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‘It takes a brave woman to speak up’*

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Abstract

Workplace sexual harassment allegations against high-profile men attract considerable public and media scrutiny. The ensuing investigation, whether it be conducted internally by the employer or through the judicial system, provides an opportunity for the media to frame the case in such a way as to generate public debate about the credibility of the allegations, as well as the credibility of the accuser and the accused. Media focus on an individual case also undermines the opportunity for wider public discussion about how to address and overcome systemic and cultural issues that allow sexual harassment to occur in the workplace. Feminist scholars have consistently identified trends in media reporting where the character, behaviour and motives of the female accuser are questioned. Research has also uncovered specific frames applied by the media to undermine her credibility and reinforce outdated societal attitudes about gender dynamics in the workplace. The extent to which #MeToo (Milano 2017), which encouraged women to bypass traditional media and publicly share their experiences of workplace sexual harassment in their own words on social media, has changed the traditional media’s framing of women remains a gap in current Australian media studies. This study examines if persistent, long-term trends exist in NewsCorp’s framing of women or if #MeToo has contributed to changes in its representation of women who accuse men of workplace sexual harassment.

* The title is taken from an article by Selena Steele in *The Daily Telegraph* (2018, Jan 12) ‘Here’s to brave men and women who speak up’.

Introduction

In 2010, Kristy Fraser-Kirk lodged the largest sexual harassment lawsuit in Australian legal history against David Jones' Chief Executive Officer, Mark McInnes, and the David Jones board for failing to protect her as their employee from McInnes' sexual advances. The lawsuit presented an opportunity for broader public discussion of the extent to which the allegations represented a systemic issue of workplace sexual harassment experienced by women. Instead, the lawsuit amount, David Jones' reputation as a popular Australian fashion retailer and McInnes' high public profile, provided appealing elements for ongoing media commentary and speculation, with several media publications focused on questioning Fraser-Kirk's motives, future career prospects and mental health (Fife-Yeomans, 2010a; Moran, J. 2010; Moran, S., 2010). While the lawsuit uncovered further claims of sexual harassment against McInnes (Fife-Yeomans, 2010b), the lawsuit's resolution within three months largely concluded broader media interest, suggesting Fraser-Kirk's claims were an isolated incident.

Changes in how both traditional and social media reported on and discussed workplace sexual harassment, emerged in 2017 when *The New York Times* and *New Yorker* published several allegations of sexual harassment and assault against movie producer, Harvey Weinstein (Farrow, 2017; Kantor & Twohey, 2017). Weinstein's reputation as a successful entertainment identity provoked an immediate public response globally, including a tweet by actress Alyssa Milano (Milano, 2017). The tweet invited women to share the #MeToo hashtag and bypass traditional media to report experiences of sexual harassment and assault. The hashtag's global popularity (Anderson & Toor, 2018) led to a significant increase in the number of men accused of sexual harassment globally, often involving high-profile men across a range of industries, including the media, arts, and sport (Carey, 2018; Horowitz, 2018). Sexual harassment allegations against actor, Craig McLachlan, was one of several high-profile cases to emerge in Australia's media and entertainment industries (Spicer, 2018). This research will examine if the #MeToo social movement, as an example of social media discourse, has influenced changes in the traditional news media's framing of women in its reporting of high-profile sexual harassment cases.

To date, while research has examined media framing of women in relation to sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence within the Australian media context (Royal, 2019; Nagar, 2016; Waterhouse-Watson, 2016; Galdi et al., 2014; Judd & Eastel, 2013; McDonald & Charlesworth, 2013; Bennett, 2012; Dwyer et al., 2012; O'Hara, 2012; Toffoletti, 2007; Alat, 2006), it is yet to consider either the emergence of long-term trends in media framing of women or the extent to which #MeToo has changed such framing. Australian media studies have typically been restricted to a select number of high-profile cases, including the David Jones case (Judd & Eastel, 2013; McDonald & Charlesworth, 2013; Dwyer et al., 2012; Eastel et al., 2011), and media reports concerning sexual assault allegations against male sporting celebrities (Waterhouse-Watson, 2016; 2012; 2009; Lonie & Toffoletti, 2012; Toffoletti, 2007). The extent to which #MeToo has changed the traditional media's framing of women, therefore, remains a gap in current Australian media studies.

