

This thesis has been approved by

The Honors Tutorial College and the Department of Journalism

Dr. Bernhard Debatin

Professor, Journalism Thesis Adviser

Dr. Victoria LaPoe

Director of Studies, Journalism

Dr. Beth Novak

Interim Dean, Honors Tutorial College

News coverage of sexual violence:

A case study analysis of news reporting on sexual violence in Cleveland

A Thesis

Presented to

The Honors Tutorial College

Ohio University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for Graduation

from the Honors Tutorial College

with the degree of

Bachelor of Science in Journalism

by Eren Crebs

April 2023

Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Background	4
Definitions	9
Literature Review	12
Sexual violence as a public health crisis	12
Sexual violence as a crime	13
Role of news media	16
Methodology	20
Best reporting practices	20
Before the interview	21
During the interview	23
After the interview	27
Discourse practices	30
Further Considerations	31
Case Study 1: Reporting on the rape kit testing initiative to the Anthony Sowell case	33
Themes and goals	34
Thematic versus episodic framing	35
Drug use	37
Language	38
Analysis	43
Case Study 2: Aftermath of the rape kit testing initiative in indictments and convictions	45
Themes and goals	46
Thematic versus episodic framing	47
Language	48
Statistics	52
Analysis	53
Case Study 3: Suspects continue to be identified a decade after rape kit testing initiative	55
Theme and goal	55
Episodic versus thematic framing	57
Language	58
Statistics	63
Analysis	64
Conclusion	66
Works Cited	71

Introduction

In 2017, the #MeToo Movement created an explosion in awareness of sexual violence in the workplace. People on social media and reporters at news outlets were reporting on sexual violence, especial sexual harassment reports, in office spaces, the entertainment industry, college campuses and more (see Definitions) (Morczek p. 1-10.)

However, news medias' language and process of reporting on sexual violence is not always effective in portraying the true nature of sexual violence and limiting the perpetuation of rape myths, which create harm for survivors in their lives as well as the investigation and prosecution of sexual violence cases.

I asked how news media can best cover stories of sexual violence by limiting harm to survivors of sexual violence, not perpetuating rape myths, and accurately portraying the nature of sexual violence in society. To answer my question, I designed a method of analyzing six news stories written by news outlets in Cleveland, Ohio. I chose these news stories as many outlets covered the testing of backlogged rape kits, and I could compare two separate outlet's coverage of similar stories.

There are many guides and trainings for news media to educate on best reporting practices for covering sexual violence. I used these guides, as well as framing theory and discourse analysis and discourse analysis, to analyze the news stories covering sexual violence cases in Cleveland, Ohio.

Background

When a perpetrator rapes somebody, the survivor has the option to undergo a medical exam and collect forensic evidence, commonly known as a rape kit. In the exam, an examiner

collects any potential evidence from the survivor, such as hair, fibers, saliva, semen, skin cells and any other potential source of evidence, especially that which could contain DNA evidence from the perpetrator. The exam can feel invasive to a survivor as they may be swabbed in the genital area, photographed, and have their entire body physically examined. These kits are used to collect evidence about the assault and potentially use evidence and DNA evidence to prove who the perpetrator was (End the Backlog).

However, for decades, thousands of those exams were going untested in Cleveland, the state of Ohio and the United States (Merrefield; Hargitay). In Cleveland alone, between 1971 and 2014, around 4,400 rape kits were not tested (Tierney and Del Greco). As of March 2023, states still are working on testing thousands of rape kits – for example, in Texas there are over 6,000; in California over 13,000; in Oregon over 3,000 and over 2,500 in Minnesota, according to the database End The Backlog. However, more than half of the states are implementing reforms to test rape kits, create statewide inventories, create tracking methods for rape kits and more. By March 2023, Ohio had tested all backlogged rape kits, not least due to the media attention that this issue received (End the Backlog).

In 2009, Cleveland police investigated the house of Anthony Sowell as part of a rape investigation. During the investigation, police found two bodies and a grave. After arresting Sowell, they found the remains of eleven women, and Sowell was charged with murder and attempted murder of over a dozen women (Heisig). Sowell raped and killed these women, who were more vulnerable to being assaulted because they suffered from mental health issues and drug addiction. Law enforcement found that some of Sowell's victims had rape kit exams done that the authorities in charge previously had not tested. Reporters at *the Plain Dealer*, a daily

newspaper in Cleveland, asked the Cleveland Police Department, how many rape kits were currently untested? Their answer: “We don’t know.” (End the Backlog; Gourarie).

The same year law enforcement investigated Sowell’s home, *Cleveland Plain Dealer* reporters Rachel Dissell and Leila Atassi began pressing the police department to find an answer, as well as understand why some cases were tested while others weren’t. Probed by Dissell and Atassi’s questions and reporting, the city began to look for answers of their own in 2013, forming a task force by the prosecution office composed of law enforcement, the prosecutor’s office, researchers, victim advocates, and the *Plain Dealer* reporters. The task force found that there were 7,000 untested rape kits obtained from 1993 to 2011 in Ohio (Merrefield). Nationwide, nonprofit organizations and the federal government began to fund the testing of rape kits across the country. The Joyful Heart Foundation, created by Mariska Hargitay, the actress that plays sexual violence detective Olivia Benson on *Law & Order: Special Victims’ Unit*, created End the Backlog in 2010, a database that tracks untested rape kits and works to help agencies test their kits (End the Backlog). In 2015, the Obama Administration set up the National Sexual Assault Kit Initiative program to distribute grants and funding for testing backlogged rape kits (SAKI). As the initiative expanded to a nationwide effort, over 400,000 untested rape kits would be found by the time “I Am Evidence” would be filmed (Hargitay).

As the kits began to be tested, the prosecution's office found disturbing trends. The testing of rape kits did result in DNA hits to rapists, including one third of the perpetrators who were serial rapists. Because of the initiative to test the rape kits, law enforcement gathered enough evidence to convict over 100 rapists by 2015 (Gourarie).

The task force found many reasons for why so many rape kits went untested. In the 1990s, police weren’t as aware of the power of DNA evidence as they are now. Dissell said in an

interview with the podcast Societies Without Borders produced out of Case Western Reserve that there were many factors police used to weigh the strength of cases, sometimes telling victims that they would be less likely to be believed due to their life circumstances (Gran). Cases police did not deem to be strong would have a lower chance of getting tested, and many then went untested for years.

“If the person who was reporting was a victim, who was very vulnerable because of drug addiction, or maybe they had prostituted or they had a mental illness – that, I think to detectives, ... signaled that this was going to be a more difficult case. ... It just makes things more difficult. They would say things, and I don't know that if you talk to detectives now that they were trying to come at it from the wrong place, but they would say to a lot of the victims, you know, this is going to be a very hard case. They basically would signal that you are going to be less likely to be believed,” Dissell said on the Societies Without Borders Podcast (Gran).

Dissell went on to describe the consequences of police not believing survivors because of their circumstances: perpetrators knew to select victims who had circumstances that would make them less likely for the police to take seriously (Gran).

As police tested the backlogs of rape kits, law enforcement began to charge and prosecute perpetrators. The survivors finally found out the outcome of their rape kits and felt a range of reactions, according to Dissell and Atassi. Some survivors expressed that they were finally finding justice. Other survivors felt law enforcement and the trials forced them to dredge up memories and emotions about one of the worst experiences of their lives (Gran; Hargitay).

Across the country, national, statewide, and local media outlets and law enforcement questioned how many untested rape kits were in their own city and state. In 2015, the White

House reported that they estimated there were 400,000 rape kits backlogged across the country (The White House).

“We are able to more closely examine patterns and we continue to ask questions about how victims are reacting to being notified (by police or the courts) that their attacker has been identified (by police). We are facilitating open discussions about the decision-making process that prosecutors must make in terms of these cases, including the balance of supporting victims versus forcing them to relive traumas,” Dissell and Lovell said in an interview with the organization End the Backlog (End the Backlog).

When telling stories of sexual violence, Atassi and Dissell described how they worked with survivors to give them additional agency in the telling of their personal trauma. “We simply put the power in her hands. Many victims ... have spent years feeling disempowered by what happened to them at the hands of a violent predator. We began our project by setting a standard that any victim who chooses to share their story through us could do so in whatever way is more comfortable for them,” Atassi said (Investigative Reporters & Editors).

Since 2009, Dissell has continually reported on cases of sexual violence as well as educated other journalists on how to best cover these stories. Her reporting on the results of the rape kit testing initiative serves as an example of how to best tell stories of sexual violence in a way that minimizes victim blaming and rape myths as well as educates the audience on the nature of sexual violence cases. Comparing her work to the reporting done at the same time by other Cleveland outlets illustrates how her use of language, structure of stories and choice of content and context is more compassionate and comprehensive in telling these stories.

Definitions

I will provide definitions of terms that will be used throughout the thesis.

Sexual violence - The Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN) defines sexual violence as “an umbrella term used to encompass sexual assault, rape and sexual harassment” (RAINN). The National Sexual Violence Research Center emphasizes in their definition of sexual violence is done without consent (NSVRC).

Sexual Assault - Sexual Assault is another umbrella term, but specifically refers to physical unwanted sexual contact (RAINN). According to RAINN, sexual assault includes “attempted rape, fondling or unwanted sexual touching, forcing a victim to perform sexual acts ..., penetration of the victim’s body.”

Sexual Harassment - The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission describes sexual harassment: “It is unlawful to harass a person (an applicant or employee) because of that person’s sex. Harassment can include ‘sexual harassment’ or unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical harassment of a sexual nature” (“Sexual Harassment”).

Rape - The FBI defines as “penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person, without the consent of the victim” (FBI).

Consent - There are many different definitions of the word consent when referring to sexual activity with varying degrees of length. Indiana University provides an very thorough definition of consent on their *Stop Sexual Violence* page:

“Consent is agreement or permission expressed through affirmative, voluntary words or actions that are mutually understandable to all parties involved, to engage in specific sexual act at a specific time: Consent can be withdrawn at any time, as long as it is clearly communicated. Consent cannot be coerced or compelled by force, threat, deception or intimidation. Consent cannot be given by someone who is incapacitated ... Consent cannot be assumed based on silence, the absence of ‘no’ or ‘stop,’ the existence of a prior or current relationship, or prior sexual activity.” (Indiana University)

Ohio Revised Code Definitions:

The Ohio Revised Code (ORC) uses different terminology when describing sexual violence. Instead of using the terms “sexual violence” and “sexual assault,” the ORC uses *sexual conduct*, *sexual contact* and *sexual activity*, and denotes that when these actions are performed without consent, they are prosecutable offenses (134th General Assembly).

The definitions for sexual conduct, sexual contact and sexual activity are as follows (ORC Section 2907.01):

“(A) ‘Sexual conduct’ means vaginal intercourse between a male and female; anal intercourse, fellatio, and cunnilingus between persons regardless of sex; and, without privilege to do so, the insertion, however slight, of any part of the body or any instrument, apparatus, or other object into the vaginal or anal opening of another. Penetration, however slight, is sufficient to complete vaginal or anal intercourse.

(B) "Sexual contact" means any touching of an erogenous zone of another, including without limitation the thigh, genitals, buttock, pubic region, or, if the person is a female, a breast, for the purpose of sexually arousing or gratifying either person.

(C) "Sexual activity" means sexual conduct or sexual contact, or both."

Literature Review

Sexual violence as a public health crisis

Every 68 seconds, an American is sexually assaulted. One in six women and one in thirty-three men have experienced rape or attempted rape, according to the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN).

The CDC says that sexual violence “is a serious public health problem in the United States” (CDC). However, sexual violence is an underreported crime. Organizations such as the CDC, gather statistics through surveys and reported data to try to understand the problem more deeply. While sexual violence affects women more than men, one in four men reported unwanted sexual contact during his lifetime and one in two women reported unwanted sexual contact (CDC).

The effects of sexual violence on the victim, communities, and society are large. The physical effects to victims can be life altering: Almost one in eight women of raped women contract a sexually transmitted infection, one in twenty women are impregnated from rape and almost one in three women are injured while being raped (Basile; Holmes; Tjaden). The psychological effects can be even longer lasting. More than half of victims report feelings concerned for their safety and fear (CDC). Survivors often feel shame and guilt for the assault, they may physically isolate and disassociate, and may have long term mental health struggles such as PTSD, anxiety, depression, panic attacks, paranoia.

The CDC estimates that because of medical costs, loss of productivity, criminal justice proceedings and other effects, sexual violence costs \$122,461 per victim (CDC). Rape’s prevalence of rape affects how women move about the world. As Susan Brownmiller wrote in her book *Against Our Will*, “A world without rapists would be a world in which women moved

freely without fear of men. That *some* men rape provides sufficient threat to keep all women in a constant state of intimidation, forever conscious of the knowledge that the biological tool must be held in awe for it may turn to weapon with sudden swiftness borne of harmful intent” (Brownmiller p. 209).

