the journalist and the source.

It should be noted, however, that not all journalists fall under the category of white, male, college educated, or living in a major northeastern city. Younger newsroom employees are statistically less likely to be both white and male, which hints at some progress toward a more representative newsroom (Grieco 2018). These journalists are already starting to make waves in the major stories covered in newspapers. For example, the two reporters—Jodi Kantor and Megan Twohey—who broke the original Harvey Weinstein case for the *New York Times* are women (Kantor and Twohey 2017). Reporter Bernice Yeung, also a woman, has worked on investigative pieces related to gender and crime for years. Her work on sexual harassment led to her first book *In a Day's Work: The Fight to End Sexual Violence Against America's Most Vulnerable Workers*, which focused on sexual harassment and assault of immigrant workers in America. This representation of journalists is important when considering that the media plays a role in how women's experiences with victimization are presented in the news (Meloy and Miller 2009:29).

### News and Sexual Harassment

An important piece of understanding how sexual harassment, myths, and news overlap is in the array of literature looking at the topic. Lonsway et al. (2008) defined the study of sexual harassment mythology as referring to “attitudes and beliefs that are generally false but are widely and persistently held, and that serve to deny and justify



male sexual harassment of women" (Lonsway et al. 2008:600). This definition is expanded in this thesis to include harassment of anyone of any gender and perpetrators of any gender.

McDonald (2013) details a research process very similar to the process detailed in this thesis, in that it is looking at sexual harassment myths in articles. McDonald's research focused on four different countries, and analyzed online news sources, magazines, and newswires (McDonald and Charlesworth 2013:95)

McDonald (2013) found that most of the articles described male-on-female sexual harassment (98). Their study also found that news organizations focused most heavily on "visible" or "high profile" people and places, which typically included scandalous cases or cases involving politics. About one-third of the articles mentioned financial compensation, with emphasis on cases involving high monetary sums (McDonald and Charlesworth 2013:99). Overall, the covered cases followed the 'classic' idea of what sexual harassment is: most of the articles were about a female victim harassed by a male who was ranked above her in a hierarchy (McDonald and Charlesworth 2013:99). Elaborating on the idea that newspapers tend to not challenge the status quo, another researcher found that newspapers tend to focus on victims who align with the earlier-mentioned mythological perfect victim (Franiuk et al. 2008:792).

A related study done by Franiuk et al (2008) focused on specifically headlines about the case against Kobe Bryant. One study found that 65% of newspaper articles about the Kobe Bryant case perpetuated at least one myth (Franiuk et al. 2008:792), primarily the "she's lying" myth. The victim's sexual history was also used against her

to paint her as a promiscuous, and thus, unreliable, victim (Franiuk et al. 2008:798). It was also found that about 20% of the articles about Bryant featured the "he's not the type" myth, saying that he is not the kind of person who would assault someone (Franiuk et al. 2008:798). This thesis relies on the assumption that readers actually read news articles; Franiuk et al (2008) instead argued that most readers tend to scan for headlines and assume the article's content based on that. The danger of that, however, is that headlines tend to be either intentionally or unintentionally misleading. Additionally, sometimes readers just do not understand the full context or meaning behind a headline, even if they believe they do. In fact, Franiuk found that readers commonly misunderstand the meaning behind headlines. Even after reading the full article, readers exposed to a "defamatory headline" were still misled (Franiuk et al. 2008:792). This is worth considering on the rare occurrence that a criminal trial related to sexual harassment or assault comes forward; while pretrial publicity tends to bias people against the defendant, cases about sexually based offenses tend to do the reverse (Franiuk et al. 2008:799). This is, arguably, connected to myths about the believability of victims and perpetrators.

An interesting finding from McDonald's work is that each article was written as though sexual harassment was an "individual aberration" (McDonald and Charlesworth 2013:99). This means that the journalists did not look at sexual harassment as an issue beyond the one case that was being written about. This survey was conducted in 2012, five years before Weinstein's case and the reemergence of #MeToo. It is possible that

the findings will be different for this thesis due to the public's realization that sexual harassment is widely experienced, as well as the emergence #MeToo as a buzzword.

### **A Brief History of Sexual Harassment**

Since the myth framework used in this thesis is based on historical and social experiences and the idea that myths are lived experiences, it must be understood where these myths come from.

There are few statistics on sexual harassment available outside of the EEOC, which compiled their statistics based only on filed complaints regarding workplace harassment. There are some statistics available from state governments and the Uniform Crime Report (Fitzgerald 1993:6) but records of sexual harassment are taken almost exclusively from primary sources and unofficial studies up until around the 1970s and 1980s. Even then, official statistics reported from government agencies rely on reporting, which means they are incomplete. For example, in the 1980s, it was found that only around 5% of victims ever reported their experience (Fitzgerald 1993:7).

The 1900s brought a new institution with policies working against women who were harassed: unions. Although unions have benefited, and will continue to benefit employees, institutional regulations for sexual harassment were often weak or difficult to enforce. Female coal miners in the 1970s, for example, faced widespread sexual harassment (Segrave 1994:95-96). One woman said: "These comments are not isolated events happening once a week or month, but something we have to live with every single

day we work. We've complained to the personnel manager but he just laughs and so do the United Mine Workers' Union Leaders. It is a condition of our jobs and no matter what they try it never goes away" (Segrave 1994:97). Additionally, an organizer in Baltimore around 1980 said "for the most part men do not have any fear of reprisal" (Segrave 1994:115), meaning not only would women not be supported by the system, but many of them did not have faith that the system would ever support them.

Women were able to find support in each other, however. In 1984, female police officers in San Francisco formed a support group (Segrave 1994:83). The officers were then able to share their experiences with the safety of knowing they were outside of the workplace and out of earshot of the men who would harass or belittle them. Female miners also began to mobilize in the 1980s and it was revealed that 17% reported having been physically attacked, 53% had been propositioned by a boss, 76% had been propositioned by a coworker, and 63% knew another woman who had also experienced harassment (Segrave 1994:97). This continued throughout the rest of the century and into the 2010s, with one organizer saying: "When women come together to organize for change, there is something very powerful about that" (Yeung 2018:79).

This was also true in the process of labeling sexual harassment. The phrase was coined in 1975 by a group of women at Cornell University (Cohen 2016). They organized an event called Speak Out where women from various industries shared their experiences, making the women realize the issue extended much further than had originally been assumed. A few months later, the phrase *sexual harassment* was used as part of a *New York Times* headline, which brought increased attention to the issue.

Although newspapers were starting to write about sexual harassment and the public was realizing what a major issue it was, there was still backlash. Conservative public figure Phyllis Schlafly, for example, said that the women were “asking for it,” perpetuating the myth that ‘good girls’ did not get harassed (Cohen 2016).

This public attention eventually moved into the legal field, where aforementioned feminist attorney Catharine MacKinnon was at the forefront of establishing sexual harassment theory. She coined the terms “hostile working environment” and “quid pro quo,” which are entrenched in the law. The EEOC, under the supervision of director Eleanor Holmes Norton, was also working toward the naming and prevention of sexual harassment in the workplace. By 1977, three court cases upheld this legal understanding of sexual harassment, including *Meritor Savings Bank v. Vinson*, which made it to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Awareness of sexual harassment appeared to lead to other forms of institutional-level support for employees. For example, the Maintenance Cooperation Trust Fund was created to help non-union janitors who generally work for unregistered black-market contractors (Yeung 2018:14). The contractors often ignore government regulations (Yeung 2018:28; Yeung 2018:25) and leave employees without recourse in the face of mistreatment. The fund provides legal assistance for janitors to file lawsuits, which has led to settlements, particularly related to sexual harassment. It still exists in 2019, and from 1999 to 2018 had collected over \$26 million for abused janitors (Yeung 2018:15).

Moving into the late 1980s and early 1990s, there was some progress in increased lawsuits and awareness which indicates slowly gained trust in institutional response to harassment. Offenders receiving actual punishment, however, was still a rarity. For example, in 1986, the New York Transit Authority “formally prohibited” sexual harassment and there was eventually someone punished under this policy in 1992. However, the man was demoted instead of fired and still received six digits a year (Segrave 1994:115-116).

Public attention and successful court cases also led to larger cases involving notable public figures and business. For example, in 1991, the widely known case against Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas is seen as pivotal in the history of the public’s understanding of sexual harassment. In some ways, it could be argued that Weinstein’s case acts as the same. Roger Ailes, Bill O’Reilly, Matt Lauer, Bill Cosby, Kevin Spacey, and Brett Kavanaugh are among some of the public figures that have been accused of sexual harassment since the article about Weinstein was published.

Socially, there was, and still is, a belief that women would make sexual harassment claims to ‘take down’ men that they did not like. In the early 1990s, there was an instance of multiple female police officers reporting that their co-worker had sexually harassed them. Another officer claimed that the accused was “the victim of a conspiracy and a ‘witch hunt’” (Segrave 1994:93). More recently, in 2018, actor Liam Neeson also described contemporary sexual harassment allegations as a “witch hunt” (Livsey 2018) This shows that, even though over 120 years had passed between them, echoes of Clark’s case still appeared in modern instances of sexual harassment.

## Implications for the Future

The historical context of myths is connected back to Grant's understanding of myths. Myths can also guide how people act or their beliefs around what is right or wrong; "The myths of lost paradise, for example, give people hope that by living a virtuous life, they can earn a better life in the hereafter" (PBS). This same concept can be applied to historically based myths about sexual harassment. We see this in the present day with the myth that, if individuals act a certain way or dress a certain way, they will not be victimized.

While history offers an explanation as to how a society has progressed over time, myths explain why that progression has happened (Heehs 1994:19). They begin to offer some insight into how the world—or a certain society—works; they can act as a guide to understanding social norms of a certain group of people during a certain historical time. For example, a common myth is that victimization is inevitable. History tells us that families believed this myth because they feared sending their daughters to work and live in cities.

If a myth is believed, it will be passed from generation to generation. It will be shared through news, books, conversations, the legal system, and so on. As stated by Grant, these ideas become ingrained into society to a degree that they are no longer questioned or even perceived. The dissolution of a myth, then, requires a person saying *perhaps this is not actually true* to an idea shared by an entire society. This relates back to the significance of this thesis: in order to eliminate sexual harassment myths, work

must be done exposing what these myths are, where they came from, and what harm they have caused.



### **Chapter 3**

## **METHODOLOGY**

Three hypotheses informed this project. The first was that the increased attention on #MeToo would influence the way sexual harassment was written about in newspapers. As explained above, this was the reasoning behind categorizing into three subsections. This would be seen on a broad scale after coding all of the articles and comparing the results from T1, T2, and T3.

The second hypothesis was that the contexts and consequences would align with many of the myths earlier detailed. While individual perpetrators mentioned in the media likely faced consequences, there was a chance these might be either: 1) Underrepresented, since many sexual harassment cases do not receive coverage, or 2) overrepresented, since the news might focus on articles that feature unusually punitive or costly punishments.

Additionally, we predicted that the contexts provided in media coverage would correspond with the myths in section II. Specifically, we predicted that coverage would focus on male perpetrator/female victim dynamics, and that most of the articles would be about workplace sexual harassment.

**How do news articles portray the contexts and consequences of sexual harassment? Does the media perpetuate old myths, or does it challenge them?**

Hypothesis 1: There will be a noticeable difference between the content in articles written before and after the increased focus on the #MeToo movement in 2017

Hypothesis 2: Articles will perpetuate old myths, portraying similar contexts and consequences to what has been historically seen and shared

Figure 2 Research Questions

### **Research Design**

This thesis utilizes a grounded theory approach, originally constructed by Glaser and Strauss (1967). Very simply, this design starts with coding and theorizing as a way of spotting early patterns and potential research directions (Bernard, Wutich and Ryan 2017:225). There are typically multiple rounds of coding, moving from open coding (forming general, broad ideas) to focused coding (beginning to code specifically based on categories and broader implications). From there is the process of memo-ing, where field notes are taken and general insight, observations and takeaways are tracked (Bernard 2017:228). Finally, the theory is built and refined based on findings that either confirm or do not confirm the hypotheses originally put forward (Bernard 2017:231).

In order to use this theory to propose a new sociological theory, there are four main components as named by Glaser and Strauss (1967). First, the theory must reasonably align with the area in which it will be used, which, in this case, is sociology. If it cannot be used by other sociologists in a real-life, applicable context, then it is unusable (Glaser and Strauss 1967:237). In this way, grounded theory intentionally moves away from myth perpetuation and accidental bias from personal beliefs (Glaser and Strauss 1967:238).

Second, the theory must be readily understood by people who are either 1) not researchers, and/or 2) people who have no experience with the field being researched (Glaser and Strauss 1967:239). This generally means that the theory should be useful and explainable to people outside of sociology.

Third, the theory must be generalizable to many scenarios, not just one particular case study (Glaser and Strauss 1967:239).

Fourth, and finally, it must be possible to manipulate, predict, and control the realities being studied (Glaser and Strauss 1967:245). For sexual harassment, this would mean being able to influence policy, workplace environments, punishments, and the like.

### **Sample Collection**

Articles for coding analysis were collected using Nexis Uni, an offshoot of LexisNexis available through the University of Delaware. Nexis Uni proved to be the

most effective method of collection because it had the ability to keep the searches narrow and easy to organize. Additionally, using only one database helped avoid collecting too many repeating articles about the same sexual harassment cases, which would skew the data. It was also useful for finding articles that extended beyond major national news organizations and spread into more localized, city-level stories that might not typically be covered by those same organizations. This point is explored in more depth below. The hope was that this would offer generalizable data that can be used when referencing cases that are not national phenomena or involving high profile celebrities, politicians, or the like, although examples of those cases are also featured.

Using a combination of our knowledge of sexual harassment myths and the first small selection of articles, the coding team that I am part of put together a preliminary codebook to use. Examples of preliminary codes were location, perpetrator statements, false accusation, organizational responses, and solutions. The codebook evolved over time and depending on what we would find in the articles, new codes would be created. After this point, we individually coded. Then, following an interobserver approach, we rejoined as a group to discuss new proposed codes and patterns that were found between articles, as well as discuss what the findings mean.