I will address this gap by conducting a mixed method (quantitative and qualitative) content analysis of a broad selection of newspaper headlines, articles and Op-Ed commentaries from NewsCorp publications – Australia's largest media company (Goldsmith, 2013). The comparative analysis of NewsCorp's coverage of the David Jones and McLachlan cases is consistent with Hertog and McLeod's (2001) advice that analysing the evolution of a frame should involve content analysis from more than one time period, providing opportunity to compare how the frame is applied. For the purposes of my research, the comparative analysis allows for the opportunity to identify if long-term trends exist in NewsCorp's framing of high-profile sexual harassment cases.

This study will apply framing theory, which Entman (1993) defines as the selection and presentation of specific pieces of information with the intent of influencing an audience's moral evaluation or judgement of a particular reality. In its reporting of workplace sexual harassment, often it is the female accuser whose character, behaviour and motives are publicly questioned, with the media applying specific frames to undermine her credibility and reinforce outdated societal attitudes about gender dynamics in the workplace.

A qualitative feminist analysis of specific frames used by NewsCorp will reveal the extent to which these frames continue to reinforce particular beliefs about gender relations in the workplace, as well as persistent gender biases in the media. In doing so, I will build on existing knowledge by analysing media framing of women within a new context. Research outcomes will not only be informative for scholars examining media's representation of women in the post-#MeToo era, but will also build awareness within the Australian media industry of persistent trends in its reporting and framing of women who accuse men of sexual harassment.

Research question

Has #MeToo changed how NewsCorp frames women in its reporting of high-profile workplace sexual harassment cases?

Literature review

Overall, the central purpose of the literature has been to analyse the media's role in both perpetuating and influencing public perceptions and attitudes about sexual violence against women. The underlying contributing factors, causes and effects of the media's reporting reveal the literature's key debates. In this context, numerous studies have been conducted into how the media represents women in its reporting of sexual violence (including Royal, 2019; Nagar, 2016; Waterhouse-Watson, 2016; Galdi et al., 2014; Judd & Eastel, 2013; McDonald & Charlesworth, 2013; Bennett, 2012; Dwyer et al., 2012; O'Hara, 2012; Toffoletti, 2007; Alat, 2006). Several authors examine the extent to which media framing directly influences broader societal attitudes about women and sexual violence (Wright, 2016; Eastel et al., 2015; Galdi et al., 2014; Judd & Eastel, 2013; Bennett, 2012; O'Hara, 2012; Toffoletti, 2007). Some of the research narrows

this argument to specifically focus on the extent to which the media engages in victim blaming (Royal, 2019; Blumell & Miglena, 2018; Brigley Thomson, 2017; Waterhouse-Watson, 2016; Bonnes, 2013; Alat, 2006).

The reasons for persistent media framing of female accusers of workplace sexual harassment are also examined in the literature, citing gender inequality in the media industry as a key barrier (Blumell, 2017; Fadnis, 2017; Toffoletti, 2007). Its focus on reporting of high-profile sexual harassment cases at the expense of non-high-profile cases is considered a factor in public perceptions of workplace sexual harassment as an individual rather than systemic societal issue (McDonald & Charlesworth, 2013; Lonie & Toffoletti, 2012; O'Hara, 2012).