Individuals who are perpetrators of sexual violence are largely men (FBI). There have been numerous studies trying to understand why individuals commit acts of sexual violence. In a study of male college students, some of those risk factors include having previously committed an act of sexual violence, participation in extremely masculine activities and beliefs as well as sexist beliefs and hostility toward women (Spencer). Disturbingly, there is also evidence supporting that being a victim of sexual violence could increase one’s chance of becoming a perpetrator, at least for men (Glasser p. 482-494).

According to statistics from RAINN, more than half of individuals who experience sexual assault are under the age of 34. Individuals who are transgender are also at significantly higher risk for being assaulted compared to their cisgender peers. According to RAINN, 21% of transgender, genderqueer, and nonconforming college students have been sexually assaulted, while 18% of not transgender, not genderqueer, and gender conforming college females have been assaulted. Native Americans are twice as likely to be sexual assaulted or raped than other races (RAINN).

Sexual violence as a crime

Sexual violence is a unique crime. It is the most underreported crime. It also has a very low rate of perpetrators actually being incarcerated for criminal acts of sexual violence such as

rape. According to RAINN statistics, only 25 out of 1,000 sexual assault perpetrators are incarcerated (RAINN).

The act of rape as we know it today has happened throughout human history, although the meaning of the word itself has changed. The first definition of rape meant when the man would “acquire” a wife through force and abduction (Brownmiller p. 38). Rape, when it occurred as non-consensual intercourse, had punishments of death for the perpetrator, and in some ancient societies, the victim as well. Rape has been used to intimidate and demoralize the “losing side” during wars as women were property or assets to be protected by men (Brownmiller p. 38). In the 1600’s, the American colonies used a definition of rape that was sexual intercourse with a girl ten years or younger. Throughout the 1800s, activists worked to raise the age of consent in states to teenage years – although the laws were not applied equally for women of color (Bishop). The second wave feminism of the 1970s pushed progress in rape law and perceptions of rape as a crime against another human instead of a violation of another man’s property, as well as beginning to recognize marital rape as a crime (Benedict p.13-42; Bishop).

The criminal justice system perceives sexual violence as a difficult crime to prove. Sexual violence does not commonly have a witness to the act. Sir Matthew Hale, an English scholar of law in the 17th century, said of rape, “It is true rape is a most detestable crime, and therefore ought severely and impartially to be punished with death; but it must be remembered, that it is an accusation easily to be made and hard to be proved, and harder to be defended by the party accused, tho never so innocent” (Cuklanz p.19). Hale’s quote encapsulates common perceptions about rape and sexual violence. It is a horrible crime universally condemned, however many believe that it is too easy for victims to cry rape when it did not happen, and therefore a benefit of the doubt is given more to perpetrators than in other crimes.

However, the true difficulties in proving sexual violence occurred often manifest as rape myths: beliefs commonly held by the public about sexual violence that are false. Common rape myths include:

- “It wasn’t really rape” – what occurred was not truly rape or a violation.
- “She asked for it” – the victim brought the violation upon themselves.
- “He didn’t mean to” – the perpetrator accidentally harmed the victim in a sexual manner, but it was not intentional.
- “She lied” – the victim is lying.
- “Rape is a deviant event” – rape is something carried out by the worst of society, dangerous strangers who stalk people in the night, not by friends or family.
- “She deserved it” – the victim was not perceived as pure or the act was done as punishment for previous sexual behavior (Hedrick; Benedict p.13-24).

These rape myths affect all levels in which cases of sexual violence are handled, from the victim’s closest friends and family to the police who investigate crimes of sexual violence to the jury ruling on cases of assault. In the study “What Do We Know about Rape Myths and Juror Decision Making?” the juror’s Leverick studied made trial judgments influenced by beliefs in rape myths. Leverick also found evidence that rape myths affect police and how they treat victims and perpetrators (Bing III p. 133-135).

Rape myths are perpetuated by many means, with various forms of media being a main culprit, including internet media, news media and entertainment media. Internet media, specifically pornographic material, have a strong influence on those who consume it, which is most often boys and men. Sexual material such as porn portrays women as sex objects for the pleasure of men without humanizing them (Maes). News media are also responsible for

perpetuating rape myths. Prior to trials about sexual violence, news media will investigate a victim's past, unearthing details on their sexual history, habits, lifestyle and more (Cuklanz p. 1-22). These details are viewed by the public as reasons the victim may have "deserved," "asked for" or "lied" about the act of sexual violence.

Misunderstandings about how victims respond to acts of sexual violence lie in a lack of understanding of the effect of trauma on the body and mind. Trauma can create gaps in memory which can lead victims to seem "unreliable" while questioning as they may only remember specific details. Victims can have a range of responses to an attack that are not just fight or flight, but including freeze, which means they may lay impassive during an act of sexual violence (Lovell). Trauma also can lead to victims behaving in ways during questioning that police do not understand, such as laughing as a defense mechanism, seeming unphased or disassociating, or crying hysterically (Dissell 2022).

Role of news media

Becoming a victim, perpetrator, or bystander of sexual violence occurs because of the many different layers of society affecting an individual. To demonstrate that, Bronfenbrenner's social ecological model can be used to illustrate how many factors, such as media and interpersonal relationships, affect an individual. The model is used to illustrate how different layers of influence affect an individual. Outside of the sphere of the individual includes personal relationships with people as well as their relationships with their community. The outermost layer of the model includes social culture and society (Bronfenbrenner p. 513-31). Media also fall into this layer. They have a direct role in the perpetuation of rape culture, gender stereotypes, community cultures and attitudes around sex (Willis, Malachi, Jozkowski p. 324-36).

As previously discussed in the perpetuation of rape myths, news media have an influence on individuals who affect how sexual violence is perpetrated in society, including jurors, police, perpetrators, and victims (Bronfenbrenner p. 513-31). When reporting on cases of sexual violence, media gravitate to using a criminal justice frame (Cuklanz p. 1-22). However, news media disproportionately cover criminal justice stories of sexual violence compared to actual instances of sexual violence – most of which do not go to trial – because criminal justice proceedings often garner more attention than reports of rape, which are not typically reported to media over police (Cuklanz p. 1-22). This creates a public misconception of the nature of sexual violence (Lonsway p. 145-68). However, there are other sources of information about sexual violence that media can access, such as rape crisis centers. News media can also influence juror's and the public's perception of a case before it is even decided in court (Harding p.11-25; Leverick p. 255-279).

There are many techniques in media in telling stories, including the use of framing. Framing is created through the selection of content and language to portray a theme or message to the audience in the telling of a story. The use of framing has an influence on what the audience takes away from the story. There are many frames that can be used when telling stories, although two specific frames of note are thematic and episodic frames. Thematic frames investigate a story in the larger context of societal and institutional influences whereas episodic stories focus on the individual actors (Iyengar p. 19-40). These are both types of frames used in telling stories of sexual violence that create two different effects: the influence of larger society and institutions perpetuating sexual violence, or the actions made by individuals in an instance of sexual violence.

The #MeToo movement had a complex effect on rape culture and on society's understanding of sexual violence. It raised awareness for sexual violence and gave more space for victims to voice their stories (Morczek p. 1-10). However, sexual violence is also perpetuated in rape myths in the reporting and perception of victim's stories, including a victim blaming and support for the perpetrators (Wellman p. 88-105). An analysis of stories that came out during the #MeToo movement found the presence of "Himpathy," or empathy for the male perpetrator by focusing on his life and showing how it was "ruined" by the victim telling their story. The #MeToo movement coverage did not erase the idea of "perfect victim" where the only victims worthy of having justice for an assault were pure and "perfect" people (Morczek p. 1-10). During the movement, with increased discourse over accusations of assault, more individuals still defended and protected predators while demonizing victims. Consumption of news media are also associated with increased belief in rape myths regarding victims, such as victim blaming (Li et al. p. 772-82).

Outside of news media, pornography media also have a large effect on the perception of women, rape culture and the scripting of sexual encounters. Pornography media portray women as sex objects, and young men who consume these media internalize the perception of women as sex objects (Maes p. 59-69). Multiple studies show in adolescent age groups, between 25% to over 60% of children are being exposed to pornography, which is graphic displays of sex acts, and much of mainstream pornography is sexist and aggressive toward women by men (Crabbe p.1-37). Without proper education, when exposed to sexual scenarios later in life, people who have been exposed to pornography will likely perceive those sex acts as how sexual encounters should be carried out, likely without consent and aggressively (Tranchese p. 2709-34).

Social media are another area in which people can carry out sexual violence. Forums online allow misogyny to be discussed openly and perpetuated against women online (Morczek and Mueller p. 85-97). Sexual violence has been carried out online since even the earliest uses of social media sites, such as the text-based program LambdaMOO. The program functioned similarly to a role-playing game like *Dungeons and Dragons*, and even though the program was text based, one player virtually raped another in the digital space, sparking a discussion of what type of a violation had occurred since the rape was not done physically but rather in the cyber world (Dibbel p. 36-42).

Methodology

To develop a way of analyzing the case studies of articles involving sexual violence, I reviewed information gathered in the literature review, guides of journalism best practices, and discourse analysis practices. These discourse analysis practices are derived from the book “Discourse and Practice: New Tools for Critical Analysis” by Theo van Leeuwen.

Best reporting practices

Journalism and sexual violence advocates have created guides and trainings for journalists to advise them in reporting on stories of sexual violence. I’ve chosen two of those guides as well as the information provided at one training for journalists to compile and analyze into a discussion of the best practices for journalists to follow. The information covered in the two guides and the training are comprehensive in discussing how a journalist should interact with a survivor of sexual violence before, during and after the interview process. These guides and training were chosen for their comprehensiveness, and other guides would repeat the same information.

The first guide is titled “Use the Right Words: Media Reporting on Sexual Violence in Canada” by Femifesto. Although the guide was published in Canada, many of the recommendations regarding language and interviewing are reflected in guides and training in the United States. The second guide was published by the Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma, titled “Reporting on Sexual Violence.” Additionally, the Ohio Alliance to End Sexual Violence (OAESV) hosted a training for journalists, entitled “Trauma-Informed Interviewing & Reporting on Sexual Violence” on October 22, 2022, in Columbus, Ohio. The training featured experts in reporting on sexual violence, including sociologists Rachell Lovell, activist Sophia Fifner and reporter Rachel Dissel.

Before the interview

Both the guides and the training emphasize that prior to interviewing a source who has experienced sexual violence, journalists should take steps to prepare for the interview and educate themselves about trauma-informed care and the reality of sexual assault. I am including the information in this section because it is relevant to how a journalist should conduct themselves when reporting on sexual violence stories, however, it is difficult to assess how if these practices have been followed simply based on the reporting of the story.

Trauma-informed care

All guides implicitly or explicitly describe treating a source with trauma-informed care. To do so, the journalist must make themselves familiar with how trauma can affect someone and how the unique trauma of sexual violence can affect an individual.

The Dart Center advised journalists to learn about the potential impacts and causes of sexual violence, and to research local conditionals and circumstances (Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma). The journalist should do this work in advance of the interview to gain a background understanding of sexual violence, especially how it manifests in their geographical area. Sexual violence is an act of power over another person, it is not about the act of sex. The identity of the survivor, such as their gender, race, and socioeconomic status, will all affect the survivor's situation. However, gaining an understanding of the trauma of sexual violence will only help the journalist learn to be open minded when speaking to the survivor. Every survivor's story and experience are different. (Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma)

The Dart center also contained a poignant sentence about how trauma internally affects a survivor. “Sexual violence is associated with high degrees of self-blame, guilt and shame.” This quote should be kept in mind in how the journalist interacts with a survivor (Center for Journalism and Trauma).

Trauma-responses

Each guide explains how telling a story of one’s trauma will be distressing for the victim. As discussed in the OAESV conference, however, feeling distress is not the same as being traumatized by the interview itself. There are a number of ways a journalist can work with the source to ensure they are not traumatized by the interview itself (“Trauma-Informed Interviewing & Reporting on Sexual Violence”).

“Use the Right Words” recommends making sure the interview is conducted in a safe place for the survivor. The survivor may feel most comfortable having another person for support in the room, being in their own home, a therapist's office, or other locations (Femifesto). The journalist should be extra mindful to accommodate what is best for the source in terms of place of the interview.

Both guides and the training recommend a journalist familiarize themselves with ways a trauma response can occur during an interview. A person who has experienced sexual violence can have a physical and emotional response when recanting trauma. The OAESV training suggested a journalist discusses beforehand ways a source can cue them to pause the interview if they are experiencing distress.