After preliminary coding, which took place over January and early February of 2019, article collection for the second round of coding began. This was when specific search parameters were put into use (see below). The articles were collected in order. The only articles that were skipped over were repeated articles or publications that were not based in the United States. Overall, this led to a sample of 123 articles.

First, I searched “sexual harassment” in the Nexis Uni search bar. Then, under the *Geography by Document* tab, I selected ‘North America’ and ‘United States’ because this project is specifically focused on representation of sexual harassment in American media. After that, I set the *Publication Type* as ‘newspaper’ to keep my research focused on one specific aspect of American media. It should be noted that this research is based on what Nexis Uni identified a newspaper to be; I did not establish any other specific criteria (for example having to be available in print, having a certain number of readers, being a certain length, etc.) that eliminated publications.

After creating those categories, a specific timeframe for article collection had to be established. An early goal of this thesis was to see if there was any difference in how articles were written before and after the article about Weinstein. I also wanted to see if there was a noticeable uptick in sexual harassment coverage in newspapers after the Weinstein article. This was investigated by comparing the difference in the number of articles published from October 5, 2016 to October 4, 2017—one year before the *New York Times* article about Weinstein—and the year immediately following the Weinstein article, from October 5, 2017 to October 4, 2018. Following the earlier stated parameters, 6,139 articles about sexual harassment were published by American newspapers from October 5, 2016 to October 4, 2017. In comparison, 23,746 articles were published using the same parameters in the year following the Weinstein article. This nearly four-fold increase is a dramatic finding. The difference in the number of articles between 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 indicated a major jump in sexual harassment coverage and was the solidifying factor in setting the final data parameter.

*The New York Times* article exposing decades of Weinstein's alleged sexual harassment and abuse was published on October 5, 2017 (Kantor and Twohey 2017). I coded articles collected from time one (Oct. 5, 2016 – Oct. 4, 2017) as *Year Before(T1)*, referencing the full year before the Weinstein article was published. The next category (Oct. 5, 2017 – Oct. 4, 2018) was coded as *Year Of(T2)*, in reference to responses during the year immediately following the Weinstein article. The final category *Year After(T3)* (Oct. 5, 2018 – Oct. 4, 2019) is meant to capture what would be the immediate year following the Weinstein article.

### **Sample Characteristics**

Since the only parameters are the ones listed above (United States, includes sexual harassment, published between October 5, 2016 and October 4, 2019), any other characteristics of the articles were naturally occurring and found by chance. This means that no attention was paid to making sure all 50 states were represented, or that there was equal representation between national and local news; this was not a particular focus of this thesis. However, it is still worth mentioning since results could vary if data collection focused on creating a sample built to emphasize differing characteristics, such as the region of the majority of the states featured, if the majority are local or national news, if the majority are independently owned or not, and the like.

This particular sample of 123 articles came out to 71 different news organizations from 27 different states, and two non-states (Washington D.C., and the

Virgin Islands). Each individual state/district/territory and news organization is listed out in Table 1.

Table 1 News Organizations by State

<b>STATE</b>	<b>ORGANIZATION</b>
Alabama	The Vanguard
Alaska	Alaska Dispatch News
Arkansas	Arkansas Traveler*
California	The East Bay Times Torrance Daily Breeze The Guardian* The East Bay Times The Daily Californian* Marin Independent Journal Palo Alto Daily News Daily Bruin* Chico Enterprise-Record The Stanford Daily* The San Diego Union Tribune The Daily News of Los Angeles
Colorado	The Catalyst* Daily Camera
Connecticut	The Hartford Courant
Florida	Miami Hurricane* Sarasota Herald Tribune
Georgia	The Atlanta Journal-Constitution
Illinois	The State Journal-Register Chicago Daily Herald Northern Star*
Indiana	The Times

Iowa	Telegraph Herald The Northern Iowan*
Maine	Bangor Daily News
Maryland	Soundoff! Education Week The Greyhouse* The Daily Record
Massachusetts	The Justice*
Michigan	Michigan Daily*
Missouri	St. Louis Post-Dispatch
New York	<b>The New York Times</b> The New York Post New York Observer The Daily Beast Crain's New York Business <b>Associated Press</b> Daily News The Daily Record American Banker Washington Square* The Post-Star Advertising Age The WORD*
Ohio	The Post* The Journal-News Dayton Daily News
Oklahoma	Oklahoma Daily*
Pennsylvania	Philly.com** New Castle News The Tartan* The Morning Call The Philadelphia Inquirer
Texas	Austin American-Statesman The UTD Mercury*



Utah	The Salt Lake Tribune Deseret Morning News
Virginia	<b>USA Today</b> The Register-Herald Flat Hat* Richmond Times Dispatch
Washington	Spokesman Review
West Virginia	The Dominion Post
Wisconsin	The Daily Cardinal*
Non-states	<b>The Washington Post</b> The Virgin Islands Daily News

\*College publications

\*\*Philly.com is the online version of *The Philadelphia Inquirer*  
Bold text indicates major news publications

It is important to note that just because a news organization is based in a certain state does not mean the article(s) in the sample from them are also from the same state. For example, most of the articles in the sample from *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* are not actually based where their headquarters are based. But, primarily, local news organizations focused on their state and, in particular, in the same city or region where the organization is based. This means that this representation can be taken at face value; articles written in California or Connecticut, for example, are generally about issues happening in their respective states. This further helps avoid the sample being too heavily oriented toward a few select cases, since each newspaper wrote about cases that were unique to their specific area.

New York and California are featured the most in this data, with New York having 13 different news organizations represented and California having 12. Pennsylvania is the third most represented, with five news organizations. It should be noted that two of the publications—*The Philadelphia Inquirer* and Philly.com—are essentially the same because Philly.com is the online version of the *Inquirer*. However, Nexis Uni categorized them as being different publishers and the data is remaining consistent to the system Nexis Uni uses.

New York also makes up the highest number of articles within the sample at 26. California follows with 21. From a logistical standpoint, this representation makes sense since, as of 2019, California has the highest state population in the United States, New York is fourth, and Pennsylvania is fifth according to Census data (U.S. Census Bureau).

Most of the newspapers featured (23) are not considered major United States publications. The only four who are considered nationally recognizable are *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *USA Today*, and *Associated Press*. It should be noted that these organizations collectively make up about 17% of the sample articles that were coded, with the majority coming from *The New York Times* with 14 articles.

Table 2 Number of Articles by News Organization

<b>NUMBER OF ARTICLES</b>	<b>NEWS ORGANIZATION</b>
14	<b>The New York Times</b>
5	The Daily Californian*

	Dayton Daily News Richmond Times Dispatch
4	The East Bay Times Philly.com** <b>The Washington Post</b>
3	The Atlanta Journal-Constitution The Daily Record
2	Alaska Dispatch News Chico Enterprise-Record The San Diego Union Tribune The Hartford Courant The State-Journal Register Chicago Daily Herald The Times Bangor Daily News Michigan Daily* The Journal-News The Philadelphia Inquirer The Salt Lake Tribune Deseret Morning News <b>USA Today</b>
1	The Vanguard* Arkansas Traveler* Torrance Daily Breeze The Guardian* The East Bay Times Marin Independent Journal Palo Alto Daily News Daily Bruin* The Stanford Daily* The Daily News of Los Angeles The Catalyst* Daily Camera (Colorado) Miami Hurricane* Sarasota Herald Tribune (Florida) Northern Star* Telegraph Herald The Northern Iowan* Soundoff!

	Education Week The Greyhound* The Justice* St. Louis Post-Dispatch The New York Post New York Observer The Daily Beast Crain's New York Business Associated Press State & Local Daily News The Daily Record American Banker Washington Square News* The Post-Star Advertising Age The WORD* The Post* Oklahoma Daily* New Castle News The Tartan* The Morning Call Austin American-Statesman Austin American-Statesman The UTD Mercury* The Register-Herald Flat Hat* Spokesman Review The Dominion Post The Daily Cardinal* The Virgin Islands Daily News, St. Thomas
--	---

\*College publications

\*\*Philly.com is the online version of *The Philadelphia Inquirer*

Bold text indicates major news publications

Interestingly, 21 of the 71 news organizations are from university-level publications. Although this may just be a coincidence rooted in the parameters that were established, it may be worth exploring in the future if college newspapers write about sexual harassment more frequently than any other type of news organization. Twenty-

seven of the 123 articles (about 22%) were published by American colleges, with the most (5) coming from *The Daily Californian*, the independent student-run newspaper from the University of California Berkeley campus.

After eliminating major news publishers and college newspapers, there are 47 publications that can be considered either local or niche in some capacity. For example, the publication *Education Week* is a news organization that discusses national issues and has readership around the country, but it is specifically geared toward K-12 educators. The value of featuring newspapers like these is that, while they might focus on major cases, they are also more likely to write about regional stories. This works to avoid the sample pool of articles being too heavily oriented toward the few exceptional cases that catch the eye of national news. It could also help provide a more holistic understanding of what readers around the country are consuming. About 61% of the articles coded for this sample came from local or niche newspapers.

As seen in Table 2 and stated earlier in this section, the most articles from the sample came from *The New York Times* at 14. Three newspapers had five articles and the same number had four articles. Two newspapers had three articles in the sample. The most organizations had one or two articles; 14 publications were featured twice and 48 were featured once. Although the numbers are somewhat unbalanced, featuring many different news organizations from multiple states, even once, could be beneficial in understanding how sexual harassment is written about.

## Coding Template

There were two different types of codes used for this project. The first round of codes, which was the origin of many of the codes listed below, were established before doing any reading. These were brainstormed by the coding team I am part of based on previous knowledge and experiences. The second round of codes were established as articles were read and patterns emerged.

Table 3 Codes Organized by Category

CATEGORIZATION	CODE
Victim	Credible Gender LGBTQ+ People of color
Perpetrator	Bad guy Good guy Heterosexual Powerful man Queer threat Racialized Perp
Organization	Accountability Counseling/training Historic Problem Immediate response Investigation Justification for response No discipline No response Perp disciplined Promises Retaliation against victim Sending a message

	Slap on the wrist
Solutions & Remedies	Civil law Criminal law Institution-wide training Mandate (without enforcement) Oversight/committee Perp response to being accused Prohibit (without enforcement) Public shaming Report New/updated institutional policy NDA
Location	K-12 Street University Work
Commentary	Asking for it Could happen to anyone False accusation Free speech limitation Inspired by the movement
Article Content	Offers definition Perp response Recommendations Victim response Word choice

#### Victim Codes

There were four codes established in relation to victim: *Credible*, *gender*, *LGBTQ+*, and *people of color*.

The code for *credible* is referencing the myth of a victim's credibility, which is based on their trustworthiness and how well they fit the mythological 'perfect victim' model.

*Gender* refers to the gender of the victim.

*LGBTQ+* refers to if there is any mention of the victim's sexuality, regardless of who the perpetrator is.

Finally, the *people of color* code is referring to if the victim is identified as not being white.

### Perpetrator Codes

Six codes were created based on myths about perpetrators: *Bad guy*, *good guy*, *heterosexual*, *powerful man*, *queer threat*, and *racialized perp*. *Bad guy* is referring to articles that directly set up the perpetrator to be a villain of some kind, whether it be their criminal history or a record of poor behavior. *Good guy* is the opposite, referencing perpetrators who are framed to not be the 'type' of person who would commit a sexual offense. Both of these are gendered because, based on statistics and preliminary coding, men were found to be the majority of perpetrators featured.

*Heterosexual* and *queer threat* are referring to the sexuality of the perpetrator. *Heterosexual* is a heteronormative male/female combination. *Queer threat* is referring to the homophobic notion that heterosexual individuals are under threat from individuals who identify as LGBTQ+.

*Powerful man* is referring to men who are powerful in their particular field, whether it is a Hollywood mogul, a politician, or a successful professor.

*Racialized perp* is referring to articles where the race of the perp is mentioned and emphasized, often—if not always—in relation to non-white perpetrators.



## Organization Codes

There were thirteen codes established in relation to organizations. These are referring to the institutions surrounding the sexual harassment, such as a workplace or school. The codes are: *Accountability*, *counseling/training*, *historic problem*, *immediate response*, *investigation*, *justification for response*, *no discipline*, *no response*, *perp disciplined*, *promises*, *retaliation against victim*, *sending a message*, and *slap on the wrist*.

*Accountability* is referring to the organization's response, meaning if they chose to accept that the organization played a role in the harassment or not.

*Counseling/training* refers to required counseling/training for either the victim or the perpetrator, typically the perpetrator.

Articles were coded with *historic problem* when it was implied that a certain organization had seen sexual harassment previously. This harassment was mentioned in the article.

*Immediate response* means the organization reported having responded quickly to the incident. How the organization actually responded did not have any bearing on this code; all it means is that the organization said that they recognized there was a report of sexual harassment and recognized it quickly. The code *justification for response* refers to an organization arguing why they did, or did not, respond and why they responded in the way they did. The code *no discipline* is when the organization responds

and decides to not punish the perpetrator internally. *Perp disciplined* is the reverse, focusing on when the organization decides to punish the perpetrator in some capacity.

*Investigation* is when the organization calls for an investigation, either operated internally or by a committee.

The code *promises* is referring to when an organization makes a statement saying that they will take action but have not yet. This is usually in reference to changing institutional policy.

*Retaliation against victim* is when a victim is mistreated by an organization after reporting sexual harassment. This could include demoting or firing the victim.

When an organization is *sending a message*, it means they are intentionally trying to prove something, whether through punishing the perpetrator or issuing a statement.

Finally, *slap on the wrist* is when a perpetrator is warned but not formally punished.

#### Solutions and Remedies Codes

There are 11 codes under solutions and remedies: *Civil law, criminal law, institution-wide training, mandate (without enforcement), oversight/committee, perp response to being accused, prohibit (without enforcement), public shaming/canceling, report, new/updated institutional policy, and NDA.*

*Civil law* and *criminal law* involve external legal action, either a lawsuit or legal punishment from the courts.

*Institution-wide training* is implemented by the organization. Instead of training for the exclusively the perpetrator, the institution treats the problem as larger than just the one perpetrator and trains, or re-trains, everyone.

*Mandate (without enforcement)* is an order for something to be done or change, but there is no guarantee that those changes will actually be made.

*Oversight/committee* is when a group is formed or brought in to make a decision on how to respond to a report of sexual harassment.