While there is broad scholarly acceptance of links between media's reinforcement of myths concerning sexual violence against women and general societal attitudes (Hegarty et al., 2018; Lockyer & Sevigny, 2018; Nagar, 2016; Eastal et al., 2015; Galdi et al., 2014; McDonald & Charlesworth, 2013; Bennett, 2012; O'Hara, 2012; Toffoletti, 2007; Alat, 2006), the extent to which this argument is supported by new, conclusive evidence varies widely. Sutherland et al. (2016) support the contention that 'the link between media reporting and behaviour is not well-established' (p. 34). Morgan and Politoff (2012) also argue that while media coverage is an important factor, the extent to which a direct causal relationship with public opinion exists is not yet proven. Judd and Eastel (2013) and O'Hara (2012) conclude that potential links may exist, without examining the extent to which such framing actually directly influences public opinion. The link between media framing of women and sexual violence, and men's attitudes in particular, is more substantial in studies conducted by Hegarty et al. (2018); Wright and Tokunaga (2016); Galdi et al. (2014). In positing the argument that the media is a key influencer of public opinion, the literature typically concludes the media to be a driver of societal attitudes about women and sexual violence, with several authors identifying the opportunity for the media to be an agent of change in such attitudes (Eastel et al., 2015; Galdi et al., 2014; Dwyer et al., 2012; Alat, 2006).

The emergence of social media provided individuals with a public forum to share uncensored views. This presents an opportunity to broaden the research field and examine the relationship between societal attitudes and the media, and challenge assumptions that traditional media is driving, rather than reflecting, societal attitudes. In doing so, research can consider the extent to which the media assumes a passive and reactive role in its relationship with its consumers.

The role of media framing

While my research is focused on high-profile workplace sexual harassment cases, the literature review is broadened to include media coverage of a range of sexually violent behaviours against women. In doing so, the focus is less about the crime itself and more about how women are framed in the media's reporting of such crimes and its effects. The literature reveals how, irrespective of the specific nature of the crime, similar frames of women are adopted by the media, including victim blaming (Royal, 2019; Blumell & Miglena, 2018; Waterhouse-Watson, 2016; Bonnes, 2013; Alat, 2006) and a 'kill-joy' (Harrington,

2018; Brigley Thomson, 2017). In doing so, each frame seeks to question the accuser's credibility and the validity of her accusations, while reinforcing existing gender power dynamics, both within and outside the workplace.

My research will apply Entman's framing theory (1993), which posits that specific pieces of information are communicated in such a way as to influence the audience's moral evaluation and judgement of a particular reality. Hertog & McLeod (2001) further elaborate that frames carry 'tremendous symbolic power' (p. 142), reinforced by language choice and placement. A frame's development, according to Hertog & McLeod (2001) is based on a set of cultural beliefs to which certain myths, metaphors and narratives generate particular reactions by members of that culture. They further elaborate that essential to a frame's formation is its definition of what role each individual, group, organisation or institution has in the frame. Reese (2001) also argues that a frame's enduring power is in its repeated use, embedding the frame across a broad range of communicative texts. My application of the theory is consistent with the methodology adopted in the literature, which mainly concentrates its focus on frames adopted by traditional media, including newspapers (Royal, 2019; Waterhouse-Watson, 2016; Judd & Eastel, 2013; Bennett, 2012; O'Hara, 2012; Toffoletti, 2007; Alati, 2006), and to a lesser extent, television (Galdi et al., 2014; Waterhouse-Watson, 2012).

Recently, the widespread use of social media and its influence on traditional media framing is emerging as a new research field, aiming to present more conclusive evidence of the relationship between media framing of women and sexual violence and broader societal attitudes (Harrington, 2018; Moody-Ramirez, 2015). Applying framing theory will assist my research in establishing the extent to which the media's choice of language attempts to frame the accuser and the allegations in such a way as to elicit a particular emotional response by the reader. The effect of this response is to attempt to influence the reader's opinion about the case that is consistent with the media's own editorial views and journalistic biases. In doing so, the literature highlights that in relation to its reporting of sexual harassment, media framing has two key effects on its audience. Firstly, it seeks to influence opinion about a specific sexual harassment case and establishes journalistic and editorial preferences about how the allegations should be judged (Royal, 2019; Moody-Ramirez, 2015; Judd & Eastel, 2013; Eastel et al., 2011). Secondly, the persistent use of similar frames of women seeks to reinforce common societal misunderstandings about sexual misconduct and violence (Waterhouse-Watson, 2016; Bennett, 2012; Dwyer et al., 2012; Waterhouse-Watson, 2012; Toffoletti, 2007).