Identities

The OAESV training and “Use the Right Words” guide emphasize a journalist should recognize that some identities make an individual more susceptible to experiencing sexual violence. Some of these identities include being non-white, coming from a lower income background, and not being heterosexual or cisgender. “Use the Right Words” also describes how the journalist’s own identity will affect how they interact with stories of sexual violence (Femifesto). Journalists should recognize how their own many identities could have an impact on their perceptions of sexual violence and how they may perceive the survivor.

Biases

Because of their prevalence in society, a journalist has undoubtedly been exposed to rape myths. They likely will have accumulated their own thoughts and perceptions about sexual violence, including what it is, who is victimized by it, and who a perpetrator might be. The OAESV training discussed what some of these biases may be, typically rape myths, and to do their job well, journalists need to leave their biases at the door when they work with a source. OAESV recommended journalists should educate themselves before interviewing a survivor of sexual assault on rape myths and assess what myths they may feel they hold (Lovell).

While I cannot assess if a journalist’s bias directly influenced how they conducted themselves when reporting on a story, I can analyze the stories for the presence of rape myths.

During the interview

In this section, I will discuss how the guides and training recommend journalists interact with sources during the interview or talking with the source. These recommendations serve to

minimize distress and avoid re-traumatization during the interview. Even though I am not able to assess how well these recommendations are followed simply by the written reporting of the stories, I am including this section to educate on how experts recommend journalists conduct themselves during the interview.

Informed consent

When journalists begin working with a source in telling their story about sexual violence, they need to inform the source thoroughly on the process of reporting and telling a story of sexual violence. A journalist should describe their reporting process, the interviewing process, and their writing process. The journalist should also give the source potential ideas of the outcome of the story, who might see it, and by what means. Thus, the source will be informed about what they are giving consent on (“Trauma-Informed Interviewing & Reporting on Sexual Violence”; Femifesto).

According to the OAESV training, the journalist should also give the source the option to back out of the story at any time. This gives the source control over telling their story. It can be frustrating and go against typical professional practices for a journalist to put a significant amount of time and energy working on a story only to have it retracted. However, it is imperative that a source be given this sort of control over the story. A survivor of sexual violence has been violated on an emotional, psychological, and physical level, and they will likely be experiencing the trauma of having power and autonomy taken away during an assault. To minimize the chance of causing additional trauma, a journalist should give this control to the survivor (“Trauma-Informed Interviewing & Reporting on Sexual Violence”).

Create boundaries

Boundaries go both ways in telling a story about trauma, and both guides and the training discuss how boundaries function for both a journalist and survivor when reporting a story. A journalist should discuss with the survivor what topics the survivor is not comfortable discussing (“Trauma-Informed Interviewing & Reporting on Sexual Violence”; Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma; Femifesto). The guides and training also recommend discussing other boundaries the survivor may have when it comes to time, place, and manner of conducting the interview.

According to both OAESV and Femifesto, the journalist should also set boundaries with the source. For example, when will the journalist be available to work with the survivor? It is very emotionally taxing to tell stories about trauma. Therefore, a journalist needs to set boundaries with the source and the story itself (“Trauma-Informed Interviewing & Reporting on Sexual Violence”; Femifesto).

Identification in the story

Femifesto and OAESV emphasize that the survivor is referred to in the story in a manner in which they feel comfortable. Survivors may prefer to be referred to as a survivor, a person who has experienced sexual assault, or a victim of sexual violence. After asking how a source would like to be referred to, the reporter should ensure they are referred to properly in the story (“Trauma-Informed Interviewing & Reporting on Sexual Violence”; Femifesto).

Sometimes, it might be needed for the source to be given anonymity in the story. Femifesto recommends educating the source on potential ways of identification in the story (Femifesto).

Monitor your own reactions

The Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma Guide described that the reactions of the journalist may have an impact on how the source feels and trusts the journalist. “Don’t underestimate how your own reactions to traumatic detail can influence the conversation” (Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma). Not only can this influence the information a journalist is able to gain from the conversation with the source, it can also cause distress for the source.

Ask the right questions

In the OAESV training, journalist Rachel Dissel recommends starting an interview with the simple question of “what happened?” This creates an open narrative where the source is able to control the conversation at the beginning and tell their story in the way they are most comfortable. Afterwards, the journalist can ask follow-up questions (“Trauma-Informed Interviewing & Reporting on Sexual Violence”).

The Dart Center recommends that journalists avoid using questions of “why” and other language that can come across as accusatory. As previously mentioned in the same guide, survivors likely will be experiencing high degrees of shame and guilt for the assault, and language that implies they are responsible for the assault can exacerbate these feelings. “Why”, as Dart describes, is a common question used by interrogators and could make the survivor feel that they are being interrogated (Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma).

After the interview

Each guide also describes how the journalist should tell the story itself, such as what words should be used when describing the assault, the survivor, context around the assault and framing of the story itself.

Language around assault

OAESV and Femifesto give journalists specific advice on what language to use and not to use when telling a story of sexual violence. To start, Femifesto and OAESV specifically recommend using terms such as “said,” “according to,” “reports” and other attributions when discussing an assault instead of overusing words such as “alleged” “accused” “claimed” (“Trauma-Informed Interviewing & Reporting on Sexual Violence”; Femifesto).

Femifesto explains why words such as “alleged” and “claimed” should be used minimally, as well as advising journalists on consulting a lawyer if they are unsure if the language used in the story is not legally appropriate. “Excessive use of these words can imply disbelief of the survivor on the part of the reporter. The language used depends on the context. Not using alleged in some contexts can have serious legal implications and could even leave a survivor open to being sued by an abuser. When in doubt, consult with a lawyer” (Femifesto).

The OAESV conference and Femifesto guide also advocate for using active language when describing an assault, rather than passive language, to ensure accountability for the assault is placed on the perpetrator instead of blaming the victim (“Trauma-Informed Interviewing & Reporting on Sexual Violence”; Femifesto).

In the analysis of news reporting, I will make note of instances in which words such as “alleged” and “accused” are used. I will evaluate where these instances are necessary due to

being a part of a paraphrased quote versus where they are added excessively. Then, I will describe how these terms effect the news story in creating a perception of misbelief in the situation and context of their use.

Femifesto also warns journalists against qualifying the assault or downplaying the effect of it by describing a survivor not being “physically harmed”. The assault should be described with appropriate language (Femifesto).

Finally, Femifesto advises journalists to make clear that an act of sexual violence is nonconsensual and violent, and not simply sex. Journalists should not use terms or language that might imply to a reader that the act was consensual or about sex.

Language around the source

Femifesto recommends when journalists write how a survivor shares their stories to use neutral language, such as the verbs “shares,” “says,” and “tells”. When journalists use language such as “confesses” or “admits,” a reader can come away with a sense that the survivor is responsible for their assault or feel shame for what was done to them (Femifesto). Similarly to the use of the words “alleged” and “accused,” I will make note of instances in which language creates skepticism around the source’s claims.

Use of sources

Femifesto is the only guide of the three that explicitly advises journalists to make sure a survivor or a survivor advocate is given a chance to comment on a story instead of focusing on the voices of the perpetrator, police or legal authorities. “If you don’t have access to the survivor’s side of the story, speak to violence against women experts, and rely on police and

court documents, to keep the story balanced” (Femifesto). I will track what sources are used in the story and evaluate if a diverse range of sources are used, or if the sources used gravitate to one type of source, such as law enforcement.

Thematic framing and context

Femifesto recommends journalists include details around sexual violence that create a thematic frame. Femifesto states, “contextualize sexual assault as a result of systems, oppression, and attitudes that exists in all communities and cultures.” Without explicitly using the term “thematic,” Femifesto is describing the process of using thematic framing by showing how sexual violence is not simply the consequence of an individual action (for more details on framing, see below).

Femifesto and OAESV also suggest that the context of a survivor’s life is given. This context allows an opportunity for the audience to see how life circumstances can put a survivor in a situation in which a perpetrator may take advantage of them (Femifesto; Lovell). Giving contextual life information is another way of providing a thematic framing, as it can show the audience how life circumstances such as substance abuse or socioeconomic status can make an individual more vulnerable to being a victim of sexual violence.

I will note where thematic framing is used in the stories, based on if the writer uses language to explain societal factors, pervasiveness of sexual violence or uses other means to provide thematic framing.

Discourse practices

Using discourse practices, each case study was analyzed for the social actors and social actions that were discussed in the articles. These social actors included law enforcement agencies, survivors of sexual violence, perpetrators, bystanders, and others. Social actors are important to identify, as well as the actions they perform in the language of the article, as they may be excluded in the article. Van Leeuwen's study "Discourse and Practice" describes this as backgrounding or suppression, which when used when referring to the perpetrator, creates the effect described in the best practices section of diminishing responsibility of the perpetrator and eliminating the perpetrator from the narrative (van Leeuwen).

In the act of suppression, van Leeuwen explains that there is no reference to the actor anywhere in the text. In the case of sexual violence, this would appear through the passive construction of a sentence such as "Jane Doe was raped" with no reference to the perpetrator. Another example used in the context of sexual violence is "Jane Doe's rape kit was lost." The sentence eliminates the social actor that lost Jane Doe's rape kit (van Leeuwen).

When backgrounding a social actor, the actor is not directly attributed to the action, but they are still present in the story. An example of backgrounding could be "John Doe was charged with rape and kidnapping. A woman said she was raped in 1990 ..." In this example, John Doe is still present in the story, but he is not directly attributed to the rape of the woman referenced (van Leeuwen).

The social actors and social actions described in the article also indicate the theme of the story and the goal of the story. Themes and goals were identified in each case study to provide insight on how the author would frame the story. It also indicates the lens in which the author wrote the story, and what information they may have chosen to exclude or include.

Further Considerations

As seen in the literature review, the framing of the story also creates a notable effect on the audience's perception of sexual violence as an act of individual responsibility versus an act influenced by society and culture. I note and discuss details in the articles that indicate the framing of the story being episodic or thematic. For this reason, I made special notice of the use of statistics in the case studies, because statistics can be used to create thematic framing in otherwise episodic stories by providing information about sexual violence beyond the singular incident.

As described in the literature review, news stories have the potential to perpetuate the belief in rape myths, such as victim blaming and misunderstandings of (and sometimes inability to give) consent when the victim and/or perpetrator has used drugs. Because of this, I analyzed each case study for references to drugs as well as any potential indications of drug use. Then, I analyzed the references to rape myths and drug use for how the topics were discussed, and whether the articles disproved or perpetuated the myths.

The terms used in describing sexual violence, such as sexual assault, sexual harassment, and rape, can be ambivalent or mistakable if not clearly defined. Because of this, I also investigated the case studies for defining the words used to describe the act of sexual violence that occurred in the story.

Finally, the best practices guides note that often, the survivor's voice and perspective may easily be neglected in the story in favor of only relying on law enforcement and political voices. Thus, I interrogated the case studies for their use of a range of sources that create a more

comprehensive picture to the audience on sexual violence than can be created with relying on one type of source.

Case Study 1: Reporting on the rape kit testing initiative to the Anthony

Sowell case

Anthony Sowell killed and raped over a dozen women in Cleveland, hiding their bodies in his home and burying their remains in his backyard. Cleveland Police first investigated Sowell's home due to a rape case, and *Plain Dealer* reporters Rachel Dissell and Leila Atassi questioned if there were untested rape kits in Cleveland, which would lead to the city, state and nationwide initiative to test backlogged rape kits (Heisig). However, throughout their continued reporting and the testing of rape kits, Cleveland police discovered that there were untested rape kits from years prior to Sowell's arrest that linked him to the assault of other women.

CBS News published an article titled "Serial killer convicted, but botched case holds lessons for police" on July 26, 2011. The 2011 *CBS News* article by Laura Strickler described many failings on police departments in investigating evidence obtained in the Anthony Sowell case. The failings all had to do with women being assaulted or raped by Sowell, but the evidence collected from those assaults were not handled properly or examined in a prompt, thorough manner (Strickler).

About a month later on August 17, 2011, *The Plain Dealer* published a similar story by Rachel Dissell titled "More questions arise on the handling of the 2009 rape case tied to Sowell" that focused on the investigation and failures by police departments to thoroughly investigate reports about Sowell in a timely manner. The delay caused the rape kit to sit for two years after the survivor reported the assault ("More Questions Arise").

Themes and goals

The themes and goals of both stories were to explain to the audience how police departments in Cleveland did not investigate reports by survivors that could have incriminated Sowell years prior to him being caught.

Police mistakes

The 2011 CBS News story indicated this theme through multiple sentences in the story: “On the last few months, crucial mistakes have come to light showing that the Cleveland Police Department was not the only law enforcement agency that could have caught Sowell earlier” and “He (an officer) put the DNA evidence from the rape kit into a bin, but according to the department he failed to tell the sex crimes detective about the evidence. So, the rape kit sat unopened for two years. The sex crimes detective said the victim did not respond to repeated messages and the case went stale” (Strickler). The first sentence used in the stories tells the reader that mistakes were made, while the second example sentence shows what those mistakes were. The use of the word “failed” indicates that it was the responsibility of the officer to have told the sex crimes detective about the evidence.