The code *perp response to being accused* is when a perpetrator calls for legal action, claiming to have been falsely accused.

*Prohibit (without enforcement)* is when sexual harassment is formally prohibited by policy, but no steps were taken beyond that. This is different from *mandate (without enforcement)* because mandate is a call to action whereas prohibit is just saying it is not allowed.

*Public shaming* is related to pushing someone out of an organization or group. This is usually applicable in spaces that are not formal institutions with universal rules, like Hollywood. Shaming is connected to the modern concept of ‘canceling,’ which is an informal social action saying that an individual does not agree with something someone, usually a celebrity, has done.

*Reporting* refers to when a victim files a formal report with an institution, claiming to have experienced sexual harassment.

*New/updated institutional policy* is when an institution makes a change to their policy following a report of sexual harassment.

The final code, *NDA*, refers to non-disclosure agreements, which are often a response of either perpetrators of organizations in an attempt to silence a victim.

#### Location Codes

Location has four codes—*K-12*, *Street*, *University*, and *Work*. These are fairly self-explanatory. *K-12* refers to American elementary, middle, and high schools. This includes student-to-student, teacher/staff-to-student, and teacher/staff-to-teacher/staff harassment. *Street harassment* is harassment experienced on the street, usually a stranger harassing another stranger. *University* is referring to harassment at a college-level institution. This is an important distinction from K-12 because the dynamics and institutional policy can often be different from university-level policy. Finally, *work* is related to any scenario that takes place in a workplace, whether a government building, a bank, or a movie set. This can overlap with other locations—for example, if someone works at a school—and articles were coded to reflect this.

#### Commentary Code

The commentary categorization is in reference to social commentary. These are myths that are not directly related to a victim or perpetrator in a specific case, but rather *about* accusations in a broader sense. There are five codes under commentary: *Asking*

*for it, could happen to anyone, false accusation, free speech limitation, and inspired by the movement.*

*Asking for it* is a myth that has been previously mentioned in this thesis. This is related to the idea that the victim was harassed because they did something—acted a certain way or dressed a certain way, for example—to ‘make’ the perpetrator harass them. This is victim-blaming language.

*Could happen to anyone* is related to the perpetrator. This is meant to be a broad statement referencing a growing fear that sexual harassment accusations are a ‘witch hunt.’ This is typically implied or argued by men.

*False accusation* is similar to *could happen to anyone*, but the major difference is that *false accusation* involves an actual accusation. Whereas *could happen to anyone* is a broad statement about how anyone is at ‘risk’ of being accused, *false accusation* is perpetuating the idea that the accusation being made by a victim is false for one reason or another.

An article was coded with *free speech limitation* when someone in the article mentioned concerns about being silenced or having their First Amendment rights infringed upon. One example of this would be claiming that anti-sexual harassment policy is limiting individual’s ability to speak freely to other individuals because it is too broad.

Finally, *inspired by the movement* is when the article references that a victim came forward because of 1) the #MeToo movement, or 2) someone they know, or read about, came forward.

## Article Content Codes

Article content is a more general category, based on specifically the journalist(s) who wrote the article. These codes are: *Offers definition*, *perp response*, *recommendations*, *victim response*, and *word choice*.

*Offers definition* is when the journalist provides some sort of definition of sexual harassment, whether from a government agency, the workplace policy, or a generalized definition.

*Perp response* refers to instances where the perpetrator shares a statement. *Victim response* is the same, except it is about the victim's response.

*Recommendations* is when the article offers recommendations on how to prevent sexual harassment, either provided from a government agency, a research study, the workplace, an expert, or their own personal thoughts.

The last code, *word choice*, looks for instances where the language referring to either the victim or the perpetrator seems impassioned or potentially biased in a certain way.

Additionally, during the coding process each coder looked for instances that could be identified as *exploitative*, *accommodating*, or *transformative*. In general, we agreed on where articles showed instances of being transformative the most. There was also group consensus on other codes; we mostly found the same results and pointed out the same sections, we would just vary on the exact code or exact phrasing. For example, the code *promises* was newly added as the process went on because we felt that the *remedies* code needed to be explored more thoroughly.

## **Reflexivity**

It is important to realistically consider my personal biases within the context of this research. I was a college reporter and editor for *The Review*, University of Delaware's (UD) independent student-run newspaper, spending three years as an active member of the staff. Additionally, my father works for Gannett and although his job is oriented toward business/training, I was raised in a household where newspapers were almost always present. Because of this, my attitudes toward journalism tend to be fairly optimistic and supportive, and I value the work put into constructing a newspaper. That being said, however, I am also able to honestly critique pitfalls within journalism, including issues of sensationalizing crime. If anything, my time on *The Review* taught me how to be more comfortable with pointing out the ways that journalism can misguide readers. It also provided insight into the process of pitching and writing news stories (for at least one newspaper), so I feel confident in my ability to provide criticism as both a reader and writer/editor of news.

I have also volunteered as a victim advocate for Sexual Offense Support (SOS) at UD. I have based most of my academic and professional endeavors around my experiences with SOS and decided to focus on researching sex crimes at least partially because of it. However, SOS is an organization dedicated to supporting everyone, including those who are not the mythological 'perfect victim.' Additionally, my thesis advisor, Dr. Leon, has taught me to keep an open mind about punishment and the way we talk about those who commit sexual offenses. This is not a thesis meant to necessarily advocate for stronger or weaker punishments, or to 'take down' anyone who

sexually harass others; it is also not meant to minimize the harm caused by individuals who commit sexual offenses. This thesis is merely meant to increase awareness around the ways we talk about and mythologize sexual harassment in print media.



## Chapter 4

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In order to answer both questions effectively, two different methods of analysis had to be used. To answer the first question (*how do news articles portray the contexts and consequences of sexual harassment?*), analysis was based on specific, face-value information the articles contained, such as the content of the quotes and how perpetrators and victims were described by others. This is where codes like *retaliation* and various forms of punishments were considered, for example.

The second question (*does the media perpetuate myths about sexual harassment, or does it challenge them?*) required a deeper, more contextual analysis based in the final group of coding under *article content* with codes such as *word choice*, *recommendations*, and *offers definition*. There was additional consideration placed on information like location and gender, as well.

#### **How do news articles portray the contexts and consequences of sexual harassment?**

Primarily, the articles in this sample reflect many of the cultural stereotypes surrounding sexual harassment. There were only male perpetrators featured and most of the victims were female—unless the case involved a male-on-male perpetrator, which falls under the *queer threat* stereotype and code. Many of the perpetrators were highly accomplished or, at the very least, hierarchically superior to the victim(s) they harassed.

Although many of these patterns sounded familiar, there were still some surprising or particularly noteworthy finds, most of which were related to the societal context surrounding sexual harassment. This ranges from the way individuals view sexual harassment to fear mongering to referencing #MeToo in articles about sexual harassment. Because of this, the findings of this thesis focus most heavily on the context surrounding sexual harassment articles rather than the direct content of the articles themselves.

### Victims

There were three major findings related to victims: their experiences are downplayed, retaliation was commonly referenced as either an experience or something they feared, and they can find support in other victims.

#### **“He’s just goofing around”**

Downplaying showed up either anecdotally or through direct quote. In some articles, it was referenced only once; one article quoted Bill Maher saying “...it didn’t seem like it was the worst kind of sexual harassment” (Stern 2019) other cases, it happened multiple times at the hands of different people, whether supervisors, lawyers, investigators or third-party of some kind. For example, one article described the experience of a female dispatcher through both anecdote and direct quote, with downplaying occurring for the duration of the investigation:

“Unnerved, the dispatcher voiced her concerns to a supervisor. Departmental policy requires supervisors to immediately report this kind of behavior. But that’s not what happened. Instead, the young woman’s supervisor told her to ‘keep the situation quiet,’ so Niehus wouldn’t get into trouble. Then the supervisor walked outside and called Niehus to warn him to stop messaging the dispatcher.

‘I came back inside and told (the dispatcher) she was OK. I advised her to unfriend him and this would be over. I told her I handled it,’ the supervisor wrote in a statement. ‘It was over, misunderstood and not necessary to continue telling people, because it can really get people in trouble’” (Joyner 2019).

This reflects downplaying because the supervisor’s immediate response was to prioritize how other people would respond to the sexual harassment instead of acknowledging the victim’s experience.

Later, in the same case, an investigation by the Department of Public Safety found that the perpetrator had acted inappropriately but still found the flirtations to be mutual, despite the victim stating otherwise (Joyner 2019). This was downplaying because the experience the victim was saying she had experienced did not matter to those running the investigation.

Other instances of downplaying were seen in quotes that attempted to excuse the perpetrator's actions. To elaborate, these are instances like what was mentioned above where sexual harassment was labeled as 'mutual flirting' rather than sexual harassment. Another case, although not recent, came from a woman reminiscing on her experience as a horse racer in the 1970s among recent controversy within the sport. She said that, in the '70s, it was common for trainers to be sexually involved with "junior riders" and the girls were simply seen as "starryeyed" (Schrotenboer 2019). This detracts from the blame of the perpetrator by saying that the victim wanted it, so it could not count as abuse.

To further elaborate on this point, one article mentioned a quote from a fired political aide who said alcohol was "responsible" for his "horrible decisions" related to sexual harassment (Neuman 2019). Another article was about a school custodian, where a supervisor said: "We all know he's creepy" and "he's just goofin' around" (Clark 2019).

The takeaway from these articles is that downplaying is used to tell victims that their experience is not significant, or not serious enough to be worth noting. For example, the supervisor saying that the custodian was known as being "creepy" implies knowledge of past incidents where, most likely, no action was taken. Additionally, identifying the feelings as mutual or as though the victim wanted it despite the victim saying otherwise places more weight on perception than actual experience. This is essentially saying that, in order to be believed in an investigation, there can be no past

interactions that are perceived as overly friendly or warm, something that is entirely subjective based on the investigators.

Overall, downplaying in articles implies that sexual harassment is not serious and can instead be harmless or even funny. This message can then get passed along to readers, who will even then downplay their own experiences or lead to the minimizing of the experiences of others.

### **“It was an army attacking us”**

Retaliation against victims is mentioned throughout the sample articles, revealing different ways that institutions or individuals will retaliate against an accuser. What is interesting is that, in addition to retaliation against victims, it is also common to see retaliation against those who are trying to help victims.

The kind of retaliation that was experienced either by a victim or a third-party varied, but generally were either continuous workplace harassment or getting fired. For example, one Mar-a-Lago employee who was a whistleblower for sexual harassment occurring at his workplace was eventually fired after the investigation (Holmes 2019). Other whistleblowers faced similar consequences. One football coach and physical education teacher filed a complaint claiming that he was fired after being named as a witness in a complaint against the school he worked for (Bogage 2017). A student from Clark Atlanta University and the dean who assisted her with filing a report both faced retaliation. The victim lost funding from her university and was not updated on

opportunities that could advance her career. The dean was demoted from her position as a dean to be a professor (Stirgus 2017).

Another article described the experience of a female employee at Aspira, who was the victim of long-term workplace harassment after was attempting to stop sexual harassment in her office. She was excluded from meetings and her work responsibilities were cutback, which included removing her as a program director from a program she helped establish. Within a month of filing a report to claim she was being harassed, she was fired (Woodall 2017). Other experiences included receiving “unwelcome looks and rude comments,” as described by one female elected official after filing a complaint of sexual harassment (Carden 2019).

Other articles instead mention the fear of reprisal, which may make people less likely to report an incident they experienced or know about. For example, graduate students at UW-Madison said that they were worried about the “professional risks” of reporting sexual harassment to the university (Experts: UW Madison sexual harassment 2017).

The same feeling was also reported by journalists who broke major sexual harassment stories. As one article said: “The reporters weren’t immune, either, to much the same kind of intimidation and bullying their sources said they’d faced” (Symonds 2017). The journalists faced threats of either themselves or the newspaper they worked for getting sued. One journalist reported being told: “I am coming after you with everything I have ... you can take it as a threat” (Symonds 2017). In some cases, there were so many lawyers and consultants coming forward in an attempt to stop the article

from being written that they felt as though “it was an army attacking [them]” (Symonds 2017).

Retaliation is noteworthy because of its attempts at fear mongering and silencing victims and whistleblowers. Retaliation acts as punishment for those who want to change an environment, whether it be at a workplace or a university or as fear reaching as an entire society. Mentioning it at a high frequency in articles risks further scaring individuals out of reporting, but it can also work to do the opposite. By exposing the practice, efforts can be made to stop it by making preventive policies, enforcing harsher punishments for those who retaliate, and overall showing support for victims and perpetrators. While the current social climate is that retaliation is common and not often something victims or whistleblowers are protected from, this does not mean it cannot change; as explained in articles within the sample, workplaces have started to adjust and update their policies as awareness around sexual harassment has grown.

### **“We aren’t going to shut up”**

Victims relying on each other for support, or finding inspiration in each other, was coded as *Inspired by the Movement*. Victims, notably in coding periods T2 and T3, would reference #MeToo or other survivors in their life as the reason why they decided to report. There were two ways that this would be mentioned in an article: either a victim would directly say #MeToo in a quote or the journalist would use the opportunity of the current social climate to reference #MeToo.

For example, after having been told to be quiet about being sexually assaulted as a child, one woman—now a college student—decided to speak out after seeing Alyssa Milano’s tweet about #MeToo (1 year after MeToo). As the woman explained: “A year ago, I wouldn’t have felt I could talk about it in person,” she said. “It’s definitely been validating and it’s helped me” (1 year after MeToo).

Others have expressed finding a community. One woman discussed how trauma seemed to unify survivors of sexual offenses, and how the bonding over the trauma liberated individuals (1 year after MeToo). She credits the recent increase in attention on #MeToo as the reason why she was able to tell her parents about being assaulted. This feeling of unification and community has led to noticeable increases in reporting in certain departments. An employment attorney in San Francisco said that she was seeing “significant numbers” of reports compared to the last few years (Kendall 2017c).