Continual use of the same frames also repeats the outdated myth of women's subordination to men in the workplace and in society (Wright, 2016; Eastel et al., 2015; Galdi et al., 2014; Bonnes, 2013; McDonald & Charlesworth, 2013; O'Hara, 2012; Waterhouse-Watson, 2009). These frames can be identified in the choice of language for news headlines about the accuser, which includes attempts to undermine the accuser's credibility. These headlines are complemented by news reports and Op-Eds that engage in victim blaming and reinforce power differentials between men and women in the workplace and in

society. This study will examine the extent to which these frames persist in newspaper headlines, articles and Op-Eds since the emergence of the #MeToo social movement, which challenged these frames.

Social media has allowed for significant changes in consumers' relationship with traditional media (Harrington, 2018; Moody-Ramirez, 2015). By conducting a comparative analysis of media framing of women in sexual harassment cases both prior to and following #MeToo, my research will support a fresh examination of the relationship between the media and societal attitudes within an Australian media context, and in particular the extent to which the #MeToo discussion, which comprised mainly female participants, has demonstrably altered media framing of women in its reporting of sexual harassment cases.

In drawing a link between the media's framing of women in its reporting of sexual violence and entrenched societal myths, some scholars consider the media's role in reinforcing perceptions about acceptable standards of behaviour for men and women. Applying a feminist critique, these scholars focus on the concept of 'victim blaming' whereby the media's reporting implies the accuser's behaviour is a contributing factor to the crime (Fadnis, 2017; Waterhouse-Watson, 2016; Bonnes, 2013). Harrington (2018) expands on this argument to argue victim blaming is linked to media language suggesting women who report sexual crimes against high-profile celebrities are 'killjoys', while Brigley Thomson (2017) links the concept of the female 'killjoy' to women being portrayed as 'agents of unhappiness' (p. 67).

My research will seek to add to this body of research within an Australian media context. I will examine the extent to which language used by NewsCorp that infers victimhood persists in its reporting. In doing so, I will seek to identify trends in Australian newspaper reporting that has the effect of undermining an accuser's credibility and the validity of her allegations.

Several authors argue persistent gender inequities within the media sector are a key contributor to media framing of sexual violence against women (Blumell, 2017; Fadnis, 2017; Toffoletti, 2007). While research indicates high rates of sexual harassment within the media sector (Corcione, 2018; Women in Media, 2016; North, 2007), the literature does not specifically link these rates to persistent trends in its framing of sexual violence against women. Toffoletti (2007) expands this point, highlighting the likelihood that female reporters adhere to their employer's editorial perspective and comply with reinforcing specific frames of women in their reporting. Toffoletti's perspective is particularly influential to my research, with the thesis' analysis not intended to include consideration of the reporter's gender as an influential or contributing factor in NewsCorp's framing of women.

Academics, including Waterhouse-Watson (2016) and Lonie and Toffoletti (2012), argue the media's choices in reporting high-profile sexual violence cases or cases that comprise unique circumstances is a contributing factor to how such cases are framed. My analysis of high-profile sexual harassment cases adds to this body of research, which posits that the reporting of high-profile cases is influential in shaping societal attitudes to non high-profile cases. McDonald and

Charlesworth (2013), Morgan and Politoff (2012) and O'Hara (2012) also argue the media's selection of such cases frames the violence as an individual act, rather than a systemic societal, workplace issue.