The 2011 *Plain Dealer* also conveyed this theme through sentences and language used in the story: “The memo indicates that evidence that ties the rape to Sowell was not submitted for forensic testing because detectives could not contact the woman. It also indicates that they questioned the truthfulness of her report after toxicology results showed the woman had ‘numerous drugs of abuse and alcohol’ in her system” and “That explanation, written in a memo by a Cleveland Heights detective who worked on the case, calls into question reasons given in June for not testing the rape evidence kit - that police didn’t know the evidence existed because

of confusion over how it was given to them by Hillcrest Hospital personnel” (“More Questions Arise”).

Criminal justice failings

Both of these stories sought to discuss failings in the criminal justice system in the investigation of a major case that had garnered nationwide media attention. The stories focused on the role that the police department and forensic investigators play in fighting sexual violence, and how, in this specific case, those parties did not accomplish their roles.

The effect of using such themes when discussing stories of sexual violence is that it draws the reader’s attention to the fact that sex crimes can go unsolved for many reasons, one being that the criminal justice system failed to properly handle evidence and thoroughly investigate the case. Thus, seeing a perpetrator prosecuted for a sex crime is not only the responsibility of a survivor coming forward or submitting evidence collected in a rape kit. There are detectives and police, as well as people who work in the chain of evidence, that do not always do their jobs properly. These mistakes are harmful for the survivor, people who may be victimized by the perpetrator being free and the community who is at continued risk and fear with the perpetrator free.

Thematic versus episodic framing

Both stories published by *CBS News* and *The Plain Dealer* in 2011 tell an episodic story because they focus on the telling of one specific story in Cleveland, Ohio. To use a thematic framing in telling this episodic story, the articles would need to expand the focus, address implications, or add more themes beyond the Cleveland story.

The 2011 *CBS News* article did use a thematic framing when discussing one component of the failures in catching Sowell: the lack of a connected forensic evidence tracking system. “According to the Department of Justice, 43 percent of police departments nationwide do not have a computerized system for tracking forensic evidence” (Strickler). This quote uses language and a statistic that connect the episodic story of police departments in Cleveland to other police departments across the country.

The 2011 *Plain Dealer* story does not use the same language, such as “nationwide”, or statistics to create thematic framing. However, the story does include facts of the story that illustrate how rape myths, such as victim blaming, played a role in the story.

The first rape myth that I identified in the 2011 *Plain Dealer* story is how survivor credibly is questioned if drugs or alcohol are involved. This is illustrated in the sentence in the story that explicitly states the myth “...indicates that they questioned the truthfulness of her report after toxicology results showed the woman had ‘numerous drugs of abuse and alcohol’ in her system” (“More Questions Arise”).

The second rape myth is the use of victim blaming in which the police wrote that the victim was too uncooperative, and thus the police did not continue investigating. “I did not send the original rape kit due to the uncooperative witness and I wanted to send the rape kit with a formal written statement from the victim which I did not obtain,’ Detective David Bartee wrote in the memo dated May 17, 2011” (“More Questions Arise”).

The inclusion of how rape myths affected the investigation in the 2011 *Plain Dealer* story may not be explicitly shown to affect many other investigations of rape cases, their inclusion still reflects some thematic framing.

The use of thematic framing 2011 *Plain Dealer* story helps the reader understand the scope of the story is beyond just the one episodic instance focused on in the story's narrative. When it comes to sexual violence, thematic framing is important in showing that the reasoning for its prevalence is more than just perpetrators who act – it is the systems that allow those perpetrators to go free and rape culture making sexual violence socially acceptable. The use of thematic framing in these stories specifically show the reader that there is a widespread problem in the handling of rape cases, as well as an issue in how that evidence is tracked and made accessible across departments. These are also problems that do have possible solutions that readers can follow up with their respective law enforcement on to hold accountable.

Drug use

Only the 2011 *Plain Dealer* story discussed how drugs played into the investigation. The kit was sent to Lake County for a toxicology report as detectives believed the survivor may have been drugged in the assault. “A detective told the Lake County lab to test the toxicology kit and got the results a few weeks later detailing the drugs – including marijuana, cocaine, opiates, and alcohol – in the victim's system. The detective also noted he was having trouble contacting the victim and surmised it might be because of drug use” (“More Questions Arise”). The author expanded on this showing its use as a rape myth and discrediting the survivor. “It also indicates that they questioned the truthfulness of her report after toxicology results showed the woman had ‘numerous drugs of abuse and alcohol’ in her system” (“More Questions Arise”).

As I discussed in the literature review, drug use can make an individual more vulnerable to being sexually assaulted as perpetrators know that drug use makes a survivor less credible in the eyes of the police, detectives, and the criminal justice system. Perpetrators can also use drugs to make a survivor unconscious or less lucid, and thus easier for perpetrators to assault. The

language used in the 2011 *Plain Dealer* story described how drugs were used against the survivor without blaming the survivor. It was important to include the use of drugs to counteract the common narrative of drug use when it comes to sexual violence.

Language

As detailed in the literature review best practices section, the specific choice of words and structure of sentences can have a great impact on how an audience views a survivor and a perpetrator when discussing sexual violence.

The 2011 *CBS News* story used the victims as the subject of the sentences, which, as described in the literature review, can put an unintended emphasis on the victim rather than other social actors involved. An example of this can be seen in the quote: “Almost a year before Sowell was caught, a woman said he tried to rape her. But she was dismissed by Cleveland police and the prosecutor as not credible even though Sowell was a convicted sex offender” (Strickler). The second sentence of this paragraph interestingly uses passive voice when describing the woman’s actions as well. She “was dismissed by Cleveland police and the prosecutor” instead of “Cleveland police and the prosecutor dismissed the woman because ...” This again puts a focus on the woman and her actions, even though the article is writing about what happened to her. As discussed in the literature review, when a victim is made the subject of a sentence using passivation, a reader is more likely to put more focus on the victim than other actors involved. In this instance, the Cleveland police and the prosecutors would have more emphasis in their responsibility for dismissing the woman if they were placed as the subjects of the sentence. The passage does, however, make good use of using attributions to information

instead of overuse of the words accused or alleged. Overusing these words would have drawn into question the truthfulness of the survivor's account of an assault having taken place.

The next passage of the 2011 *CBS News* article describes an incident in which Sowell victimized another woman. "On April 17, 2009, a woman at a Cleveland area bus stop caught a ride with a friend in a car driven by a man named "Tony". Her friend left the car, leaving the woman alone with "Tony" who punched her in the face and made a series of rapid turns. They ended up at a house fitting the description of Sowell's. / The police report notes that "Tony" put her in a chokehold and dragged her to the third floor of his house where she later said it smelled "stagnant" perhaps from "garbage or mold." In fact, the smell was from dead bodies. / She said she was raped four times and fed an unknown pill during the course of the night often passing out from pain" (Strickler).

"Tony," the name the survivor gave to identify Sowell in the police report, is written as the subject of the sentence when it describes the physical assault, but not the sexual assault. This creates an implication that Sowell was responsible for the physical assault, yet the writer omitted Sowell from the description of the assault, which eliminates the perpetrator's involvement in the assault. "'Tony' put her in a chokehold and dragged her to the third floor of the house" versus "She said she was raped four times and fed an unknown pill." The unknown pill and drug use was also not expanded upon in the *CBS News* story.

The use of active voice for Sowell's perpetrated physical assault and passive voice for description of Sowell's perpetrated sexual assault, whether intentional or unintentional, shows a discomfort for journalists when discussing sexual violence. Journalists commonly use passive voice when describing instances of sexual violence, which, as described in the literature review, eliminate a perpetrator from the discussion of sexual violence. It focuses the audience's attention

on the survivor, again creating questions as to the survivor's "role" in their sexual assault. The use of active voice in describing the instance of physical assault of the survivor and not the sexual assault raises questions for the audience on whether Sowell even committed the act of sexual violence, despite Sowell's multiple convictions of rape and murder at the point of writing (Strickler).

The main social actor referenced in the 2011 *CBS News* story is the Cleveland police and other law enforcement. When the writer discussed police, they often used passive voice, which then diminishes the responsibility that law enforcement had in the actions described.

Here are some of the instances of passive voice in the 2011 *CBS News* story when referring to law enforcement:

- "But she was dismissed by Cleveland police and the prosecutors as not credible even though Sowell was a convicted sex offender."
- "Another reported rape was not investigated by the Cleveland Police Department for more than a month."
- "... his DNA was taken as part of a state program to create a database of criminal DNA..."
- "There may be other DNA profiles taken in the late 1990s that were supposed to be entered into the state database that never were..."

It is interesting that the 2011 *CBS News* story uses passive voice despite one of the themes of this story showing how law enforcement failed in investigating cases of sexual violence. Passive voice minimizes and softens the responsibility law enforcement had in investigations, with some instances, such as the last two given, completely omitting the individual who took Sowell's DNA and failed to enter it into the system.

Later on, in the 2011 *CBS news* story, when it discussed how the law enforcement agencies are making progress in better investigating rape kits and sexual violence, the sentence structure shifts to active voice, which gives increased emphasis on the responsibility of the police in these initiatives.

- “As a result of the Sowell case, the Cleveland Heights Police Department will now test all rape kits and their evidence is now tracked with a computer.”
- “State Attorney General Mike DeWine convened a roundtable to discuss the standardization of rape kit testing across the state. His office is awaiting the results of a law enforcement survey to see how different departments handle evidence.”
- “The Cleveland Police Department says they have overhauled their sexual assault policies. For the first time they have counted all of their untested rape kits finding more than 4,000 and they say they are now committed to testing all kits.”

The sentence structure used in the three example sentences emphasizes the “present,” or present at the time, actions taken by police. The structure is also in active voice, emphasizing the current actions of police and the responsibility of police in how they are creating progress when it comes to solving sexual violence. The previous actions by police written in passive voice diminish the responsibility law enforcement had in the mistakes made for investigations.

On the other hand, the 2011 *Plain Dealer* story had more uses of active voice than the *CBS News* story when it came to discussing police. This makes sense as they have the same theme and goal of educating the audience on how cases of sexual violence are investigated (“More Questions Arise”).

- “It also indicates that they questioned the truthfulness of her report ...”

- “... police didn’t know the evidence existed because of confusion over how it was given to them by Hillcrest Hospital personnel.”
- “The detective, Gibbon said, wrote that sentence to justify the delay in time in sending out the evidence.”
- “... and the detective drove a box of evidence to the Lake County Crime Lab on May 4.”
- “... when Cleveland police asked for it as part of their investigation of Sowell”
- “... they had sent a toxicology kit for testing, not a rape kit.”
- “A detective told the Lake County lab to test the toxicology kit...”
- “The detective also noted he was having trouble contacting...”

Dissell’s use of active voice gives responsibility to the law enforcement agencies and individuals who failed in properly handling the evidence that could have connected Sowell to rapes and murders earlier. It is important in journalism to not be afraid of using active voice – when the *CBS News* story used passive voice and seemingly “blunted” the role of the police, it is not as honest of a portrayal of the situation and the role that law enforcement does have in fighting crimes of sexual violence.

The 2011 *Plain Dealer* story does make a notable use of passive voice when referring to police while the 2011 *CBS News* story uses active language to better place responsibility on law enforcement. The 2011 *CBS News* story contains the sentence “He (an officer) put the DNA evidence from the rape kit into a bin, but according to the department he failed to tell the sex crimes detective about the evidence. So, the rape kit sat unopened for two years,” which uses two notable instances of activation when discussing the actions taken by the police officer: putting the rape kit in the bin and not telling the sex crimes detective about the evidence. On the other

hand, the 2011 *Plain Dealer* story omits the individual responsible for the testing not occurring in the sentence: “The memo indicates that evidence that ties the rape to Sowell was not submitted for forensic testing because detectives could not contact the woman.” Even though the 2011 *Plain Dealer* story has more uses of active voice when discussing police, the 2011 *CBS News* story does use active voice and the 2011 *Plain Dealer* story does use passive voice when discussing police as well.

Additionally, the opening sentence of the 2011 *CBS News* story begins with a comparison to another murder trial that was occurring at the same time – the trial of Casey Anthony. “While much of the country fixated on the murder trial of Casey Anthony, another murder trial unfolded in a Cleveland courtroom that put an entire state’s criminal justice system and its handling of rape cases under scrutiny.” The 2011 *CBS News* story compares the two through this juxtaposition. While police charged Sowell with both murder and sexual violence, this juxtaposition creates an emphasis on the murder rather than the sexual violence, creating the idea that the murder charges are what should be focuses on, or what is grabbing the audience’s attention, rather the horror of the sexual violence crimes that were poorly investigated. However, in the same sentence, the 2011 *CBS News* story places a strong focus on the criminal justice system with the detail “that put an entire state’s criminal justice system and its handling of rape cases under scrutiny.” Thus, the reader’s attention is focused on the actions of the criminal justice system in the state of Ohio for the story.