While these examples focused directly on how #MeToo connects to survivors, some articles focused more on placing the reported harassment within the lens of #MeToo for the sake of social context. One article references #MeToo as the “growing national #MeToo movement” (Krishnamurthy 2018). Another article used the phrase “amid the peak of the #MeToo movement” and mentioned how #MeToo had given survivors’ anger a “voice” (Wang 2019). One mentioned the coincidence of a sexual harassment case coming to light as #MeToo started to “crest” (Farhi 2018).<sup>4</sup>

Going off of this, a number of articles were about how #MeToo has sparked social change and movement. For example, an article about workplace sexual harassment in Maine found that #MeToo had increased discussion around sexual



harassment (Valigra 2019). Another article specified the same about Harrisburg, Pennsylvania (Kreuger and Collett 2019). One article specifically focused on how #MeToo has sparked conversations in areas that receive less attention, like harassment that happened in grades K-12. Online, survivors and allies alike rallied behind this to create #MeTooK12 (Marriott 2018).

These mentions of #MeToo tell us how significant #MeToo is in understanding sexual misconduct. It is being used as a lens or a social reference that, when stated, anyone can recognize and know what it is about. It tells us that, for victims, #MeToo has sparked a social context of connecting to others and building bonds. It has given them a voice. And, as a number of the articles imply, when the victims form connections and depend on each other, they feel more comfortable speaking out and have no intention of staying quiet about sexual harassment. Although this is a small subsample and only features a select number of voices, it can indicate a possible direction #MeToo is moving in, at least based on what we know from news articles.

### Perpetrators

There were two major findings related to perpetrators, both related to way perpetrators respond to allegations—accusations of “witch hunt” and the perpetrator’s legal response to being accused.

### **“It’s McCarthyism”**

In the same way writers will feature quotes saying that #MeToo has led to an increase of victims coming forward, other articles will focus on the ramifications of that—an increased number of accusations. Namely, there is concern around false accusations.

One article mentions a former Utah county commissioner believing the complaints filed against him could be directly connected “to the national wave of women publicly accusing powerful men of sexual misconduct” (Tanner 2019). Although #MeToo is not mentioned by name, it is a clear reference. Others believe the number of accusations make the current social context like the “Salem witch trials” (Schrotenboer 2019). An individual quoted in another article made the same connection, believing that the accusations were a “witch hunt” (Bogage 2017). Another article cited a connection to “McCarthyism” (Kendall 2017a).

One article in particular digs into concerns raised by horsemen after sexual abuse claims were raised by U.S. Olympic athletes. The men noted concerns of being “devastated with false sex abuse claims” and being considered “guilty until proven innocent” (Schrotenboer 2019).

This concern of false claims is echoed throughout a number of statements of either men who have been accused or people who are concerned about a rash of false accusations spurred from #MeToo. Some articles stressed the importance of how “one online accusation” (Kendall 2017b) or “one tweet” (Kendall 2017a) could cause a major domino effect, taking down companies, employees, and CEOs (Kendall 2017b).

This concern of false accusations has also led to an increased conversation and concern over “do[ing] something wrong” (Farrish 2017). One man, who claimed to have been punished for holding the door open for a woman, posted on Facebook: “You cannot even joke or cut up with people without consequences that will follow you for the rest of your career” (Joyner 2019). One politician specifically stated concern over a “smear campaign” and implications of an affair as the reason why he would not allow a female reporter to shadow him (Zraick 2019).

The importance of concerns over witch hunts and smear campaigns is that it sets the stage for men to fear false accusations. In the same way victims or whistleblowers may learn to fear retaliation in risk of speaking out, men may become worried about false accusations, as statistically low as that risk might be. Based on this sample of news article, we learn that men may be on the defensive. This is in direct opposition to the perspective that the growing number of sexual harassment accusations has led to bonding and allowed victims to speak out who had never felt comfortable before.

### **“Trumped up accusations”**

A few articles mentioned alleged perpetrators filing lawsuits in response to being accused of sexual harassment.

One talk-show host sued PBS based on breach of contract after he was fired following sexual harassment allegations (Farhi 2018). He argued that the accusations against him were “trumped up” and the company had been actively searching for a reason to fire him because of years of “infighting” (Farhi 2018).

Related to issues of employment, a man seeking employment with a school district sued because he was unable to get a job after being accused of sexual harassment. He stressed that any misconduct had been directed toward adults and not students, but this had not been properly communicated by his previous employer to the hiring managers of the had applied for (Wachter 2017).

The lawsuits go beyond just employment; some focus on defamation and libel. One man directly attacked whistleblowers by filing a suit against former coworkers “for telling the public about those [sexual harassment] allegations” (a former Utah county). He was reported to have inappropriately touched and communicated with a female employee, but he denies the situation ever happened.

Also related to defamation and undue punishment, a male student sued the University of South Alabama because Title IX imposed sanctions on him that he believed violated his constitutional rights (Clayton 2017).

As seen, these examples all varied dramatically in purpose and situation. Primarily, the takeaway is how alleged perpetrators decide to respond to accusations. Based on the news articles, we can believe we will see an influx of growing suits and civil involvement initiated by perpetrators. Since these lawsuits were primarily later (T3), it is difficult to know what long term effect this could have.

### Organizations

The way that organizations respond to employees being accused varies dramatically. The bulk of coding for this project was dedicated to trying to categorize the various

approaches. Primarily, organizations were featured in articles for changing their policies and how they punish perpetrators.

**“That’s just the way it is”**

Policy was a large part of the discussion around organizations’ involvement in sexual harassment. If policies are not effective, it can prevent victims from getting help, not offer proper channels for how to punish a sexual harasser and make it a challenge to improve a hostile work environment. The methods organizations would use varied, but primarily included trainings and rehiring those who are in charge of monitoring sexual harassment allegations.

For example, when allegations against a professor came to light at UCLA:

“UCLA said in a statement that since the alleged violations, the university has created the Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, hired a new Title IX coordinator, and implemented, with the rest of the University of California, comprehensive new policies and procedures on sexual harassment and sexual violence. ‘These changes include establishing peer review committees to review proposed sanctions for any senior leader or faculty member found to have violated the UC Policy on Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment, UCLA officials said’” (Bays 2016).

This signifies an acknowledgement of areas of needed improvement and can act as a show of support for survivors who later may come forward to report. However, since this project is focused exclusively on articles written and not the actual implementation of policy changes, it is difficult to know if these policy updates actually achieved what ULCA hoped to achieve. This applies to all articles mentioning updates policies; while the effort shows promise, it is difficult to know immediately upon a change what overall impact it will have over the next six months, one year or three years.

In part to changing policies is also the *promise* to change policies. While some of the articles do mention actual changes (Casselman and Tankersley; Wang 2019). others focus more on theoretical changes that they either hoped to make or were actively writing at the time the article was published. For example, an Adjutant General nominee in the National Guard pushed a platform that would help survivors and provide training for the organization (Rao 2019). Additionally, the mayor of Hartford, Connecticut described efforts to improve the sexual harassment investigating process, although it was said he “did not elaborate” on how he would actually achieve that. He explained that:

"One of the most fundamental responsibilities you have as a leader is to say this is an environment - at work - where you can feel comfortable and safe," she told Bronin at the meeting, held in Hartford's Parkville neighborhood. "It's not only about creating a process where people can finally report it through some proper structure, it's also about minimizing

the opportunity for it to happen in the first place” (Carlesso 2019).

Primarily, the organizations that proposed policy changes were universities and legislators. One theory about why this is happening could be that both face intense pressure to make changes. Legislators are expected to listen to their constituents and universities, notably Title IX offices, have been under scrutiny for years for lengthy investigations.

These changes are sometimes many years coming. As explained by one Assemblywoman from Manhattan: “I was told, ‘That’s just the way it is,’ said Assemblywoman Linda Rosenthal of Manhattan after describing being harassed by a former colleague. ‘For too long, we’ve accepted that’s just the way it is. But that’s not true anymore” (Wang 2019). According to the article, the New York State Capitol had spent decades not talking about sexual harassment and not attempting to make any changes until then.

The social importance of talking about policy is a growing conversation about why policy matters and why proper policies should be put into place. If no one realizes, for example, a political office does not have a “procedure to remove or force” an official accused of sexual harassment from office (Tanner 2019). then there will be no channels put in place for if an accusation comes to light. Additionally, by making the general public more aware of sexual harassment policy, they can demand appropriate policy changes or know when a workplace has policy that might not support them if they filed a complaint.

### **“A neutral stance”**

Organizations would punish perpetrators in a range of ways but, typically, the punishments were either internal, like enforced sexual harassment trainings, or firing the perpetrator.

For example, one man was demoted by his department, transferred to a new office, and forced to take workplace behavior training (Joyner 2019). A professor of economics lost his research lab and was suspended for two years from teaching and research using university resources (Casselman and Tankersley 2019). At a different university, an abuser found guilty of a number of incidents including sexual harassment and intimate partner violence, was expelled (Alumna uses UM). A celebrity case involving a former host of The Today Show was fired following sexual harassment allegations (Richardson 2017). All of these are examples of an organization stepping in and following policy to punish a perpetrator in a way deemed appropriate by an investigation.

However, a fair number of articles also featured perpetrators being able resign from their positions rather than formally fired.

“On March 15, six days after the survey responses were due, Giannelli resigned. He said he left the position willingly and said that Clark did not mention any of the allegations against him when the two met” (Bogage 2017).



“Binary Capital founder Justin Caldbeck resigned in June after six women accused him of making unwelcome advances ranging from late-night texts to groping. A week later, 500 Startups founder Dave McClure resigned after publicly apologizing for coming on to multiple women in work-related settings. And Last month, Frank Artale, a Seattle-based managing director at Ignition Partners, resigned after he was accused of misconduct. This week Greylock revealed that the firm's chief operating officer, Tom Frangione, resigned in July over what a spokeswoman called behavior which would represent a significant lapse of judgement. The claims were internal and did not involve a founder” (Kendall 2017a).

“Razzano, who had worked for the district for 20 years, had resigned his position in a settlement in April, 2014, after allegations of sexual harassment were made by adult teachers and other adult co-workers” (Wachter 2017).

“Rep. Dean Westlake, D-Kiana, said on Friday that he will resign from his seat after being accused of sexual harassment by multiple women” (O’Malley 2017).

“District Court Judge Rafael Ovalles, accused of sexual harassment and judicial misconduct, has decided to retire Oct. 31. A state report found that Ovalles had degraded women, mistreated court staff, lawyers and the public and napped on the job” (News from across the USA 2017).

Although resignation is a loss of a job, it is somewhat controversial because it can be seen as not aggressive enough. Once a person resigns, or even if they are fired, they can still be rehired somewhere else and still not have received any form of training or anything that indicates a true change in behavior. For example, a former political aide was forced to resign from his position after he was accused of sexual harassment by two women. The aide had been fired from a previous job for a similar reason (Neuman 2019). Another man was fired after an internal investigation found he violated company sexual harassment policy and in response to this, the man moved to Ecuador (Kelly 2018). Although this was a punishment, the man was allowed to continue his life elsewhere without having received any form of training.

In other cases, there appears to be no punishment or response. For example, two different universities allowed two different professors accused of sexually harassing their students to return to teaching (DeRuy 2017). At a K-12 school, one family reported that they had never been involved in the investigation they initiated; no one in their family had been interviewed (Bogage 2017).

Punishment, and a lack thereof, raises questions of what exactly is enough. For some, resignations might be deemed as enough of a punishment because the perpetrator lost their job. For others, an organization allowing someone to resign could be a sign that they are not being aggressive enough or harsh enough. However, since the purpose of this paper is not to explore the psychology of punishment, the main takeaway for this thesis is that punishments vary. There is no singular way that an organization will respond. Additionally, it is typically highly ranked members of an organization who resign, meaning this does not provide any indication of how other individuals might be punished. This means that any victims who may consider filing a report against their employer may not have any idea what to expect or if the person who harassed them will actually face a punishment the victim finds appropriate.

### Journalists

Although journalists were not a key part of the initial coding process, their influence became evident throughout. This is evident primarily in two codes, *Inspired by the Movement* and *Recommendations*.

Since journalists—including reporters and editors—set up the context in which a story is written in, they decide whether to feature social context or not. In this sample of articles, #MeToo was frequently mentioned as a way of grounding the reader. However, journalists hold an immense amount of power in deciding how #MeToo is talked about in terms of word choice and detail, like whether it is mentioned in passing or given an extended explanation.

Additionally, journalists can elect to highlight recommendations. The stories sampled appeared as straight news items, not opinion pieces so it is not the journalist giving advice on how to stop sexual harassment, however the writer has the power to choose whether to feature quotes from subjects about policy reform. For example, in the sample, stories would mention employees signing pledges to stop sexual harassment (Valigra 2019), and feature recommendations provided by experts to use external investigators (Joyner 2018), require company-wide training (Skelly 2017) and generally raise awareness around sexual harassment (Scott 2019), among other things.

The way journalists present a story is arguably one of the most important parts of this thesis. As mentioned in the literature review, journalists hold at least some power over the general public in terms of their opinion. The way journalists cover sexual harassment could determine where our policies go and if public opinion supports or blames victims. This is especially important if the contexts and consequences are not portrayed accurately. The types of stories reported on and the style of reporting could lead to the perpetuation of myths, including myths that are harmful and potentially untrue about victims.

**Does the media perpetuate myths about sexual harassment, or does it challenge them?**

To appropriately answer this question, I examined the sample of news articles holistically. While the first research question led me to look for portions of each article to describe the context and consequences of sexual harassment, the second question

required analysis of the overall impression or main idea of entire articles. To simplify, the main goal of this portion is to pinpoint how an average reader might perceive sexual harassment overall after reading an article.

Towards this end, I categorized each of the 123 articles as being exploitative, accommodating, or transformative. This categorization was based on primarily *article content* codes, which considers factors like word choice and the cultural context the article was placed within. For example, this was looking for instances where Me Too was mentioned and how Me Too was described. Additionally, location and gender were also taken into consideration because these would tell us if readers would come to believe that, for example, sexual harassment always falls on a male perpetrator/female victim dichotomy, or that sexual harassment can only occur in a workplace.

After analysis, this sample included eight myth exploitative articles (7%), 83 myth accommodating articles (67%), and 33 myth transformative articles (27%).