In the Australian media context, there is continued focus on high-profile sexual harassment cases, such as those involving actor, Geoffrey Rush (Wingett, 2018) and former Lord Mayor of Melbourne, Robert Doyle (Anderson, 2018). However, the emergence of #MeToo challenges assumptions identified in the literature that the media's focus undermines the ability for the wider community to identify links between high-profile cases and more systemic cultural issues and behaviours that allows sexual harassment to be prevalent in the workplace. It is within this context that my research will analyse the extent to which the media's continued reporting of high-profile cases has been influenced by #MeToo. Furthermore, the research question affords the opportunity to examine whether a key outcome of #MeToo, which empowered women to share their experiences of workplace sexual harassment in a public forum in which traditional media frames could not be applied, has influenced changes in how the traditional media frames women and their experiences of sexual harassment.

#MeToo's origins may partly explain why research into media reporting of workplace sexual harassment is currently limited to the United States (Blumell & Huemmer, 2019; Blumell & Miglena, 2018; Blumell, 2017; Blumell & Huemmer, 2017), with several cases in Australia reported one year later. This research is further limited to media reporting of the 2016 sexual harassment allegations concerning (then United States' presidential candidate) Donald Trump and does not consider the extent to which #MeToo could be identified as contributing to any changes in media framing of women and their experiences of sexual harassment.

Within the Australian media context, research examining trends in media framing of women has yet to emerge since #MeToo and is yet to examine the extent to which trends in media framing of women exists. My research contribution will be to address this gap in current Australian media studies and identify whether trends in media framing identified prior to #MeToo continue to persist since the emergence of the social movement.

Over the past two decades, research into media framing of women and sexual violence has been focused on attempting to establish causal links between media biases and reinforcement of entrenched patriarchal views of women's position in the workplace and society. Consideration of persistent frames, including victim blaming, and the gender imbalance within the media industry are commonly identified in the literature as barriers to more balanced reporting of workplace sexual harassment.

The emergence of #MeToo affords opportunity to challenge these arguments and broaden the research field to examine the changing dynamics between the media and its consumers, and its effect on media framing of women. Furthermore, my research into the effect of #MeToo on the Australian media's framing of women will aim to identify the extent to which this unique and historic moment in social media discourse, in which women felt empowered to bypass traditional media formats and publicly share their experiences of sexual

violence, has influenced the media's reporting of workplace sexual harassment and its representation of female accusers. In doing so, while my research will add to the literature's central theme of the media as an important and relevant factor in how sexual violence against women is perceived, it will not attempt to prove a direct link between the media's framing of women and broader societal attitudes, which reveals the literature's key debate.

In order to examine the effect of #MeToo on Australian media reporting of workplace sexual harassment, it is necessary to consider the existence and nature of media framing prior to the social movement's emergence. My research expands on existing studies, which have examined the Australian media's framing of the case involving former David Jones' CEO, Mark McInnes (Eastel et al. 2011; Judd & Eastel 2013), who was accused of sexual harassment by David Jones' employee, Kristy Fraser-Kirk. The media's interest in the case was fuelled by Ms. Fraser-Kirk's \$37 million lawsuit against Mr. McInnes and the David Jones board, for failing to protect Ms. Fraser-Kirk from Mr. McInnes' behaviour.

Methodology

Mixed methods and frame analysis

Through a mixed method analysis of newspaper headlines, articles and Op-Ed commentaries, I compared frames adopted by NewsCorp newspapers in the David Jones case to frames used in its reporting of sexual harassment allegations against actor, Craig McLachlan, almost a decade later. The analysis will aim to uncover the extent to which long-term trends exist in media framing of high-profile sexual harassment cases within the post-#MeToo era, contributing to and broadening a rich research field of the traditional media's representation of women and workplace sexual harassment.