Analysis

In the reporting on the connection between the rape kit initiatives to Anthony Sowell, both articles attempted to illustrate how law enforcement made mistakes in the handling of rape

kits and rape investigations that could have incriminated Anthony Sowell earlier. However, the 2011 *Plain Dealer* more effectively portrayed this role through the use of active language when describing how law enforcement behaved when handling the cases. The 2011 *CBS News* story, on the other hand, used more passive voice, diminishing the responsibility of law enforcement in their actions.

The 2011 *Plain Dealer* story also opted to use some thematic framing and included how drug use played into the treatment of the rape cases. The descriptions of rape myths, without explicitly calling the actions rape myths, allow the reader to gain an understanding of how bias effects the treatment of sexual violence cases. Thus, the 2011 *Plain Dealer* story succeeded in more effectively teaching the reader about the reality of sexual violence than the 2011 *CBS News* story due to the details it included and focused on .

Case Study 2: Aftermath of the rape kit testing initiative in indictments and convictions

A few years after the untested rape kit story broke and law enforcement began testing backlogged the kits, law enforcement identified serial rapists and rapists from those kits. With the new evidence, law enforcement then began prosecuting. Both the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* and other Cleveland news outlets reported on the court proceedings against Charles Steele, a man who had raped a woman in 1993 and was 60 years old in 2013 when he was finally brought to court.

The statewide initiative to test rape kits yielded results, and the justice system had begun prosecuting rapists and serial rapists. On March 15, 2013, *Fox 8 News* covered the first indictments of individuals after the rape kit testing had occurred. Charles Steele and Anthony Moore were two of the first people indicted as part of this initiative. *Fox 8* reported on the indictments with sources from law enforcement to show how progress has seemingly been made (Loreno).

The *Plain Dealer* story that I am analyzing also reports on Steele, but *The Plain Dealer* published the story a year later in 2014 when he was sentenced. The story reports on the sentencing with quotes from the judge and two survivors of Steele's assault ("Steele, 61, Gets 65 Years").

Themes and goals

The goal of the 2013 *Fox 8* story is to inform the reader that the rape kit testing initiative resulted in criminal justice proceedings, and the theme of the story is that progress has been made in prosecuting rapists.

Progress made

The first sentence of the 2013 *Fox 8* story conveys this goal and theme: “The first two criminal indictments have been filed after the state’s increased efforts to examine Ohio’s untested rape kits,” directly linking the statewide rape kit testing initiative to criminal indictments. The following sentence, which includes a quote by the attorney general at the time, implies to the reader that this is the beginning of an ongoing process in putting away rapists. The sentence is: “Attorney General Mike DeWine said the indictments – involving Two Cuyahoga County cases – are ‘just the beginning.’” (Loreno).

The 2014 *Plain Dealer* story on Steele’s conviction had a similar goal to *Fox 8*’s, illustrated by a sentence that appears in the second half of the story: “Steele, 61, was the first person in the state indicted based on evidence taken from rape kits collected decades ago. The kits were tested recently as part of a statewide initiative” (“Steele, 61, Gets 65 Years”). While the theme of the 2013 *Plain Dealer* story also portrays that progress has been made in the aftermath of the rape kit testing initiative, it shows that the aftermath is more complex than a criminal getting justice. The *Plain Dealer* includes quotes from two victims of Steele’s that show a range of emotions from survivors. One quote shows resilience and hope that Steele would get arrested, while the other quote displays difficult emotions regarding Steele finally being caught after more than two decades.

These themes and goals are important in telling the narrative of sexual violence as they both show optimism and hope about the progress being made. However, the 2014 *Plain Dealer's* shows the complexity of this process, which adds that this process still caused extensive harm to survivors and the community by taking so long. This gives the reader a further sense of urgency or importance of holding systems accountable to continue investigating sexual violence.

Thematic versus episodic framing

Both stories cover an episodic story: the indictment and conviction of rapists. However, the 2013 *Fox 8* story tends toward using episodic framing, while a thematic frame can be seen used in parts of the 2014 *Plain Dealer* story.

The 2014 *Plain Dealer* story expands into a thematic story in ways the *Fox 8* stories covering Steele's indictment did not by including an additional direct quote from a second one of Steele's victims who spoke at his sentencing. The 2013 *Fox 8* story includes one of these quotes, "Steele 'didn't take my joy, and he didn't take my determination'" ("Steele, 61, Gets 65 Years"; Loreno). The 2014 *Plain Dealer* story uses the same quote, which speaks to the resiliency of the survivor. However, the 2014 *Plain Dealer* story shows further complexity of the effect of Steele's crime by utilizing a quote from another survivor. "Another victim, now 44, said she's still not able to walk or drive through the area where she was raped. 'I kind of was trying to bury it until all this and then it came back up ... It isn't easy,' she said" ("Steele, 61, Gets 65 Years").

This quote is powerful because it shows the long-lasting effect trauma can have on an individual. One common effect of trauma is avoidance of places that become trauma triggers. For this individual, it is the area where she was raped. The detail shows that the survivor's life has

forever been impacted, because that area will now always be associated with her rape, and could possibly have a very negative effect on her wellbeing if she is forced to encounter it.

The second part of the survivor's quote points to how the rape kit testing is forcing people to relive and confront trauma from decades in the past, which can have a negative effect on them. "I kind of was trying to bury it until all this and then it came back up ... It isn't easy," she said" ("Steele, 61, Gets 65 Years"). This quote implicitly raises questions for the reader, how could this survivor's healing have been different if the rape kit had been tested in a timely manner, and Steele had been prosecuted sooner? What damage was done to an individual's lives because of this delay, and is it even possible to rectify this damage after so many years?

The 2013 *Fox 8* story focuses almost solely on the two indictments and includes sourcing from law enforcement and political figures, such as the attorney general, the prosecutor in the county and the police chief. This limits the story to only being episodic. Using sources from the survivors and the judge who had directly heard from the survivors, the 2014 *Plain Dealer* story conveys more about the real-life impact sexual violence crimes have on people, as well as the long-term effects on these survivors due to having to wait for two decades.

Language

The majority of social actors included in the 2013 *Fox 8* story are related to politics or law enforcement. The actors mentioned in the story that are unrelated to those groups are the two women who were victimized by the individuals identified through the rape kits and the perpetrators. Beside these actors, the attorney general, county prosecutor, city police chief, and forensic scientists were referenced as individuals, while group actors such as 53 law enforcement agencies and the bureau of criminal investigation were also included in the 2013 *Fox 8* story.

Even then, the survivors were not directly sourced in the story. The only people directly sourced in the story were the 2013 attorney general, the county prosecutor, and the Cleveland police chief. While the survivors do not need to be sourced in the story, there are a large number of sources who are connected to law enforcement and politics painted in a positive way. These individuals do have a stake as to not be portrayed negatively as many individuals look to law enforcement to be protected. Law enforcement and politicians also have their own perspective on sexual violence. While the story *Fox 8* is telling does need sourcing from law enforcement and politicians, it provides an opportunity for victim advocates and other experts on sexual violence to speak as well to try to keep the story from only being told from one perspective.

The 2013 *Fox 8* story gives time to law enforcement talking up the progress done by the rape kit investigation initiative. The second sentence in the story is a quote from the attorney general: “Attorney General Mike DeWine said the indictments — involving two Cuyahoga County cases — are ‘just the beginning.’” The quotes and perspectives are from one perspective in investigating sexual violence cases. Because of that, the view of progress being made in investigating sexual violence cases is only from a law enforcement and political perspective rather than from any survivor-centered sources.

Like the 2011 *CBS Story* that discussed the connection to Anthony Sowell, the 2013 *Fox 8* story continually uses passive voice when referencing the law enforcement and criminal justice system until the end of the story when the focus is now on progress.

Instances of passive voice:

- “In one case, Charles Steele, 60, was indicted for the rape and kidnapping of a Cleveland woman in 1993.”
- “According to the release, Steele is accused of attacking the victim ...”

- “Also indicted was Anthony Moore, 42, on charges of rape, kidnapping, felonious assault and attempted murder ...”

Instances of active voice:

- “So far, 53 law enforcement agencies have submitted a total of 2,465 rape kits to BC for DNA testing services ...”
- “DeWine announced the sexual assault kit testing initiative in December 2011 ...”

The 2014 *Plain Dealer* story includes more social actors and sources in the story, including the two victims of Charles Steele with quotes, the assistant county prosecuting attorney, and the judge. The author chose not to include quotes from Steele even though he is a social actor in the story.

The Plain Dealer story used active voice when referring to the women who spoke at the sentencing (“Steele, 61, Gets 65 Years”).

- “Two of Steele’s victims spoke at the sentencing.”
- “... one victim, now 46, told Judge Steven Gall.”
- “The woman said she knew she did the right thing...”
- “Another victim, now 44, said she’s still not able to walk or drive through the area where she was raped.”

In some instances, using active voice when talking about the victims can create an overemphasis on their role and responsibility in a situation of sexual violence, which can lead to victim blaming. However, in the 2014 *Plain Dealer* story, the use of active voice serves to give agency and power back to the victims due to the context. The victims are speaking at the sentencing of their perpetrator and speaking on how they were impacted by what happened to them. Using an active voice here emphasizes their agency.

There was one notable use of passive voice and omission of the perpetrator in the 2014 *Plain Dealer* story. “Both women were in their 20s when they were raped and had waited for 20 years to get news their attacker had been arrested” (“Steele, 61, Gets 65 Years”). This sentence combines the women’s rape and the wait they had to experience before they saw any consequence for Steele by law enforcement. However, omitting the perpetrator through passive voice eliminates the perpetrator from the sexual violence crime they committed.

Steele’s indictment is described in the following passage: “In one case, Charles Steele, 60, was indicted for the rape and kidnapping of a Cleveland woman in 1993. According to the release, Steele is accused of attacking the victim at gunpoint after forcing her into an abandoned garage. / Two days after the indictment, BCI matched Steele’s DNA to another attack on a Cleveland woman which happened eight months after the first incident. Charges in that case are pending. The suspect is currently in prison on a Hamilton County rape conviction” (Loreno). Because *Fox 8* is including an attribution from a police document, the use of the word “accused” is appropriate. However, the story goes on to attribute the information in the next sentence, but still uses “is accused” — “Steele is accused of attacking the victim at gunpoint.” While “is accused,” as shown in the literature review, does create an air of mistrust or doubt around the crime, the structure of the sentence still has Steele as the subject doing the attacking. Steele is omitted in the next sentence and description of an attack on a woman, only referencing Steele’s DNA. It is important to note that this story was written before Steele was convicted, so *Fox 8* could not write that it was proven that Steele had raped the survivor. “BCI matched Steele’s DNA to another attack on a Cleveland woman” (Loreno). The attack is turned into a noun yet again, not being used as a verb to attribute directly to Steele’s actions.

The sentence describing Moore's conviction utilizes neutral language and sentence structure, only describing Moore's charges and omitting the survivor. "Also indicted was Anthony Moore, 42, on charges of rape, kidnapping, felonious assault, and attempted murder in connection with another 1993 crime. The case was investigated by the Cleveland Police Department" (Loreno).

The 2014 *Plain Dealer* story uses passive voice when describing Steele's actions as well. The sentence "Both women were in their 20s when they were raped ..." omits Steele as the perpetrator of the rape. The lead in the *Plain Dealer* also disconnects Steele from his actions of raping individuals. However unlike the *Fox 8* story, the word "rape" is used as a verb. "Serial rapist Charles Steele was sentenced Friday to a minimum of 65 years in prison for raping four Cleveland women 20 years ago" ("Steele, 61, Gets 65 Years").

The 2014 *Plain Dealer* story also includes an interesting quote from the judge: "'You're the bad guy,' Gall told him 'You're the person that everyone fears ... You've haunted these women for 20 plus years and that's a shame. They're going to get their justice now and so are you'" ("Steele, 61, Gets 65 Years"). The quote encapsulates a common feeling people have about rapists and people who commit such horrific crimes – they are bad, they are monsters. The judge seems to acknowledge that Steele did damage to the women who had to survive his attack and the ensuing trauma for 20 years without justice, but finally they are seeing something done about it.

Statistics

The statistics used in the 2013 *Fox 8* story refer to the rape kit testing initiative and the aftermath of the initiative. The statistics show up in the following sentences: "Out of around 600

rape kits tested so far, 90 have yielded DNA hits, according to a release issued by DeWine's office" and "So far, 53 law enforcement agencies have submitted a total of 2,465 rape kits to BCI for the DNA testing services, which are free to law enforcement, the release states. More than 1,000 of those cases are from Cleveland" (Loreno). These statistics are important to showing the scope of the story within Cleveland and statewide, broadening the story to provide even more context for the reader.