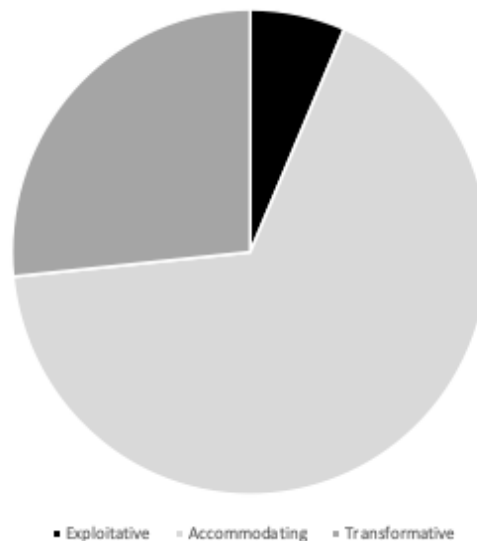


Figure 3 Article Categorization Based on Leon's Myth Framework

It should be noted that this style of categorization is not a perfect system. Some articles could arguably have fit within any of the three categories depending on how an article was perceived or what an individual considers important in an article, which suggests that future research should employ multiple coding and assess interrater reliability.

#### Myth Exploitative

Articles were considered myth exploitative when sexual harassment was framed in a way that could potentially move the public backward in their understanding of sexual harassment. While there is not one unifying factor that makes an article exploitative, there are characteristics that might stand out. For example, articles that perpetuate stereotypes, or articles that frame sexual harassment claims as inconvenient could be considered exploitative. In this sample, there were three noticeable characteristics: focusing on settlement amounts, viewing sexual harassment as a financial burden on institutions and taxpayers, and focus on stereotypical beliefs about sexual harassment.

#### **Frames sexual harassment as a 'moneymaker'**

In some ways, it might seem counterintuitive to believe that an article about a victim receiving financial compensation for the harassment they experienced is exploitative. However, it is important to consider that not all articles about financial compensation

are inherently exploitative; it is how the settlement is framed within the article. For example, one article in this sample started off by saying, “Philadelphia officials have agreed to pay \$127,500 to a former employee of the Sheriff’s Office who last year sued the city, claiming that repeated sexual harassment by Sheriff Jewell Williams rendered her emotionally broken and caused her to quit her job” (Dean 2019). Another article in the sample started off in a similar way: “The town has paid \$202,000 to two women to settle sexual harassment lawsuits, while a third woman's lawsuit remains pending in federal court, records show” (Reese 2019). While it may be understood as the journalists’ practice of highlighting key findings prominently, the effect of framing the story this way may re-enforce the myth that victims only come forward to either ruin someone’s reputation or receive a large payment.

### **Frames sexual harassment as a financial burden**

In addition to viewing sexual harassment as a ‘moneymaker’ for victims, sexual harassment can also be painted as a financial burden to the perpetrator or to the employer or other entity held responsible due to the costs of training programs or investigations. This was partially seen in the section above with the quote referring to how “the town” paid to settle sexual harassment claims, which could arguably be viewed as framing sexual harassment as a burden on taxpayers.

A clear example is seen in the article *4 Women File Sexual harassment Lawsuit Against Indiana Attorney General, State*, which said: “Hoosier taxpayers could be forced to pay the price for alleged sexual misconduct by Attorney General Curtis Hill

Jr (Carden 2019). Although the blame of sexual misconduct is placed on the attorney general, the burden of ‘paying for’ the sexual harassment is placed on the taxpayers. This could make readers more likely to respond negatively to sexual harassment cases and claims.

Additionally, sexual harassment claims could be framed as a burden on a school district. One article said: “The cost to make the Palo Alto Unified School District comply with federal Title IX laws and conduct further sexual harassment investigations could run about \$200,000, according to school administrators” (Lee 2017). Similarly to the earlier stated examples, this may leave an overall impression of the cost of sexual harassment to third parties rather than the focus on the victims.

### **Perpetuates potentially harmful mindsets**

In addition to framing sexual harassment primarily as a “cost” to third parties, including the public, some articles that blatantly perpetuate victim blaming mythology. Myths that directly play into the falsity of claims or victims “asking for it” are especially harmful because they invalidate *all* sexual harassment victims and their experiences. Two articles in this sample represented this<sup>3</sup>.

The first was written about a politician: “Robert Foster, a Republican state representative in Mississippi who is running for governor, blocked a female reporter

<sup>3</sup> This is not to say that any journalists share these beliefs or intentionally wrote these articles to invalidate the experiences of victims.



from shadowing him on a campaign trip ‘to avoid any situation that may evoke suspicion or compromise’ his marriage’” (Zraick 2019). While the story may seem important, it comes at the risk of enforcing stereotypical beliefs in readers. It frames sexual harassment claims as something that could happen to anyone, and sexual harassment more holistically as a tool individuals use to ruin a person’s reputation. Most importantly, and for context, it should be understood that the basis of the article was solely Foster’s concern of being accused of infidelity or sexual harassment. It was not a piece within a larger article but, rather, the entire purpose of the article itself. Additionally, this was the only article written by this journalist for this publication on the topic of Mississippi’s election or Robert Foster in general, meaning there were no other angles provided. This approach could lead to individuals, including victims and people who have not been victimized, internalizing the belief that sexual harassment complaints are used to ruin reputations.

The second article was focused on a training provided to army commanders. The primary topic was “the physical dangers and legal consequences of alcohol intoxication and sexual assault” (Bad mix). Although primarily focused on sexual assault, the article mentions sexual harassment, suggesting sexual assault falls under the larger umbrella of sexual harassment experienced on the base. The article shines light on the risks of alcohol abuse, but it also frames sexual assault and sexual harassment, as something that happens when people drink. One presenter said, “It is important to educate junior service members about the harm that can occur when they mix drinking with sexual situations” (Bad Mix). And while it is an important discussion to have, the article seems to detract

from the fact that, even if alcohol is involved, the perpetrator committed a sexual offense; they did not harass someone *because* they were drinking, they harassed someone *while* they were drinking. Even if the distinction was recognized at the presentation itself, it was not clearly stated in the article, which could perpetuate the idea that perpetrators can be excused because they are just ‘messing around’ or were intoxicated at the time.

### Myth Accommodating

Myth accommodating articles do not challenge readers in any way. Whereas myth exploitative articles re-enforce a potentially damaging perspective that may move readers backward in their recognition of sexual harassment, myth accommodating articles more neutrally repeat what is typically already believed. This includes myths like only men can be perpetrators or that sexual harassment isn’t a ‘big deal.’ I also chose to include articles about updated policies in this category. In this case, traits that stood out from accommodating articles were: focusing on the male perpetrator/female victim dichotomy, focusing on exaggerated unbalanced power dynamics, and writing about either enacted or discussed policy changes.

#### **Features the male perpetrator/female victim dichotomy**

Focusing on a male perpetrator/female victim dichotomy is considered accommodating because it aligns with the beliefs that the general population has. It does not push

boundaries by opening up the conversation to include lesser-discussed situations, like male-on-male sexual harassment. Instead, it simply replicates what is already believed to be true.

There are numerous articles in the sample that feature a male perpetrator/female victim pairing, but some notable examples are:

“When Mr. O’Brien left the governors association in December 2015, Mr. Bullock was among those who knew the reason: A woman employed at the association had accused Mr. O’Brien of sexually harassing her, and an investigation had backed her up” (Neuman 2019).

“Rep. John Conyers, D-Mich., the longest serving member of Congress, stepped aside as the top Democrat on the House Judiciary Committee amid growing internal pressure as an ethics investigation begins into sexual harassment allegations. Conyers, 88, settled a sexual harassment allegation brought by a former staffer, leaving her on the payroll as a temporary employee and paying out just under \$30,000” (Keene 2017).

“A federal judge in Kansas was given a rare public reprimand on Monday for sexually harassing female

judiciary employees and having an affair with a felon that made him “susceptible to extortion” (Zaveri 2019).

It should be noted that not all articles involving the male perpetrator/female victim dichotomy read overall as myth accommodating. As will be seen, there are articles involving this dynamic that can be considered transformative because of the way the dynamic is written about. However, a majority of the articles written about a male perpetrator/female victim dynamic were overall accommodating and aligned with preconceived notions of sexual harassment.

### **Focuses on unbalanced power dynamic**

Similarly to the section above about the male perpetrator/female victim dichotomy, articles that focused on an exaggerated unbalanced power dynamic were frequently accommodating. This is referring to articles that were written about specifically perpetrators who were placed above the victim in a hierarchy, typically in a working environment. There were numerous examples of this:

“Harvard's actions represent a remarkable fall from grace for an economist who until recently was among the profession's most admired researchers—and one of Harvard's highest-paid faculty members. He is also one of the most prominent African-Americans in a field that has long struggled with racial diversity. Harvard's decision comes after a process that

began in June 2017 when a woman who worked for Mr. Fryer reported to human resources officials that he had repeatedly harassed her. Several other women came forward with similar accusations” (Casselman and Tankersley 2019)

“Rep. John Conyers, D-Mich., settled a sexual harassment allegation by a former staffer. He has denied wrongdoing” (Keene 2017).

“Randall, an experienced pâtissier who worked in a different Palm Beach hotel before joining the Mar-a-Lago staff as executive pastry chef, claims that his employment was revoked for "wholly pretextual reasons" after he initiated and participated in an investigation of two high-level managers at the swanky resort who had been accused of sexual harassment” (Holmes 2019).

All of these articles also featured a male perpetrator/female victim relationship. One theme that appears throughout articles that were categorized as accommodating is how they align with multiple myths that are understood to be ‘common knowledge’ in American culture. In this case, the dynamic of a superior harassing someone who works

for them is not new information, particularly when it is a male superior harassing a female employee.

Although there were no articles in the sample involving a female boss harassing a male employee, articles with a similar message would be considered transformative because it challenges social norms.

### **Describes general policy updates**

There were three noticeable subtypes of proposed policy: legislative, university, and workplace. All of the articles were of a similar nature, some addressing changes that have been formally passed. For example, “City of Hartford employees will take part in interactive training on sexual harassment every three years, and receive supplemental training every year, under a new policy adopted this week” (Lurye 2019). Similarly, “After the state of Illinois mandated in November that governmental entities update their sexual harassment policies, the city of Springfield has added to its existing anti-harassment and nondiscrimination rules in city code” (Thomas 2018). Even if the new *legislation* could be considered transformative, the *articles* are categorized as accommodating because the overall effect of the article is interpreted as neither enforcing nor challenging previous beliefs.

Other articles are written about either an individual or organization wanting to change policy, which aligns with the aforementioned *promises* code. For example, in one article it is stated: “After media reports of sexual misconduct at the Capitol, Gov. Greg Abbott said Tuesday he will work with lawmakers to improve policies related to

sexual harassment” (Silver 2017). Similarly, another article said, “Adjutant General nominee Col. Kodjo Knox-Limbacker is hoping to foster a "culture of dignity and respect" within the V.I. National Guard, an organization, which, for years, had reportedly taken a blind eye toward sexual misconduct” (Rao 2019). These examples feature individuals who eventually want to improve policy, but it is uncertain when they will do it or, in some cases, how.

Overall, simply discussing, debating, or writing about sexual harassment is not inherently transformative. It does, however, signify some progress, making it not exploitative. Additionally, I would argue that mentioning policy in and of itself is not inherently transformative because it is difficult to know at its inception if the policy will actually benefit the people it is trying to help.

### Myth Transformative

I coded articles as myth transformative when they had the potential to change a reader’s perspective about sexual harassment to be more inclusive. Articles in this category offered cutting-edge or more inclusive definitions of sexual harassment, framed sexual harassment a social issue rather than an individual issue, and wrote about populations not frequently addressed in sexual harassment discourse.

#### **Offers inclusive definitions**

Articles featuring an inclusive definition challenge more limited perspectives . This can take the form of examples of sexual harassment beyond physical and extended into locations beyond the workplace. For example, one article provided the definition:

“...Sexual harassment is a civil offense defined by the Equal Opportunity Employer Commission as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal and physical harassment of sexual, sex, or gender-based nature. Sexual harassment can be legally pursued when it occurs in the workplace or a school setting” (McGuill 2019).

This definition is important because it provides 1) a recognizable and legitimate organization, 2) includes multiple forms of sexual harassment, 3) clarifies that sexual harassment can be related to both sex and gender, and 4) includes schools. Additionally, it does not exclude anyone or specify a hierarchical standing; it simply says “unwelcome sexual advances” without limiting it to who is displaying the behavior. While not all of this criteria is necessary to make a definition inclusive, these components are important and worth considering in the construction of future definitions.

Another article is similar in nature, but phrased in a slightly different manner:

“Sexual harassment includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and other conduct of a sexual nature that affects a person's employment or education or interferes with a person's work or educational performance or creates an environment that a reasonable person would find it intimidating, hostile or offensive. Let them know it's unacceptable” (Sultan 2017).



This definition is transformative because it is inclusive of different types of sexual harassment and clarifies that it extends into educational settings. Additionally, it frames sexual harassment from the perspective of a victim's subjective experience. It does not provide specific criteria; it just notes that the harassment "affects" someone or "interferes" with their life. This may help victims name harassment they have experienced as sexual harassment.

### **Frames sexual harassment as a social issue**

In addition to offering definitions, transformative articles recognized the social significance of sexual harassment. This could include aforementioned instances of referencing Me Too or referring to the benefits of victims supporting each other. At the very least, framing sexual harassment as an issue that goes beyond only one individual person can allow for a real acknowledgement of how prevalent sexual harassment is in the United States today. This was a theme seen in a few articles in this sample with small variations.

"The response was immediate and overwhelming, and touched off a cultural movement that has shed light on the pervasiveness of sexual harassment, assault and violence against women across all industries" (1 Year After Me Too).

"While three times more women than men, or 57.6 percent, of respondents said they were harassed, 18.8 percent of men

said they were victims. And younger employees, between 18 and 34 years old, experienced sexual harassment most commonly, at 57 percent” (Valigra 2019).

“It starts with a whisper. A prominent man has used his wealth and power to harass or abuse a woman—or worse—and then to intimidate her, or to buy her silence. As several reporters at The New York Times have learned this year, it rarely ends with a single woman, a single whisper” (Symonds 2017).

Although the articles used different approaches—for example, referring to Me Too and the “cultural movement” it sparked, using statistics, or referring to how sexual harassment is rarely an individual experience—all achieve the same effect. Whether intentional or not, it instills in the reader a sense of potential community that could be beneficial in inspiring other victims to come forward when they are ready or reminding them that they are not alone. Additionally, it informs readers of how pervasive sexual harassment, both from a statistical standpoint and in a more personal, individual way with anecdotes.

### **Includes underrepresented populations**

Another theme that appeared in articles identified as transformative was a focus on populations who are not frequently mentioned in sexual harassment discourse. Discussing harassment in K-12 schools, for example, broadens readers' understanding of who can be a victim and what sexual harassment can look like.

The articles varied in location and subject matter. For example, two that focused on harassment in K-12 schools (Marriott 2018; Krishnamurthy 2018). One of them states in the first paragraph,

“But the lesser-known #MeTooK12 has shown the relationship norms underlying sexual harassment develop long before men and women enter college or start their first job. Research and education experts indicate kids say they face sexual harassment every day in school. They want to know how to say no, how to navigate relationships, and who they can trust when harassment happens” (Marriott 2018).

This section is transformative because it not only opens up a conversation about sexual harassment in young adults, but it also indicates that the students want the conversation to occur. By doing this, it both informs the reader, as well as validates feelings that other students might be having.

Other articles focused on occupations not frequently discussed. For example, one was specifically about research conducted on sexual harassment in the medical field

(Geller 2019). Another article focused on boat inspection station workers at the Adirondack Watershed Institute (sexual harassment is prevalent).

There were also articles written about perpetrator/victim dynamics not frequently referenced, like male-on-male harassment (The Daily Progress 2019; Hazelrigg 2019). One was written about a student who was harassed by her school therapist, which can open up the conversation about harassment perpetrated by helping professionals on their patients.

All of these articles are transformative because they can contribute to readers forming a more inclusive, open perspective of who can be a victim and where sexual harassment occurs.

### **Main Takeaways**

In terms of answering the research questions, the article sample offered a variation of responses. Mainly, the response to *How do news articles portray the contexts and consequences of sexual harassment?* is that the contexts and consequences align with the myths that we have normalized in American society. We consistently see the male perpetrator/female victim scenario, workplace sexual harassment, and a superior harassing someone who works for them. Perpetrators are rarely punished in the court system for either civil or criminal law, and the way that organizations punish perpetrators is up for debate in terms of its efficacy.

As for the second question, *does the media perpetuate myths about sexual harassment, or does it challenge them?*, I found that, in this sample, articles perpetuated

myths more frequently than they challenged them. To relate back to the myth framework, the articles were primarily accommodating (83 articles and align with myths that are common in public discourse about sexual harassment. However, it is worth noting that the second highest category (with 33 articles) was transformative. This indicates movement toward articles that could be genuinely beneficial for the public's understanding of sexual harassment.

In addition to the knowledge that this sample is primarily myth accommodating, this research also suggests the importance of *context*. The major differentiating factor between how articles were categorized was *how* sexual harassment was written about. Thinking about questions like *Could this article expand a reader's understanding of victimization?* can help determine if an article is ultimately helpful or hurtful.

The main point of focusing this research on the social context surrounding sexual harassment is that news articles have power over readers. Those who have not had personal experience with sexual harassment may form their understanding of sexual harassment on the media they consume. If the context provided by these articles is incorrect or perpetuates harmful mythology, then readers will begin, or continue, to view victims through the lens of that mythology.

For example, if articles feature quotes downplaying the experiences of victims or constantly feature stories about retaliation, this may tell a reader that victims are not supported. Additionally, if articles focus on how perpetrators view modern accusations as McCarthyism, a reader will come to believe that accusations are widespread and false. Finally, if organizations do not appear to take action, it could be believed that

harassers can get away with what they have done. Because of this, we should be cautious in how myths are discussed and how journalists present the issue of sexual harassment.

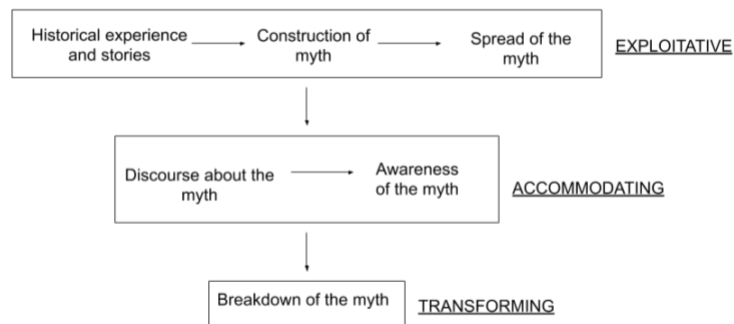
This, then, implies that journalists play a significant role in how sexual harassment is understood. The way that journalists approach a story, in addition to the type of story that they decide to write about, is valuable in considering the role they play in perpetuating stereotypes. For example, if journalists only ever write about male perpetrators and female victims, it could limit their readers' understanding of sexual harassment. But if journalists decide to write about sexual harassment in a way that defies preestablished notions of sexual harassment, they could lead their readings to being more inclusive. In turn, inclusive readers could become a more inclusive American public.

**Proposed Framework: Sexual Harassment Myth Formation, Distribution, and  
Dissolution Paradigm**

Because of the perceived role that journalism plays in sexual harassment mythology, I propose a new framework that combines Grant's (1998) understanding of modern mythology and Leon's (2016) theory of myth accommodation. It should be noted that Grant does not offer an explicit process of how myths form, but he provides a general understanding of how history influences mythology. This new framework understands the importance of historical context in considering myths and offers steps forward in how to potentially avoid myth perpetuation in the media.

Figure 4 Sexual Harassment Myth Formation, Distribution, and Dissolution Paradigm

This paradigm proposes that each part of the myth formation process aligns with one of the three categories provided in Leon's myth accommodation framework. The importance of this paradigm is that we are able to determine where we fall on the scale



and what needs to be done in the future for improvement. In a very general sense, this

paradigm argues that, in order to breakdown a myth, we must first become aware of its existence.

### Exploitative

The paradigm begins with historical experiences and stories. Because this paradigm is meant for sexual harassment, all of the experiences and stories could arguably fall under exploitative because the experiences require some form of harassment or abuse to be legally considered sexual harassment.

From there, the lived experiences and stories about victims leads to the construction of a myth. This myth may be based on any combination of factors, including false beliefs that victims are lying or promiscuous or wanted a relationship with their supervisor. All of these beliefs would be considered exploitative under Leon's framework because it directly works against progress toward gender equity.

From there, the myth begins to spread from how and where it originally formed to the degree that it becomes normalized and accepted as truth. This is still exploitative rather than accommodating because it is the process of normalizing the myth, which then leads to the ability to accommodate the myth.

### Accommodating

The process of accommodating myths has two specific processes. First, there is discourse about the myth. This is after the myth has already been normalized and is



viewed as a generally acceptable perspective. The discourse and awareness of the myth merely acts as commentary about it, not necessarily positive or negative.

### Transforming

In order to be considered transforming in Leon's framework, the program must deconstruct the myths that are perpetuated. In this case, it is the same; in order for an article to be seen as transformative, it must actively deconstruct the myths being perpetuated. Examples of this could be featuring stories that go against the grain, including stories about male-on-male sexual harassment that does not perpetuate queer threat, or experiences that extend beyond the workplace, like street harassment.

The main challenge of this is journalist involvement. In some ways, fighting against mythology could be seen as advocating or 'taking a stance,' which goes against the expected attitude that journalists will be balanced in their writing. However, it is important to note that this framework is not pushing for journalists to act as victim advocates. It is merely saying that journalists should be cautious about what is written in order to avoid myth perpetuation around the contexts and consequences of sexual harassment. The hope is that this would allow readers to have a more open perspective of what sexual harassment can, and does, look like outside of sensationalized stories. It can lead to a broader understanding that anyone of any gender can be a perpetrator and the same for victims. It can also be generally beneficial for the public since these articles can educate readers on next steps, organizations they can approach for help, and programs that can be initiated at a school or workplace to later prevent harassment. It

can, hopefully, overall at least start dismantling victim blaming and moving behind the attitude of *sexual harassment* must *look like this* to a more holistic, accepting mindset.

## Chapter 5

### CONCLUSION

Just under three years after Kantor and Twohey's *New York Times* article about Weinstein was published, he was sentenced to 23 years in prison. After the sentencing, his attorney said, "That number spoke to the pressure of movements in the public, that number did not speak to the evidence that came out in trial. That number did not speak to the testimony that we heard. That number did not speak to evidence, nor did it speak to justice" (Barr 2020). Immediately, journalists connected this statement to the #MeToo movement (Maddaus 2020; Pierson and Freifeld 2020; Sisak, Hays, and Peltz 2020). This not reveals how journalists make intentional connections back to a familiar social movement; it also shows that newspapers also provide a platform for myths surrounding the treatment of perpetrators, playing into the ideas of false accusations and victims overstating the harm done to them. It is unsure of what exactly this could mean for the upcoming years, but it hints at the various ways that social movements, journalists and mythology overlap.

While the sample in the thesis found that sexual harassment has been generally written in the same way immediately before and immediately following the increased attention on #MeToo, it hints that there may be changes to come. More specifically, articles suggested an accommodating mindset, but with increased attention on sexual harassment we can begin to move toward breaking down myths.

While this thesis focuses primarily on the way journalists can play a role in that, it is not limited to only journalists. On individual levels, thinking critically about what

American society, and the entire human population in general, believes to be true about sexual harassment is vital. Education surrounding victimization, why people commit sexual offenses, how to prevent sexual offenses, resources following sexual offenses, and how third parties can respond to allegations they hear are absolutely necessary. As previously explained, sexual harassment is not a minor act; it can impact victims psychologically and emotionally, sometimes going as far as making it difficult for them to go to work and maintain a job. Not only does this impact people on an individual level, but it can also influence the overall economy, workplace environments, unemployment and the distribution of government resources.

It should be noted, however, that these findings are based on just one sample of articles. Additionally, after the articles were collected and coded, it was found that there were flaws in the methodology. The sample was not randomized and was instead collected in a non-systematic way, making the sample have serious limitations in terms of generalizability.

Further research could find what forms of education are most beneficial, or if educating individuals about myths even works in preventing the spread of them. Additionally, researchers could go further back in history and extend this project, looking at a timeframe beyond 2016 to 2019. Analysis could also focus on underrepresented populations in sexual harassment coverage, like studying how the aforementioned #MeTooK12 is written about. Samples could be larger, the frame could be wider, and the samples could be more specific or based on broadcast journalism instead of print reporting. It could also go beyond journalists overall and instead find a

myth framework that is fitting for workers in other employment sectors, or other walks of life. There is also the potential for similar research on a different sexual harassment case; although this thesis is not intentionally written about Weinstein, the current social context is focused on Weinstein and Me Too, thus making current articles focused on them, too. It is worth looking at cases before Weinstein to see if articles about sexual harassment written in, for example, 2003 are any different from articles today.

The value of this research is clear: sexual harassment has existed for centuries and continues to exist alongside evolving, and sometimes exclusionary, mythology. However, through research and time, we may be able to find a way to at least limit the effects of this.

## REFERENCES

- “1 year after MeToo, survivors reflect on their disclosures.” *The Northern Star: Northern Illinois University*, October 15, 2018. (Retrieved from NexisUni on February 25, 2019).
- “Alumna sues UM for Title IX violations.” *The Miami Hurricane*, October 3, 2017. (Retrieved from NexisUni on July 12, 2019).
- Barr, Jeremy. 2020. “Harvey Weinstein sentenced to 23 years in prison.” Retrieved March 11, 2020 ([https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/thr-esq/harvey-weinstein-sentenced-23-years-prison-1283818?utm\\_source=twitter&utm\\_medium=social](https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/thr-esq/harvey-weinstein-sentenced-23-years-prison-1283818?utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=social))
- Bays, Scott. 2016. “Professor accused of sexual harassment to return in winter 2017.” *Daily Bruin: University of California – Los Angeles*, November 15. (Retrieved from NexisUni on July 9, 2019).
- Bernard, H. Russell, Amber Wutich, and Gery W. Ryan. 2017. *Analyzing Qualitative Data: Systematic Approaches*. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Bogage, Jacob. 2017. “At Lake Braddock, resentment lingers amid sexual harassment accusations.” *The Washington Post*, June 30. (Retrieved from NexisUni on July 9, 2019).

Callanan, Valerie. 2012. "Media Consumption, Perceptions of Crime Risk and Fear of Crime: Examining Race/Ethnic Differences." *Sociological Perspectives* 55(1): 93–115.

Campbell, Joseph. 1972. *Myths to Live By*. New York, NY: Viking Press.

Carden, Dan. 2019. "4 women file sexual harassment lawsuit against Indiana attorney general, state." *The Times (Munster, Indiana)*, June 18. (Retrieved from NexisUni on July 12, 2019).

Carlesso, Jenna. 2019. "Firm to avoid with sexual harassment complaints mayor: Hartford changing policies on outside help." *The Hartford Courant*, February 22. (Retrieved from NexisUni on February 25, 2019).

Casselmann, Ben, and Jim Tankersley. 2019. "A rising star in economics is suspended by Harvard." *The New York Times*, July 11. (Retrieved from NexisUni on July 12, 2019).

Chermak, Steven M. 1995. *Victims in the News: Crime and the American News Media*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Clark, Michael. 2019. "Federal lawsuit accuses Butler County school custodian of sexual harassment." *The Journal-News (Hamilton, Ohio)*, July 11. (Retrieved from NexisUni on July 12, 2019).

- Clayton, Hannah. 2017. "Student sues USA after Title IX hearings." *The Vanguard*, October 1. (Retrieved from NexisUni on July 12, 2019).
- Clifford, Janice E., Carl J. Jensen III, and Thomas A. Petee. 2009. "Does Gender Make a Difference? The Influence of Female Victimization on Media Coverage of Mass Murder Incidents." Pp. 124–40 in *Women, Violence, and the Media*. Northeastern University Press.
- Cohen, Sascha. 2016. "A brief history of sexual harassment in America before Anita Hill." Retrieved March 9, 2020 (<https://time.com/4286575/sexual-harassment-before-anita-hill/>)
- Dean, Mensah M. 2019. "City Settles Lawsuit Accusing Philadelphia Sheriff Jewell Williams of Sexual Harassment." *Philly.com*, January 23. (Retrieved from NexisUni on January 29, 2019).
- DeRuy, Emily. 2017. "Petition grows to remove San Jose State professor who sexually harassed student." *The East Bay Times (California)*. (Retrieved from NexisUni on July 12, 2019).
- Dowler, Kenneth. 2002. "Media Influence on Citizen Attitudes Toward Police Effectiveness." *Policing and Society* 12(3): 227–38. Retrieved March 9, 2020 (<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10439460290032369>).