The 2014 *Plain Dealer* story also used statistics central to the untested rape kits in Cleveland. "Since Steele was charged last March, more than 80 other cases based on the initiative have resulted in indictments in Cuyahoga County" ("Steele, 61, Gets 65 Years"). This statistic allows the reader to see that there could be more than 80 other potential rapists put away for crimes. However, when these statistics are coupled with the quotes from the survivors in the 2014 *Plain Dealer* story, the reader can consider what it means for more than 80 survivors that their rapists are being indicted by the criminal justice system. Yet, the statistics used in the *Plain Dealer* story are narrowly focused on Cleveland, while the *Fox 8* story gives statewide context to expand the scope of the story to more of a thematic frame.

Analysis

The largest difference between the 2013 *Fox 8* story and the 2014 *Plain Dealer* story is the use of sources. The 2013 *Fox 8* story relied heavily on the use of sources from politicians and law enforcement. It did not include sourcing from victim advocates, survivors, or experts in covering stories of sexual violence. The sources were specifically related to the prosecuting office and the police department in Cuyahoga County, and to the statewide attorney general's

office. In contrast to this, the 2014 *Plain Dealer* story uses a diversity of sources, thus portraying the complexity of sexual violence investigations and the effect they have on survivors.

The 2014 *Plain Dealer* story also empowered the voices of survivors of sexual violence in the reporting on the criminal sentencing of Charles Steele. The story included quotes from both survivors who spoke at the trial, giving them an opportunity to have their voices documented and shared about how the act of violence committed against them affected their life. The story also utilized active voice when referring to the survivors, and as the context was the survivors speaking out against their attacker, this use of active empowered the survivors.

The 2014 *Plain Dealer* story also illustrated how including details can expand an episodic story into a thematically framed story. Specifically through the use of survivor quotes that evidenced the long-term harm of trauma and the resiliency of survivors, the 2014 *Plain Dealer* story showed more about the complexity of sexual violence than just conveying information about one specific episodic story. However, the 2013 *Fox 8* story did provide statewide statistics that broadened the scope of the story beyond a Cleveland level, which lends to the use of thematic framing as well.

Case Study 3: Suspects continue to be identified a decade after rape kit testing initiative

Even ten years after the initial initiative to test the rape kits, suspects are still being identified through the rape kit testing initiative. Local media outlets in Cleveland continued to cover the results of the initiative. In 2021, the *ABC News* outlet in Cleveland, *News 5*, covered how some of these individuals were identified thanks to the Sexual Assault Kit Task Force work and a genetic testing grant. And in 2019, the *Plain Dealer* published a story on how John “Countdown” Doe was finally caught and identified.

Theme and goal

The 2019 *Plain Dealer* story began with graphic details describing how the man who came to be known as John “Countdown” Doe got his name and portrayed the horror he inflicted upon his victims. “The man with the paint-splattered pants would threaten to kill them with a gun or knife if they peered at his face. After raping them, often repeatedly, he’d order his victims to count to 50, 100 or 200 as he fled” (“Suspect ID’d, Charged”). The first sentence could be viewed by readers as a sensationalization of the events, but it also places the emphasis on the perpetrator, the horrific act he committed and an explanation for the “Countdown” aspect of his name. “Countdown” Doe, as later described in the story, did inflict feelings of horror upon his victims, and the opening of the 2019 *Plain Dealer* story seeks to show that to the reader.

Preventable rape

The theme of the 2019 *Plain Dealer* John “Countdown” Doe story is similar to others that have reported on the rape kit testing initiative. Because of the rape kits were not tested,

preventable rapes were not stopped from occurring, which is why it is important to give each rape kit its due investigation. The writer conveyed the theme through sentences such as “DNA in rape kits tested years later eventually linked the man to six rapes reported in one nine-month stretch, from the fall of 1993 to the summer of 1994” and “It was a stark example of how rape kit testing and new investigations could unearth serial rape patterns in decades-old cases that often merited little attention or investigation from police when first reported” (“Suspect ID’d, Charged”). These quotes from the article raise many questions for the reader. How did someone commit so many rapes in such a short period of time? And how did these kits go so long without being tested? The story included quotes from the prosecution often that show what law enforcement and prosecutors hopefully learned from the case: “The case, Bell said, is just the latest example of why law enforcement should be motivated to test every rape kit – ones from stranger attacks and ones with named suspects that aren’t prosecuted” (“Suspect ID’d, Charged”).

The 2019 *Plain Dealer* story was written two decades after the attacks by John “Countdown” Doe occurred. With his identity unknown for so long, the *Plain Dealer* posed rhetorical questions for the reader: “Had he died? Left the state? Would his identity stay a mystery?” (“Suspect ID’d, Charged”). If John “Countdown” Doe was dead or had fled police, he might never have been prosecuted or convicted. However, the *Plain Dealer* did answer those questions. John “Countdown” Doe was identified as Ronald Watson, and he was in a nursing home. The fact of this rapist being found in a nursing home, a place for vulnerable individuals to receive care as they age, lends to the theme and goal of this article that the lapse of time during which rapists were free allowed them to live out full, normal lives.

The 2021 *ABC News* article portrays its theme and goal in the first sentence of the story: “Three men have been identified as suspects in multiple cold case rapes dating back decades, according to the Cuyahoga County Prosecutor’s Office” (Scofield). While the theme may seem similar to that of the Plain Dealer story, it was accomplished by using less in-depth details about each specific suspect’s alleged crimes rather than an in-depth examination of one case, such as that of the 2019 *Plain Dealer* story.

Additional sentences in the 2021 ABC News story that convey this theme are, “In 2019 and 2020, the prosecutor’s office Sexual Assault Kit Task Force was awarded grants to launch the G.O.L.D. Unit (Genetic Operations Linking DNA), which contracted with Gene by Gene for a pilot project. This included genealogical searches for 20 of the ‘most wanted’ DNA profiles connected to cold case sexual assaults.” These sentences tell the reader that there are other government entities with an interest in solving sexual violence cold cases. Thus, the theme for the 2021 ABC News story is that there is continued work in solving sexual violence cold cases, and many government agencies on the local level and higher government levels are working to solve these cases and punish dangerous perpetrators.

Episodic versus thematic framing

Even though both stories use episodic framing, the 2019 *Plain Dealer* story has one sentence that broadens the detailed singular case into a larger thematic story: “It was a stark example of how rape kit testing and new investigations could unearth serial rape patterns in decades-old cases that often merited little attention or investigation from police when first reported” (“Suspect ID’d, Charged”). This sentence is loaded with information. First, the word “example” signals to the reader that this is one episodic story of many, across not only Ohio, but

potentially the country. The detail, “cases that often merited little attention of investigation from the police when first reported,” tells the reader that these cases of sexual violence were originally not handled thoroughly by police. However, as described in the 2019 *Plain Dealer* story, with increased rape kit testing and investigations done by police, these cases can still be solved, even if they are solved decades after the crime occurred.

After the 2021 *ABC News* story covers three separate cold cases, it returns to discussing the genealogical testing grant and speaks only on how the grant has affected investigations in Cleveland. In the sentence “The three men identified by the G.O.L.D. Unit so far are among the top 20 'most wanted' DNA profiles selected after an 'extensive review' process that considered serial offenders, stranger sexual assaults and other relevant facts, the prosecutor's office said,” the reader is shown that the three men identified in Cleveland are three of many, and three of 20 dangerous rapists. This one sentence, similar to the *Plain Dealer*'s detail, does expand the scope of the reader's understanding of the story to beyond the episodic crimes of the three identified rapists.

Language

The 2019 *Plain Dealer* uses active language with the perpetrator as the subject of sentences, while avoiding the overuse of words like “alleged” and “accused” even though at the time, he had not been convicted. “The man led her to an abandoned house on Churchill Avenue where he forced her to take off her clothes and sexually assaulted her repeatedly, she reported” (“Suspect ID'd, Charged”). The use of the words “forced” and “sexually assaulted” both emphasize that this was an attack and it was by force, and use of the attribution “she reported” eliminated the need for repeated modifiers to show that this claim has not been proven in court.

The story of this specific survivor in the 2019 *Plain Dealer* story is expanded upon when it describes how she escaped the man. In the next sentences, the survivor is the subject of the sentences, and it also shows that the man was hospitalized, and could have been caught in that moment but was not. “She heard a group of her friends walking by the house, and she screamed for help. The man fled and the group of friends chased him, then beat him up so badly he was hospitalized” (“Suspect ID’d, Charged”).

Watson committed another crime many years later, which showed how Watson, or John “Countdown” Doe, still was committing acts of sexual violence. “That case involved a teen who was helping Watson with a chore for the church they attended. Watson, who drove the church’s van, stopped at his house to change clothes and came out of his room naked from the waist down, fondling himself, the teen reported. He then gave her \$20 and told her not to tell anyone, according to the police report” (“Suspect ID’d, Charged”). Again, this part of the story uses active language with Watson as the subject of the sentence, which effectively portrays how unsettling and gross it was that he did.

The 2019 *Plain Dealer* uses extensive active language when describing the suspect, John “Countdown” Doe, and the actions taken by the survivors in fighting back against the perpetrator.

Here are some examples of the use of active language (“Suspect ID’d, Charged”):

- “John “Countdown” Doe stalked Cleveland’s East Side decades ago, ambushing young girls and attacking them in blighted backyards, vacant houses or wooded areas.” In this example, “Countdown” Doe is the subject of the sentence with active language, so he is attributed responsibility for his actions.

- “The Cuyahoga County Sexual Assault Kit Task Force has reviewed more than 7,000 Cleveland and suburban rape cases, with about 1,200 cases left to investigated.” This example uses active language in describing the task force, giving the task force responsibility for reviewing the rape cases.
- “She told police she’d gotten off an RTA bus near East 105th and Superior Avenue ...” The “she” in this example is one of “Countdown” Doe’s victims.
- “About a month later, a city prosecutor declined to issue charges against Watson.”
- “The state lab found DNA in the kit but not enough to enter into combined state and federal databases.”
- “Watson, who drove the church’s van, stopped at his house to change clothes and came out of his room naked from the waist down, fondling himself, the teen reported.”

In all of the examples of using active voice, the author indiscriminately gives responsibility to the subject of the sentence’s actions. Because of this, the individuals in authority are responsible for the work they’ve done to fight sexual violence and the mistakes they’ve made in investigations equally. Watson is responsible for his actions in committing crimes of sexual assault. Watson’s victims are empowered when their actions in fighting Watson, reporting to the police as well as calling for help.

There are many social actors involved in the *ABC News* story, including the three suspects, Leo Bradley Scott III, Rayshawn Hundley, and Thomas Graham. The descriptions of the suspect’s attacks also include the survivors of their attacks, making them social actors in the story. However, the only sources used in the story are those in authority of being prosecutors or people related to the Sexual Assault Kit Task Force. The goal of the story is simply to provide

information on the people who are suspects of committing crimes of sexual assault. However, there is a potential of bias in the portrayal of the story because the sources are all law enforcement.

The language ABC News 5 in the 2021 story used to discuss the perpetrators has extensive use of words such as alleged and uses sentence construction to place blame and responsibility on the survivors.

The writer first mentioned perpetrator Leo Bradly Scott III. “The prosecutor’s office said Scott is accused of raping a 22-year-old woman in Cleveland on Oct. 14, 1994. Authorities say the woman was walking on Euclid Avenue when she was grabbed, dragged to another location and sexually assaulted. / Four years later, on April 18, 1998, Scott then allegedly raped a 26-year-old woman who was walking home from a club in East Cleveland. Authorities say the man pulled up to her and offered her a ride. When she refused, he grabbed her and dragged her into his car, went to a nearby parking lot and raped her” (Scofield).

Interestingly, the report uses attributions multiple times that could eliminate the need for using alleged in sentences “The prosecutor’s office said” and “Authorities say.” While the sentence “The prosecutor’s office said Scott is accused ...” does make appropriate use of the word of accused as it is an indirect quote, the following use of the word “allegedly” is unneeded and creates doubt that the crime occurred. In the later sentences, when Scott’s other actions are described, there is no use of the word alleged or accused. Even though the subject of the paragraphs is Scott, he is eliminated from one of the sentences through the use of passive voice. “... the woman was walking on Euclid Avenue when she was grabbed, dragged to another location and sexually assaulted” (Scofield).

The writer named another perpetrator, Rayshawn Hundley. The paragraph describing Hundley and his attack uses “accused” without any attribution to a source. “Hundley is accused of breaking into a house on Dec. 31, 1995 and raping a 16-year-old girl who was sleeping at her aunt’s house on Cleveland’s East Side and was home alone. He left after stealing a VCR and cassette tapes” (Scofield).