“Experts: UW-Madison sexual harassment policies could make it hard to track repeat offenders.” *The Daily Cardinal: University of Wisconsin – Madison*, August 20, 2017. (Retrieved from NexisUni on July 9, 2019).

Farhi, Paul. 2018. “Chat host Travis Smiley sues PBS over his firing; sexual harassment claims ended his 14 years on network.; sexual harassment scandals.” *Dayton Daily News*, February 22. (Retrieved from NexisUni on July 10, 2019).

Farrish, Jessica. 2017. “Counties seek training in sexual harassment law.” *The Register-Herald*, May 4. (Retrieved from NexisUni on July 9, 2019).

Fitzgerald, Louise F., & Sandra L. Shullman (1993). Sexual harassment: A research analysis and agenda for the 1990s. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 42(1): 5–27. <https://doi.org/10.1006/jvbe.1993.1002>

Franiuk, Renae, Jennifer L. Seefeldt, & Joseph A. Vandello. 2008. Prevalence of rape myths in headlines and their effects on attitudes toward rape. *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research*. 58(11-12): 790–801. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-007-9372-4>

Geller, Jen. 2019. “Study Finds Sexual Harassment to be a Prominent Issue in the Medical Field.” *The Justice: Brandeis University*. September 24. (Retrieved from NexisUni on September 24, 2019).

- Gill, Mary M. 1993. "Academic Sexual Harassment: Perceptions of Behavior." Pp. 149–169 in *Sexual Harassment: Communication Implications*. New York, NY: Hampton Press.
- Glaser, Barney G., and Anselm L. Strauss. 1967. *Discovery of Grounded Theory*. Aldine Publishing Company.
- Gramlich, John. 2019. "5 facts about crime in the U.S." Retrieved March 9, 2020 (<https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/10/17/facts-about-crime-in-the-u-s/>)
- Grant, Colin. 1998. *Myths We Live By*. Ottawa, Canada: University of Ottawa Press.
- Grieco, Elizabeth. 2018. "Newsroom employees are less diverse than U.S. workers overall." Retrieved March 9, 2020 (<https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/11/02/newsroom-employees-are-less-diverse-than-u-s-workers-overall/>)
- Grieco, Elizabeth. 2019. "9 charts about America's newsrooms." Retrieved March 9, 2020 (<https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/11/26/9-charts-about-americas-newsrooms/>)

- Hazelrigg, Nick. 2019. "David Boren Spokesperson Denies Any Inappropriate Behavior, Calls Sexual Harassment Investigation a 'Fishing Expedition.'" *Oklahoma Daily: University of Oklahoma Norman Campus*. February 13. (Retrieved from NexisUni on February 25, 2019).
- Heehs, Peter. 1994. "Myth, History, and Theory." *History and Theory* 33(1):1–19. Retrieved March 9, 2020 (<https://www-jstor-org.udel.idm.oclc.org/stable/2505649>)
- Higgins, Colin. 1980. *9 to 5*. IPC Films.
- Holmes, Helen. 2019. "A former Mar-a-Lago pastry chef says he was fired for reporting sexual harassment." *New York Observer*, January 29. (Retrieved from NexisUni on January 29, 2019).
- IGWG. 2017. "The Gender Integration Continuum Training Session User's Guide." Retrieved March 9, 2020 ([https://www.igwg.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/17-418-GenderContTraining-2017-12-12-1633\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.igwg.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/17-418-GenderContTraining-2017-12-12-1633_FINAL.pdf))
- Joyner, Chris. 2019. "AJC Investigation sexual harassment; Harassment cases flood state office." *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, May 26. (Retrieved from NexisUni on July 12, 2019).
- Judd, Keziah, and Patricia Easteal. 2013. "Media Reportage of Sexual Harassment: The (in)Credible Complainant." *The Denning Law Journal* 25(1): 1–17.

- Kantor, Jodi, and Megan Twohey. 2017. "Harvey Weinstein Paid Off Sexual Harassment Accusers for Decades." *New York Times*.
- Keene, Paul. 2017. "Conyers Cedes Committee Post; Michigan Democrat Vows to Fight Sexual Harassment Claims; Sexual Harassment Allegations." *Dayton Daily News (Ohio)*, November 27. (Retrieved from NexisUni July 10, 2019).
- Kelly, Devin. 2018. "Sexual harassment suit filed against Calista Corp., which denies allegations; A Colorado businesswoman says her complaints of sexual harassment were not only mishandled but retaliated against." *Alaska Dispatch News*, July 4. (Retrieved from NexisUni July 10, 2019).
- Khondaker, Mahfuzul I., and Melissa H. Barlow. 2009. "Rapist Freed, Victim Punished: Newspaper Accounts of Violence Against Women in Bangladesh." Pp. 141–55 in *Women, Violence, And the Media*. Northeastern University Press.
- Kitzinger, Jenny. 2000. "Media Templates: Patterns of Association and the (Re)Construction of Meaning over Time." *Media, Culture & Society* 22: 61–84.
- Korn, Jane Byeff. 1993. "The Fungible Woman and Other Myths of Sexual Harassment. (Symposium: Ideological and Cultural Influences on Work and Benefits Law)." *Tulane Law Review* 67(5): 1363–1419.

- Kendall, Marisa. 2017a. "Can a VC blacklist stop sexual harassment in Silicon Valley?" *The East Bay Times (California)*, August 4. (Retrieved from NexisUni on July 9, 2019).
- Kendall, Marisa. 2017b. "How Silicon Valley silences sexual harassment victims." *The East Bay Times (California)*, July 16. (Retrieved from NexisUni on July 9, 2019).
- Kendall, Marisa. 2017c. "Silicon Valley now reeling in the wake of sexual harassment storm." *The East Bay Times (California)*, July 9. (Retrieved from NexisUni on July 9, 2019).
- Kreuger, Leanne and Maria Collett. 2019. "Time for Harrisburg to deal with its sexual harassment problem." *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 3. (Retrieved from NexisUni on July 12, 2019).
- Krishnamurthy, Madhu. 2018. "How consent is taught in suburban schools." *Chicago Daily Herald*, October 15. (Retrieved from NexisUni on February 25).
- Lamb, Sharon, and Susan Keon. 1995. "Blaming the Perpetrator: Language That Distorts Reality in Newspaper Articles on Men Battering Women." *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 19(2): 209–220.

- Lee, Jacqueline. 2017. "Palo Alto: Sexual Harassment Cases Could Cost School District \$200,000 to Remedy." *Palo Alto Daily News (California)*, March 2. (Retrieved from NexisUni July 9, 2019).
- Leon, Chrysanthi S. 2016. "Law, Mansplaining, and Myth Accommodation in Campus Sexual Assault Reform." *Kansas Law Review* 64(4): 987–1025. Retrieved March 9, 2020 (<https://doi.org/10.17161/1808.25539>)
- Livsey, Anna. 2018. "Liam Neeson says harassment allegations are now 'a witch-hunt.'" Retrieved March 9, 2020 (<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2018/jan/13/liam-neeson-says-harassment-allegations-have-become-a-witch-hunt>)
- Lonsway, Kimberly A., Lilia M. Cortina, and Vicki J. Magley. 2008. "Sexual Harassment Mythology: Definition, Conceptualization, and Measurement." 58(9–10): 599–615. Retrieved March 9, 2020 (<https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007/s11199-007-9367-1.pdf>)
- Lurye, Rebecca. 2019. "Hartford Adopts New Sexual Harassment Policy." *The Hartford Courant*. October 4. (Retrieved from NexisUni October 4, 2019).
- Maddaus, Gene. 2020. "Weinstein defense lawyer blasts 'obscene' 23-year prison sentence." Retrieved March 11, 2020 (<https://variety.com/2020/biz/news/weinstein-defense-lawyer-blasts-prison-sentence-1203530197/>).

- Marriott, Maile. 2018. "Sexual harassment starts in K-12 schools, and students want to talk about its new Utah sex education law could help prevent sexual harassment." *Deseret Morning News (Salt Lake City)*, July 29. (Retrieved from NexisUni on July 10, 2019).
- McDonald, Paula, and Sara Charlesworth. 2013. "Framing Sexual Harassment through Media Representations." *Women's Studies International Forum* 37(1): 95–103.
- McGuill, Lauren. 2019. "Addressing Workplace Sexual Harassment." *The Northern Iowan: University of Northern Iowa*. October 3. (Retrieved from NexisUni on October 3, 2019).
- Meloy, Michelle L, and Susan L. Miller. 2009. "Does Gender Make a Difference? The Influence of Female Victimization on Media Coverage of Mass Murder Incidents." Pp. 29-56 in *Women, Violence, and the Media*. Northeastern University Press.
- Me Too. "About." Retrieved March 9, 2020 (<https://metoomvmt.org/about/#history>)
- Milano, Alyssa. 2017. "If you've been sexually harassed or assaulted write 'me too' as a reply to this tweet." Retrieved March 9, 2020 ([https://twitter.com/alyssa\\_milano/status/919659438700670976?lang=en](https://twitter.com/alyssa_milano/status/919659438700670976?lang=en))
- Montoya, R. Matthew, Robert S. Horton, and Jeffrey Kirchner. 2008. "Is Actual Similarity Necessary for Attraction? A Meta-Analysis of Actual and Perceived Similarity." *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* 25(6): 889–922.

Neuman, William. 2019. "De Blasio aid who was forced out had been fired over sexual harassment before." *The New York Times*, January 28. (Retrieved from NexisUni on January 29, 2019).

News from across the USA. 2017. "State by State." *Dayton Daily News*, October 4. (Retrieved from NexisUni on July 12, 2019).

O'Malley, Julia. 2017. "Rep. Westlake, embattled over sexual harassment allegations, will resign; Rep. Dean Westlake, D-Kiana, said Friday that he will resign from his seat after being accused of sexual harassment by multiple women." *Alaska Legislature*, December 15. (Retrieved from NexisUni on July 10, 2019).

PBS. "What is a myth?" Retrieved March 9, 2020

([https://www.pbs.org/mythsandheroes/myths\\_what.html](https://www.pbs.org/mythsandheroes/myths_what.html))

Pew. 2006. "The American Newsroom." Retrieved March 9, 2020

(<https://www.journalism.org/2006/10/05/the-american-newsroom/>)

Pew. 2019. "Newspapers Fact Sheet." Retrieved March 9, 2020

(<https://www.journalism.org/fact-sheet/newspapers/>)

Pierson, Brendan, and Karen Freifeld. 2020. "Weinstein sentenced to 23 years prison, taken to NY hospital for chest pains." Retrieved March 11, 2020

(<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-people-harvey-weinstein/weinstein-sentenced-to-23-years-in-prison-voices-sympathy-for-men-in-metoo-era-idUSKBN20Y19J>).



- Rao, A.J. 2019. "Nominee says he's committed to 'cleaning up' National Guard." *The Virgin Islands Daily News, St. Thomas*, July 12. (Retrieved from NexisUni on July 12, 2019).
- Reese, Sarah. 2019. "St. John Has Paid \$202,000 to Settle Sexual Harassment Lawsuits Against Former Police Officer." *The Times (Munster, Indiana)*, July 7. (Retrieved from NexisUni on July 12, 2019).
- Richardson, Sydney. 2017. "Reactions to sexual harassment shows need for cultural changes reactions to sexual harassment shows need for cultural change." *Arkansas Traveler*, December 5. (Retrieved from NexisUni on July 10, 2019).
- Rivers, WHR. 1912. "The Sociological Significance of Myth." *Folklore* 23(3): 307–31. Retrieved March 9, 2020 (<https://www.jstor.org/stable/1255153>)
- Sacco, Vincent F. 1982. "The Effects of Mass Media on Perceptions of Crime: A Reanalysis of the Issues." *Pacific Sociological Review* 25(4): 475–93. Retrieved March 10, 2020 ([https://www.jstor.org/stable/1388925?seq=1#metadata\\_info\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/1388925?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents))
- Schrotenboer, Brent. 2019. "Sex abuse probes incite horsemen." *USA Today*, July 10. (Retrieved from NexisUni on July 12, 2019).

- Scott, Olivia. 2019. "U-M joins National Academies in collaborative on sexual harassment." *Michigan Daily*, May 22. (Retrieved from NexisUni on July 12, 2019).
- Segrave, Kerry. 1994. *Sexual Harassment of Women in the Workplace, 1600-1993*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co Inc.
- Shearer, Elisa. 2018. "Social media outpaces print newspapers in the U.S. as a news source." Retrieved March 9, 2020 (<https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/12/10/social-media-outpaces-print-newspapers-in-the-u-s-as-a-news-source/>)
- Silver, Johnathan. 2017. "Abbott Seeks Improved Sexual Harassment Rules Abbott Calls for Improved Sexual Harassment Guidelines at the Capitol." *Austin American-Statesman (Texas)*. November 15. (Retrieved from NexisUni on July 10, 2019).
- Shi, Luzi, Sean Patrick Roche, and Ryan M. McKenna. 2018. "Media Consumption and Crime Trend Perceptions: A Longitudinal Analysis." *Deviant Behavior* 40(12): 1480–92. Retrieved March 10, 2020 (<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01639625.2018.1519129>)

Sisak, Michael R., Tom Hays, and Jennifer Peltz. 2020. "Weinstein gets 23 years in sentence hailed by accusers." Retrieved March 11, 2020

(<https://www.kaaltv.com/national-news/weinstein-faces-sentencing-prison-in-landmark-metoo-case/5670686/>).

Skelly, Sophia. 2017. "Professor Becca Barnes, Fighting Sexual Harassment in STEM." *The Catalyst*. September 29. (Retrieved from NexisUni on July 12, 2019).