Thirdly, the writer identified Thomas Graham, who assaulted three women. “Graham is accused of raping a 25-year-old woman on June 7, 1994, that he met two weeks prior. Authorities say the victim met up with Graham for a ride and once in the car, he drove to an alley and assaulted her at knife-point. / The second case he’s a suspect in happened on Nov. 24, 1994. Authorities say a 20-year-old woman was walking home in Cleveland when the suspect forced her into his car, drove to another location and assaulted her. / The third case happened on Aug. 30, 1998. According to the prosecutor’s office, Graham sexually assaulted a 27-year-old woman when she got into his car and then later stole \$40 from her. A bystander who heard her screaming called police” (Scofield).

The first survivor is given undo responsibility for what occurred through making her the subject of the sentence “Authorities say the victim met up with Graham for a ride ...” and while Graham is then the subject of the attack, such a phrase can easily be viewed by the public as responsibility as she “met up” with the perpetrator. The third survivor’s story was reported with the language recommended to be used when describing a sexual assault case. There is no use of the words accused or alleged, and Graham is the subject of the sentence describing the assault. “The third case happened on Aug. 30, 1998. According to the prosecutor’s office, Graham sexually assaulted a 27-year-old woman when she got into his car and then later stole \$40 from her. A bystander who heard her screaming called police” (Scofield).

When using attributions for information, the 2021 *ABC News* story places the attribution at the beginning of the sentence frequently when referring to the crimes of sexual violence. This also emphasizes that the authorities are reporting the information rather than putting focus on the crime of sexual violence itself.

Here are some examples when the attribution of “Authorities say” is placed at the beginning of sentences describes crimes of sexual violence (Scofield):

- “Authorities say the woman was walking on Euclid Avenue when she was grabbed, dragged to another location and sexually assaulted.”
- “Authorities say the victim met up with Graham for a ride and once in the car, he drove to an alley and assaulted her at knife-point.”
- “Authorities say a 20-year-old woman was walking home in Cleveland when the suspect forced her into his car, drove to another location and assaulted her.”

The use of the “Authorities say” attribution in these sentences also indicate that the reporter could be directly sourcing from police reports or language used by police sources without seeking out other sources to verify the information. As mentioned in the previous case study, journalists relying too heavily on law enforcement sources for comment when reporting on stories of sexual violence can mean the story is not comprehensively told as it relies on one perspective. Similarly, relying on law enforcement exclusively for facts on a sexual violence crime only gives information to tell the story law enforcement saw. The use of additional sources to verify and supplement the story can give a more accurate picture of the events that occurred.

Statistics

Statistics were also used in the 2019 *Plain Dealer* story about the Cleveland angle for the rape kit testing: “Since then, a special task force has identified more than 800 serial rape suspects” and “The Cuyahoga County Sexual Assault Kit Task Force has reviewed more than 7,000 Cleveland and suburban rape cases, with about 1,200 cases left to investigate” (“Suspect ID’d, Charged”). These statistical details give the reader additional context to the scope of the rape kit testing initiative, and how the results the initiative had at the time of the story being published.

The 2021 *ABC News* story did not include any statistics.

Analysis

The 2021 *ABC News* article focused on describing the possible perpetrators of sexual violence and that they were entering the criminal justice system, potentially getting off the street where they could be causing more harm to individuals. However, the vast majority of instances in which these individuals were described in the story, they were referred to using passive voice when describing their assault, which diminishes the responsibility of the perpetrator in the action of assault. The overuse of “accused” and “alleged” in this story also increases skepticism on whether or not the actions occurred.

On the other hand, the 2019 *Plain Dealer* story included specific details about instances of sexual violence crimes perpetrated by Watson and avoided using language or sentence structure that would increase skepticism of the survivors.

The 2021 *ABC News* story mostly conveyed information about three suspects of crimes of sexual violence, but did include a thematic framing by explaining the wider genealogical

initiative's efforts to target dangerous rape suspects outside of Ohio. The 2019 *Plain Dealer* story highlighted the impact of one specific perpetrator, Watson, explained why he had not been caught for so long, and showed the impact of him being free and unpunished. This story also empowered survivors through the use of active language when describing how they fought against their attacker and tried to work with police.

Both stories did heavily rely on sources from law enforcement. As described in the literature review, the police department and authority figures investigating sexual violence crimes are potentially biased sources with their own interpretations of events and perceptions warped by rape myths. Both stories could have utilized a more diverse range of sources.

Conclusion

News media affect how sexual violence is perceived and treated in society, from societal beliefs in rape myths, to the perpetuation of rape culture, to criminal investigations and trials, as described in the literature review. As shown in the literature review, the use of thematic versus episodic framing influences how an audience will perceive responsibility for an act of sexual violence. Also, there are many rape myths such as victim blaming and empathy for the perpetrator that journalists can perpetuate based on the details and language they choose to include in a story. Because of this, there are best practices that journalists are supposed to follow in conducting their reporting and writing of stories to limit the harm caused to the source and avoid perpetuating misunderstandings about sexual violence.

Best practices for journalists stem from an understanding of trauma-informed care, which is treating a source with sensitivity and empathy regarding the effects that trauma has on the individual physically, emotionally, and psychologically. Journalists are recommended by guides from Femifesto, the Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma, and the Ohio Alliance to End Sexual Violence to ensure a survivor of sexual violence is given informed consent in working with media, continually giving a survivor the opportunity to back out of the story and write up the story with heightened sensitivity toward language. Some of the language recommendations in the guides and training include avoiding excessive use of words such as accused and alleged, writing in active voice especially when referring to the assault, and giving the source agency over how they are referred to in the story.

Based on these best practices, understanding of rape myths, as well as framing and discourse analysis, I developed a set of analytical tools to analyze news article case studies. I noted the social actors and social actions involved to analyze the use of language around the

actors and whether they were included or had use of passivation. I noted the themes and goals of the story and the details in the stories that indicated those themes and goals. Then, I looked for thematic framing and whether there were details in the story that expanded the otherwise episodic stories to a thematic frame. I made note of any rape myths that were present in the stories and whether they were disproven by the author, as well as how drugs were referenced in the story explicitly and how they were discussed. I also analyzed how statistics were used, if at all, and whether a broad range of sources were used in the stories.

The first two news articles analyzed were published in *CBS News* and *The Plain Dealer* in 2011 after the rape testing initiative began. *CBS News* and *The Plain Dealer* wrote about how the initiative displayed mistakes made by law enforcement in Ohio handling rape kits of victims of Anthony Sowell. The reporting showed Sowell could have been caught sooner if law enforcement had properly handled the evidence and investigated the cases.

Based on the analysis of the 2011 *CBS News* and *Plain Dealer* stories, I concluded that police report language should be modified when written up by journalists to contain active language instead of passive language. Also, news outlets also use passive language when referring to actors besides the perpetrator, such as law enforcement, which diminishes the emphasis on their responsibility for their actions in investigations. Both stories contained examples of journalists using active language to discuss law enforcement in a positive or negative light. Because of the use of active language linking an actor to the responsibility of their actions, I conclude using active language when discussing law enforcement attributes for both their success and failings.

In 2013, *Fox 8* published a story about the indictment of a serial rapist incriminated with evidence from the rape kit initiative. In 2014, *The Plain Dealer* published a story about the same

rapist facing sentencing for his attacks. In the comparison of these stories, *The Plain Dealer*'s use of more sourcing from survivors, and the use of quotes from those survivors, created a thematic framing in the story and portrayed a more thorough understanding of the nature of sexual violence in its harm to survivors. The *Fox 8* story's heavy reliance on law enforcement and political sources indicated a missed opportunity to seek out survivor-centered sources to provide additional angles and perspectives in the story.

A decade after the rape kit initiative began, serial rapists were still being caught by investigators thanks to the testing of rape kits. *ABC News* published a story in 2021 detailing the crimes of three serial rapists caught from the efforts of a genealogical testing grant and the rape kit testing initiative. The *ABC News* story had an overuse of qualifiers, such as alleged, which created doubt whether the assault occurred. In 2019, the *Plain Dealer* published an in-depth story on how one serial rapist, previously unknown to police, evaded police due to the cases and reports being poorly investigated. Both stories were able to include thematic framing because of sentences that indicated to the reader serial rapists and stories such as these were occurring in Ohio and all over the country.

Due to this thesis being a case study analysis, with the stories only from Cleveland relating to one specific event, the findings cannot be generalized. However, the stories contain instructive examples of both exemplary reporting on sexual violence and avoidable errors that should be corrected to better report on sexual violence.

Based on my analysis, I have identified a tendency in news stories to write in a passive voice when discussing many different social actors and social actions, not just when discussing perpetrators. As explained in the literature review, writing in passive voice unintentionally does not convey responsibility as effectively and clearly to the reader. Journalists reporting on sexual

violence, as well as any other subjects, can more effectively convey responsibility and action attribution by writing in active voice.

I found that all of the stories incorporated thematic framing in the telling of an episodic story. While I did not analyze any stories that only incorporated thematic framing, I identified many instances in which the reporter used thematic framing by including as little as one sentence to draw the audience's attention to the fact the episodic incident was not the only instance of sexual violence or handling of a sexual violence case across the country.

Overall, I find it notable that local media outlets in Cleveland reported and continue to report about the backlog and testing of rape kits. Because of this reporting and the statewide and nationwide attention it created, government agencies and nonprofits pushed for the country to test backlogged rape kits. The continual reporting of these stories for more than a decade signals to government agencies that journalists are still monitoring and holding agencies accountable to promises made when they discovered the backlog of rape kits.

Finally, all stories showed the opportunity for victim advocates and experts on sexual violence to speak on these types of stories. All of the stories also necessarily relied heavily on police reports for facts of the case, and when reporters directly cited the victims, they were speaking in court. The additional comment of victim advocates and experts on sexual violence would offer another perspective on the case beside the police's interpretation.

Reflections

Originally, I attempted to use analysis on sexual violence reporting that was written in the form of magazine articles. However, magazine articles report stories in a very different way,

often with more of an angle and message going into the story rather than just telling the facts of a specific story. Thus, the goals of magazine stories made them unsuitable for my type of analysis.

However, through the analysis of these news stories, I learned to consider the impact of reporting the facts of news stories more carefully. Magazine articles and opinion articles are able to use a more editorial lens in their reporting, which signals to the reader the goal of the articles. News articles are meant to inform a reader about the facts of a story. Because of that, I wasn't sure how thematic framing could show up in news articles effectively. However, I learned ways that episodic stories could also use thematic framing, even if the reporter is constrained by time and space.

I also think that many of the considerations in sexual violence reporting can be applied to the reporting of stories that are beyond sexual violence, especially in the treatment of sources who have been traumatized by an event. From reporting about mass shootings and accidents, to covering natural disasters and wars, journalists are frequently exposed to and dealing with traumatic events. Many of the lessons taken from these case studies and guides can be applied to those events.

Works Cited

Aroustamian, Camille. "Time's up: Recognising Sexual Violence as a Public Policy Issue: A Qualitative Content Analysis of Sexual Violence Cases and the Media." *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, vol. 50, Jan. 2020.

Basile, Kathleen C et al. "Chronic Diseases, Health Conditions, and Other Impacts Associated With Rape Victimization of U.S. Women." *Journal of interpersonal violence* vol. 36,23-24 (2021): NP12504-NP12520. doi:10.1177/0886260519900335

Benedict, Helen. *Virgin or Vamp: How the Press Covers Sex Crimes*. New York, Oxford University Press, Inc., 1992.

Bishop, Kyla. "A Reflection on the History of Sexual Assault Laws in the United States." *The Arkansas Journal of Social Change and Public Service*, 20 Apr. 2019, <https://ualr.edu/socialchange/2018/04/15/reflection-history-sexual-assault-laws-united-states/>.

Bronfenbrenner, Urie. "Toward an Experimental Ecology of Human Development." *American Psychologist*, vol. 32, no. 7, July 1977, p. 513–531.

CDC. (n.d.). *Preventing sexual violence - centers for disease control and prevention*. Violence Prevention, 20 January

2023, <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/sexualviolence/index.html>

Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma. "Reporting on Sexual Violence." *Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma*, 15 July 2011, 5 March 2023,

<https://dartcenter.org/content/reporting-on-sexual-violence>.

Dissell, Rachel. "More Questions Arise on Handling of 2009 Rape Case Tied to Sowell Cleveland Heights Detective's Memo Adds to Confusion." *Plain Dealer, The (Cleveland, OH)*, 17 Aug. 2011.

Dissell, Rachel. "Steele, 61, Gets 65 Years for Rapes Rape Kits from '90s Provided Evidence." *Plain Dealer, The (Cleveland, OH)*, 22 Feb. 2014, p. 003.