Stern, Marlow. 2019. "Bill Maher Has Sexual-Harassment Meltdown Over Bernie Sanders Story on 'Real Time'; The HBO host appeared to minimize the allegations of sexual harassment in Bernie Sanders' campaign, saying, 'It didn't seem like it was the worst kind of sexual harassment.'" *The Daily Beast*, January 19.

(Retrieved from NexisUni on January 29, 2019).

Stirgus, Eric. 2017. "Clark Atlanta University; Doctoral student: CAU did little to stop sexual harassment." *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, September 30. (Retrieved from NexisUni on July 12, 2019).

Sultan, Aisha. 2017. "Aisha Sultan: Sexual Harassment Starts in Schools." *St. Louis Post-Dispatch (Missouri)*. October 15. (Retrieved from NexisUni on February 25, 2019).

Symonds, Alexandria. 2017. "How to break sexual misconduct." *The New York Times*, October 15. (Retrieved from NexisUni on February 25, 2019).

- Tanner, Courtney. 2019. "A former Utah County commissioner is suing his colleagues, saying he was wrongfully accused of sexual harassment." *The Salt Lake City Tribune*, June 13. (Retrieved from NexisUni on July 12, 2019).
- The Daily Progress. 2019. "Ex-DMB Member Tinsley Reaches Settlement in Sexual Harassment Lawsuit." *Richmond Times Dispatch (Virginia)*. June 12. (Retrieved from NexisUni on July 12, 2019).
- Thomas, Crystal. 2018. "City Clarifies Sexual Harassment Policy; Legislature Mandated Updates to Sexual Harassment Policies Across the State." *The State Journal-Register (Springfield, IL)*. January 4. (Retrieved from NexisUni on July 10, 2019).
- U.S. Census Bureau. 2010-2019. Population, Population Change, and Estimated Components of Population Change: April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2019. Retrieved March 9, 2020 ([https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/popest/2010s-state-total.html#par\\_textimage\\_1574439295](https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/popest/2010s-state-total.html#par_textimage_1574439295))
- U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). "Sexual Harassment." Retrieved March 9, 2020 ([https://www.eeoc.gov/laws/types/sexual\\_harassment.cfm](https://www.eeoc.gov/laws/types/sexual_harassment.cfm))
- Valigra, Lori. 2019. "4 in 10 Mainers experience sexual harassment at work at least once a week, study finds." *Bangor Daily News*, July 10. (Retrieved from NexisUni on July 12, 2019).

- Wachter, Debbie. 2017. "Former principal sues New Castle district." *New Castle News (Pennsylvania)*, September 29. (Retrieved from NexisUni on July 12, 2019).
- Wang, Vivian. 2019. "After years of rebuffs in Albany, sexual harassment laws are toughened." *The New York Times*, June 21. (Retrieved from NexisUni on July 12, 2019).
- Warr, Mark. 1994. *Understanding and Preventing Violence, Volume 4: Consequences and Control*. Washington DC: The National Academies Press. Retrieved March 9, 2020 (<https://www.nap.edu/read/4422/chapter/2>).
- Woodall, Martha. 2017. "Former academic leader sues Aspira, says she lost job for backing sexual harassment claim." *Philly.com*, September 2. (Retrieved from NexisUni on July 9, 2019).
- Yeung, Bernice. 2018. *In a Day's Work: The Fight to End Sexual Violence Against America's Most Vulnerable Workers*. New York, NY: The New Press.
- Zacharek, Stephanie, Eliana Dockterman, and Haley Sweetland Edwards. 2017. "The Silence Breakers." Retrieved March 10, 2020 (<https://time.com/time-person-of-the-year-2017-silence-breakers/>)
- Zaveri, Mihir. 2019. "Federal Judge in Kansas City is Reprimanded for Sexual Harassment." *The New York Times*. September 30. (Retrieved from NexisUni October 2, 2019).

Zraick, Karen. 2019. "Mississippi candidate for governor blocks female reporter from campaign trip." *The New York Times*, July 10. (Retrieved from NexisUni on July 12, 2019).

## Appendix A

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

#### 1600s-1700s

As stated in the introduction of this thesis, sexual harassment has spanned centuries. Segrave goes as far back as the 1600s, looking at when the United States was first settled. One of the earliest—if not the earliest—instance of sexual harassment transcribed in the United States was in the 1670s, dating back to the Colonies. Although the term ‘sexual harassment’ would not be used until centuries later, the phrasing and contexts make historians believe these were early examples of it.

It is believed that servants were rewarded or threatened in order to stay quiet about sexual involvement with their master; women who were impregnated by their masters were often punished by being sold (Segrave 1994:13). In Virginia, there had originally been a statute that allowed masters who fathered a servant’s child to receive compensation from the servant in the form of additional work. However, in 1672, a new law was passed that made it “impossible” for masters to continue this practice (Segrave 1994:13), hinting at least minimal steps to rights for victims.

Victims also had the ability to appeal abuse to a magistrate, but it was “just about impossible” for the accused to receive any form of punishment (Segrave 1994:15). These attempts to punish their masters also offered little social or financial benefit to domestic servants, so it was seen as generally fruitless to even try (Segrave 1994:23).

Additionally, myths around sexuality had already started at this time. Myths about slaves and domestic servants claimed they “caused trouble” and “led men on” and

were promiscuous (Segrave 1994:23). Segrave argues that this mindset was used to set the stage for victim blaming, with claims that women initiated the harassment, thus making it increasingly difficult to punish perpetrators accordingly (Segrave 1994:23). This continued to perpetuate ideas in courts and in daily life that domestic servants lacked sexual morality and thus, could not be trusted. The impact of these myths carries over into the workplace and beyond in the following centuries.

### **1800s**

Victim blaming continued into the 1800s, relying on ideas that had taken root in earlier years. The public had latched onto the idea that sexual relations and any resulting pregnancy between a servant and their master are the fault of the woman (Segrave 1994:17). It was seen as a breach of chastity for women to ‘allow’ themselves to become involved with any man outside of wedlock; fault did not fall on the man (Segrave 1994:17). Beyond the general public sphere, these ideas also spilled into the courts, which again, made it increasingly difficult to even attempt to prosecute abusers (Segrave 1994:17).

The 1800s did, however, mark a major step forward in the ability to record and disseminate information about sexual harassment. A quote from Harriet A. Jacobs, a woman enslaved to a doctor in the 1820s, said that the doctor “began to whisper foul words in my ear...he peopled my young mind with unclean images, such as only a vile monster could think of. I turned from him with disgust and hatred" (Segrave 1994:18).



As stated in the introduction of this thesis, many of the modern sexual harassment experiences mirror past experiences, which this quote helps confirm.

The recording of these situations did not mean anything was changing, however. In fact, as women began to enter the workforce, continued efforts were made to further paint women as the initiators of their own abuse. One congressional minister fought against the ‘danger’ of “mixed workrooms” because he believed women were “coarse, low, vulgar, and bad featured” (Segrave 1994:46). Female journalist Virginia Penny found that management in charge of about 250 women believed that women who worked with men were, or would eventually become, “very immoral” (Segrave 1994:46). Clark, who was first mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, attempted to paint his accusers as “prostitutes” (Segrave 1994:104). Collectively, this public mindset framed women as prone to being ‘sexually immoral’ and continued to make it increasingly difficult for women to say that they did not consent to the sexual relationship.

What is interesting is that this public mindset continued even with evidence that sexual harassment was occurring. For example, female journalist Helen Campbell published an investigative piece in 1887 related to sexual harassment in the workplace (Segrave 1994:48). One woman told Campbell that she had previously quit three different jobs because “they wouldn’t let [her] alone,” implying persistent harassment (Segrave 1994:48).

Another example from the 1880s is from New York City carpet weaving plants. If a male superior was interested in a female employee, she would be propositioned.

Any woman who refused would be fired (Segrave 1994:48). These instances were fairly well known, since parents were often afraid to send their daughters to work in cities (Segrave 1994:49). In fact, Americans were so aware of the harassment women faced that they established strict woman-only boarding houses where doors were locked at 10pm; these were popular in the 1840s and 1850s (Segrave 1994:49). Employers would often boast about having a single-gender workspace and families responded positively to this, feeling more comfortable sending their daughters there, believing it offered them "protection." One example of this was seen in 1910 with the owner of a clothing company, using the women-only workspace as a draw to work for his factory" (Segrave 1994:47). This can generally be perceived as meaning that the public at the same time was aware that harassment was occurring.

Another form of harassment uncovered in the 1800s was related to prisons. Dating back to the early 1800s, it was found that male officers often assaulted and harassed female detainees to the degree that many states did not allow men to work in female prisons (Segrave 1994:84). It was decided that matrons should be used instead (Segrave 1994:49) to hopefully ward off future abuse. One instance of switching to matrons occurred only after public outrage, which, again, means that the public was most likely aware of sexual harassment, at least on a certain level.

This increasing public awareness, passed on from articles, investigations and word-of-mouth, hinted at what was to come in the 1900s.

### **1900s and 2000s**

Sexual harassment became a widely recognized public issue in the twentieth century. It did not happen quickly or easily, however. In fact, historical records—which became more plentiful as time went on—indicate how truly widespread sexual harassment was at this time.

In the early 1900s, Charlotte Ayers, a female law school graduate said that, if a woman were not willing to “get on the couch with the boss,” they would not be hired (Segrave 1994:106). The experience was similar for women looking for work outside of law offices; one woman said that, “I have had improper proposals made to me in not one place, but in three or four offices until I looked forward to it as a matter of course” (Segrave 1994:107-108).

Upon being hired, harassment would still continue. In 1937, women detailed the pressure they faced to have sex with their boss for better assignments and work conditions (Segrave 1994:71). Women who would not sleep with their bosses stated that they were given “poorer work assignments, less work, [and] less tractable machines” (Segrave 1994:71). This was in addition to continuous verbal and physical forms of sexual harassment.

It was not just upper management that would harass female employees. Male employees would also harass their female coworkers. One woman who worked at a clothing plant in 1910 explained that men would tell “dirty jokes” that she found so unsettling that she would later cry at home after work (Segrave 1994:63). Another woman who worked in a shop had a similar experience with a male coworker who would tell “obscene stories and jokes” (Segrave 1994:63). Women’s’ experiences were

downplayed by their coworkers, who would sometimes laugh and egg on a man who was sexually harassing his female coworker (Segrave 1994:63). One woman said that, while the men laughed: “We girls as usual sad with our heads hanging” (Segrave 1994:63).

Sexual harassment was also physical in nature, with bosses “pinching the female employees on the bottom” (Segrave 1994:62; Segrave 1994:64) and raping their employees (Segrave 1994:63), which women were expected to endure without complaint.

The circumstances female employees were in were often enough to discourage them from trying to report any instances of harassment or assault. One woman in 1913 said that her boss had physically and sexually assaulted her. She wanted to press charges but decided against it because she had no witnesses and spoke in “broken English” (Segrave 1994:64). The woman also expressed concerns over what she had done, wondering what it was about her that had made her boss assault her (Segrave 1994:64).

The harassment women faced in the workplace was often used against them, mirroring the experiences of women from earlier decades. In 1920, one writer perpetuated the idea that women were promiscuous by claiming men were the ones really at risk. The article claimed that female employees would attempt to seduce their bosses in an attempt to get married, and that men would be “unable to resist” the woman’s charms (Segrave 1994:109). These claims further worked to place blame on women who were harassed, framing them as women who were merely angry because they were rejected by their boss rather than angry about being harassed.

A book written in 1935 also perpetuated the same idea; instead of sexual harassment, most of the book focused on the risk of women falling in love with their boss (Segrave 1994:113), shifting public opinion to believe that this was more common than sexual harassment. It also claimed that sexual harassment was “quite harmless masculine attention” and common for ‘attractive’ women to experience (Segrave 1994:112). Women were told to simply “pretend not to see” if they were harassed (Segrave 1994:112). This perpetuated the ideas that, 1) any workplace relations were initiated by the women, and 2) sexual harassment was not a serious issue and could be easily ignored.

One development somewhat unique to the 1900s and women entering the workforce was the involvement of jobs in women’s’ personal lives. Mill owners early in the century would try and influence the decisions of their employees, “assuming the right to judge [the workers’] conduct both in and out of the factory and treat them as they see fit” (Segrave 1994:62). This could include firing a woman if it is found she had premarital sex. Other companies expressed explicit concern over women working night shifts, believing it was “dangerous” (Segrave 1994:66). One tobacco company in the early 1900s had a policy that their female employees be “self-respecting, religious, and chaste” (Segrave 1994:65). These policies, although framed to perhaps protect their employees, exert control over an employee’s autonomy inside and outside of work, and allow a company to deny any wrongdoing if a woman claims to have been harassed.

As time went on, women’s attitudes toward harassment seemed to reflect a kind of acceptance that it was just part of being employed. As one woman said that before

equal employment opportunity and sexual harassment laws: “[Sexual harassment] was just the cost of doing the job” (Segrave 1994:86).

This is reflected in studies and victims’ stories. One female researcher in 1977 found that one-third of the 117 women she interviewed reported being sexually harassed. These results led to the researcher’s conclusion that a woman’s best bet against sexual harassment was to “change to fit in” (Segrave 1994:95).

Another study, conducted in 1975, estimated that nearly 170, or 50%, of the female officers in Washington D.C. had experienced sexual harassment (Segrave 1994:84). As explained by a female officer: “You’ve got to make love to get a day off or make love to get a good beat” (Segrave 1994:84). This harassment also extended into threatening the safety of the officers. One male officer shared a story about a field-training officer who, upon being rejected by a female officer, would start fights with suspects with the goal of scaring or hurting the woman (Segrave 1994:88). The police chief, however, merely called these claims “back-alley gossip” (Segrave 1994:84).

It was not just police officers who downplayed the harassment experienced; one male researcher in 1980 focused on how female officers manipulated male supervisors to get what they wanted (Segrave 1994:35). Similarly to experiences of women in earlier decades, it was generally believed that female officers who were harassed were asking for it and claiming that victims could not “deal with their own sexuality,” even going so far as to say that those who were victimized should not be trusted to be police officers (Segrave 1994:85). This hiring standard was not applied to the perpetrators, who were

sometimes hired above 'hysterical' women who claimed that they had been sexually harassed (Segrave 1994:85).