Dissell, Rachel. "Suspect ID'd, Charged in 7 Decades-Old Rape Cases Rape Case John 'Countdown' Doe Found in Nursing Home." *Plain Dealer, The (Cleveland, OH)*, 13 Oct. 2019, p. 001.

Dissell, Rachel. "Trauma-Informed Interviewing & Reporting on Sexual Violence: A Training for Journalists." Ohio Alliance to End Sexual Violence, 23 Nov 2022, 5 Dec 2023

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vhfbG615-kk>

End the Backlog. “An Interview with Rachel Dissell and Leila Atassi.” *Endthebacklog.org*, 25 Apr. 2014, 23 Feb 2023 <https://www.endthebacklog.org/blog/an-interview-with-rachel-dissell-and-leila-atassi/>.

End the Backlog. “What Is a Rape Kit and Forensic Medical Examination?” *Endthebacklog.org*, 25 Feb. 2023 <https://www.endthebacklog.org/what-is-the-backlog/what-is-a-rape-kit-and-rape-kit-exam/>.

Entman, Robert M. “Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm.” *Journal of Communication*, Dec. 1993, vol. 43, no. 4, p. 51–58.

FBI. “Summary for NIBRS 2019.” *FBI*, FBI, 10 Nov. 2020, 5 Dec. 2023, <https://ucr.fbi.gov/nibrs/2019>.

Femifesto. “Use the Right Words: Media Reporting on Sexual Violence in Canada.” *Femifesto*, 2015, 24 Feb. 2023 <http://www.femifesto.ca/media-guide/use-the-right-words/>.

Fifner, Sophia. "Trauma-Informed Interviewing & Reporting on Sexual Violence: A Training for Journalists." *Ohio Alliance to End Sexual Violence*, 10 Nov. 2022, 28 Nov. 2022.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fH6k2UaLrsI>.

Glasser, M et al. "Cycle of child sexual abuse: links between being a victim and becoming a perpetrator." *The British journal of psychiatry : the journal of mental science* vol. 179 (2001). p. 482-494. doi:10.1192/bjp.179.6.482

Given, L. M. "Case study." *SAGE encyclopedia of qualitative research methods*. SAGE Publications, Inc. p. 68-71. <https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412963909.n39>

Gjika, Anna. "New Media, Old Paradigms: News Representations of Technology in Adolescent Sexual Assault." *Crime, Media, Culture*, vol. 16, no. 3, Dec. 2020, p. 415–430.

Gourarie, Chava. "How an Ohio Reporter Helped Convict More than 100 Rapists." *Columbia Journalism Review*, 2 Sept. 2015, https://www.cjr.org/local_news/rape_kit_reporting.php.

Gran, Brian; Waltz, Margaret; and Caporale, Lacey. "Interview with Rachel Dissell - The Cleveland Rape Kit Case" (2016). *Societies Without Borders Podcasts*.
https://scholarlycommons.law.case.edu/swb_podcasts/1

Hargitay, Mariska, and Trish Adelsic. *I Am Evidence*. HBO, 2017, 20 Feb. 2023,
<https://www.iamevidencethemovie.com/>.

“A Health Equity Approach to Preventing Sexual Violence.” *National Sexual Violence Resource Center*, 16 June 2021, 23 March 2022. <https://www.nsvrc.org/resource/2500/health-equity-approach-preventing-sexual-violence>.

Heisig, Eric. “Cleveland Serial Killer Anthony Sowell Dies of Terminal Illness in Prison Hospital.” *Cleveland.com*, Cleveland.com, 9 Feb. 2021,
<https://www.cleveland.com/crime/2021/02/cleveland-serial-killer-anthony-sowell-dies-of-terminal-illness-in-prison-hospital.html>.

Holmes, M M et al. “Rape-related pregnancy: estimates and descriptive characteristics from a national sample of women.” *American journal of obstetrics and gynecology* vol. 175,2 (1996): 320-4; discussion 324-5. doi:10.1016/s0002-9378(96)70141-2

Holt, Lanier Frush, and Lesa Hatley Major. “Frame and Blame: An Analysis of How National and Local Newspapers Framed the Jena Six Controversy.” *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, vol. 87, no. 3–4, Sept. 2010, p. 582–597.

Indiana University. "What Is Consent?" *Stop Sexual Violence*,
<https://stopsexualviolence.iu.edu/policies-terms/consent.html>.

Investigative Reporters & Editors. "Behind the Story: Two Cleveland Reporters Raise the Issue of Rape Kits That Sat Untested for 20 Years." *Investigative Reporters & Editors*, 9 Oct. 2013, <https://www.ire.org/behind-the-story-two-cleveland-reporters-raise-the-issue-of-rape-kits-that-sat-untested-for-20-years/>.

Iyengar, Shanto. "Framing Responsibility for Political Issues: The Case of Poverty." *Political Behavior*, vol. 12, no. 1, Mar. 1990, p. 19–40.

Jamieson, Kathleen Hall. *Beyond the Double Bind: Women and Leadership*. Oxford University Press, 1995.

Kohlbacher, Florian. "The Use of Qualitative Content Analysis in Case Study Research." *Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, p. 1-30. 2006.

Li, J. Y., et al. "'I Believe What I See': College Students' Use of Media, Issue Engagement, and Perceived Responsibility Regarding Campus Sexual Assault." *Journal of Health Communication*, vol. 22, no. 9, p. 772–782.

Loreno, Darcie. “1st Indictments Filed after Increased Rape Kit Testing.” *Fox 8 Cleveland WJW*, Fox 8 Cleveland WJW, 15 Mar. 2013, <https://fox8.com/news/first-2-indictments-filed-after-increased-rape-kit-testing/>.

Lovell, Rachel. ““Trauma-Informed Interviewing & Reporting on Sexual Violence: A Training for Journalists.”” *Ohio Alliance to End Sexual Violence*. 10 Nov. 2022, 28 Nov. 2022. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9oFp8l41E3o&t=78s>

Martins, Nicole, et al. “What the Public ‘Knows’ About Media Effects Research: The Influence of News Frames on Perceived Credibility and Belief Change.” *Journal of Communication*, vol. 68, no. 1, Feb. 2018, p. 98–119.

Matthes, Jörg, and Matthias Kohring. “The Content Analysis of Media Frames: Toward Improving Reliability and Validity.” *Journal of Communication*, vol. 58, no. 2, June 2008, pp. 258–79.

Matthes, J. “What’s in a Frame? A Content Analysis of Media Framing Studies in the World’s Leading Communication Journals, 1990-2005.” *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, vol. 86, no. 2, 1 June 2009. 17 Apr. 2022. p. 349–367.

McVey, Laura, et al. "The Structural Oppression of Women by Markets: The Continuum of Sexual Violence and the Online Pornography Market." *Journal of Marketing Management*, vol. 37, no. 1/2, Feb. 2021, p. 40–67.

Merrefield, Clark. "How They Did It: A Reporter-Researcher Partnership Deepens Public Understanding of Untested Rape Kits in Cleveland." *The Journalist's Resource*, 19 May 2021, <https://journalistsresource.org/media/partnership-reporter-researcher-cleveland-rape-kits/>.

Monika Johnson Hostler & Moira O'Neil, et al. "Reframing Sexual Violence: From #Metoo to Time's up (SSIR)." *Stanford Social Innovation Review: Informing and Inspiring Leaders of Social Change*, 17 Apr. 2018, 17 Apr. 2023.
https://ssir.org/articles/entry/reframing_sexual_violence_from_metoo_to_times_up.

O, Boyle, J., and Q. J. Y. Li. "#MeToo Is Different for College Students: Media Framing of Campus Sexual Assault, Its Causes, and Proposed Solutions." *Newspaper Research Journal*, vol. 40, no. 4, 14 Aug. 2019, 14 March 2022. p. 431–450.

"Oppression & Sexual Violence." *Oppression & Sexual Violence | Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape (PCAR)*, 2022. 16 March 2022. <https://pcar.org/about-sexual-violence/oppression-sexual-violence>.

ORC Section 2907.01. “Section 2907.01: Sex Offenses General Definitions.” *Section 2907.01 - Ohio Revised Code* | *Ohio Laws*, 4 Apr. 2023, <https://codes.ohio.gov/ohio-revised-code/section-2907.01/4-4-2023>.

Pennington, Rosemary, and Jessica Birthisel. “When New Media Make News: Framing Technology and Sexual Assault in the Steubenville Rape Case.” *New Media & Society*, vol. 18, no. 11, Dec. 2016, p. 2435–2451.

“The Social Ecological Model.” *Prevention*, 26 March 2022.
<https://www.wcsap.org/prevention/concepts/social-ecological-model>.

Spencer, Chelsea M., et al. “Risk Markers for Male Perpetration of Sexual Assault on College Campuses: A Meta-Analysis.” *Trauma, Violence & Abuse*, May 2022, p. 15248380221097436.

Strickler, Laura. “Serial Killer Convicted, but Botched Case Holds Lessons for Police.” *CBS News*, CBS Interactive, 26 July 2011, 28 Feb. 2023.
<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/serial-killer-convicted-but-botched-case-holds-lessons-for-police/>.

“Rape Culture.” *Womens Gender Center*, 23 March 2022

<https://www.marshall.edu/wcenter/sexual-assault/rape-culture/>.

“Reporting on Sexual Violence.” *National Sexual Violence Resource Center*, 23 March 2022.

<https://www.nsvrc.org/sexual-violence-reporting-tools>.

SAKI. “About the National Sexual Assault Kit Initiative.” *SAKI Grantee Sites | Sexual Assault Kit Initiative (SAKI)*, <https://www.sakitta.org/about/>.

Salerno-Ferraro, Alisha C., et al. “Young Women’s Experiences With Technology-Facilitated Sexual Violence From Male Strangers.” *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, vol. 37, no. 19/20, Oct. 2022, p.17860-17885.

Scheufele, Dietram A., and David Tewksbury. “Framing, Agenda Setting, and Priming: The Evolution of Three Media Effects Models.” *Journal of Communication*, vol. 57, no. 1, Mar. 2007, p. 9–20.

“Sexual Harassment.” *US EEOC*, <https://www.eeoc.gov/sexual-harassment>.

Siefkes-Andrew, A. J. ., and C. Alexopoulos. "Framing Blame in Sexual Assault: An Analysis of Attribution in News Stories About Sexual Assault on College Campuses." *Violence Against Women*, vol. 25, no. 6, 24 Sep. 2018, 28 Mar. 2022. p. 743–762.

Scofield, Drew. "Cuyahoga Co. Prosecutor's Office: 3 Cold Case Rape Suspects Identified through Genealogical Testing." *News 5 Cleveland*, 28 Dec. 2021, <https://www.news5cleveland.com/news/local-news/cuyahoga-co-prosecutors-office-3-cold-case-rape-suspects-identified-through-genealogical-testing>.

Tierney, Dan, and Jill Del Greco. "Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine Announces Completion of Sexual Assault Kit Testing Initiative." *Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine Announces Completion of Sexual Assault Kit Testing Initiative - Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost*, 23 Feb. 2018, <https://www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/Media/News-Releases/February-2018/Ohio-Attorney-General-Mike-DeWine-Announces-Comple>.

Tjaden, Patricia, and Nancy Thoennes. *Full Report of the Prevalence, Incidence, and Consequences of Violence against Women*. Department of Justice, Nov. 2000, <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/183781.pdf>.

Van Leeuwen, Theo. *Discourse and Practice : New Tools for Critical Analysis*. Oxford University Press, 2008.

“Victims of Sexual Violence: Statistics.” *RAINN*, 2014, 3 March 2022.

<https://www.rainn.org/statistics/victims-sexual-violence>.

Wellman, Ashley, et al. “What’s Trending: #SexualAssault: An Exploratory Study of Social Media Coverage of Teen Sexual Assaults.” *Criminology, Criminal Justice, Law & Society*, vol. 18, no. 1, Apr. 2017, p. 88–105.

The White House. “Fact Sheet: Investments to Reduce the National Rape Kit Backlog and Combat Violence against Women.” *National Archives and Records Administration*, National Archives and Records Administration, 16 Mar. 2015, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/03/16/fact-sheet-investments-reduce-national-rape-kit-backlog-and-combat-viole>.

Willis, Malachi, and Kristen N. Jozkowski. “Barriers to the Success of Affirmative Consent Initiatives: An Application of the Social Ecological Model.” *American Journal of Sexuality Education*, vol. 13, no. 3, Jan. 2018, p. 324–336.

Zhong, Linda R., et al. "An Exploratory Study of Technology-Facilitated Sexual Violence in Online Romantic Interactions: Can the Internet's Toxic Disinhibition Exacerbate Sexual Aggression?" *Computers in Human Behavior*, vol. 108, July 2020.