This research combines a quantitative and qualitative analysis of newspaper texts. The approach is considered by many scholars to be an effective method, enabling a deeper analysis of data and greater opportunity to validate a researcher's findings and conclusions (Caruth, 2013; Hesse-Biber, 2012; Benoit & Holbert, 2008; Burke, Johnson et al., 2007). Hertog and McLeod (2001) argue a quantitative analysis of text should also include the identification of 'symbols, language, usage, narratives, categories and concepts' for evaluation (p. 152). Hertog and McLeod (2001) and Winslow (2017) explain that content is then examined to calculate the number of times particular symbols, language choices, narratives and categories are used.

A quantitative content analysis of media framing is consistent with the method adopted widely in the research field in which data is selected comprising one or more sexual misconduct cases; a select number of newspaper articles from particular publications; and a specified time frame during which the articles were published (Royal, 2019; Eastel et al., 2015; Moody-Ramirez, 2015; Judd & Eastel, 2013; McDonald & Charlesworth, 2013; Bennett, 2012; Dwyer et al., 2012; O'Hara, 2012; Toffoletti, 2007; Alat, 2006).

The analysis is enhanced by a qualitative analysis, which involves the researcher analysing the content from a specific cultural perspective (Hertog & McLeod, 2001). The researcher's objective is to uncover new insights into a particular frame's usage in communicative texts. Hesse-Biber (2012) highlights the advantages of the mixed method approach for feminist researchers in particular, providing opportunity to uncover new meaning and understanding of the barriers to gender equality and social justice. In order to identify improvements for how women are represented in the media's reporting of workplace sexual harassment, a feminist analysis of the data is integral to understanding the extent to which media frames reinforce these power differentials.

Feminist analysis underpins research that argues the media's reporting of sexual violence against women reinforces current power dynamics and inequities between men and women (Nagar, 2016; McDonald & Charlesworth, 2013). A contributing factor identified in the literature is the media's use of language that reinforces perceptions that men are strong and that women are weak (Waterhouse-Watson, 2009). This will inform my own analysis of specific events to reveal whether the media's framing of sexual harassment cases reinforces the accuser-perpetrator relationship as one distinguishing between weakness (the female accuser) and strength (the male accused).

Adopting a deductive approach to frame selection enables frames to be pre-defined (Matthes, 2009), however Matthes & Kohring (2008) argue this approach can prevent the opportunity to identify new frames, revealing the researcher's personal bias. To overcome this potential limitation will require, as Walliman (2018) highlights, the need for researcher objectivity to ensure the integrity and robustness of the analysis. In doing so, the absence of researcher bias enables the potential for new insights and revelations during the data analysis stage.

Data selection

This analysis is based on a selection of newspaper articles and Op-Eds from NewsCorp's national, state and territory-based newspapers, which accounted for high national circulation figures at the time at which both the McInnes and McLachlan cases occurred (Mediaweek, 2018; Goldsmith, 2013). It therefore provides a reliable rationale for examining the Australian traditional media's coverage of high-profile sexual harassment cases.

Articles and Op-Eds of a minimum 150 words each were selected from the Factiva database using the following search terms: 'DJs', 'McInnes' and 'Craig McLachlan'. A broad range of publications were represented in the search, including NewsCorp's national newspaper, *The Australian*, and its state and territory-based newspapers: *The Daily Telegraph* (New South Wales), *Herald-Sun* (Victoria), *The Courier Mail* (Queensland), *The Advertiser* (South Australia), *NT Times* (Northern Territory), *The Sunday Times* (Western Australia) and *The Mercury* (Tasmania).

The search criteria were restricted to specific time periods relevant to each case, from the date when details about the case were first made public. The David Jones case was reported publicly in August 2010 and concluded in October 2010, providing a finite time period for selection of relevant articles.

The McLachlan case had not concluded at the time this study's analysis was conducted and therefore the time period selected is from January 2018 when the allegations were first publicly disclosed to January 2019. The search identified 16 articles in relation to the McInnes case and 20 articles in relation to the McLachlan case.

Data categories

Five categories were defined for analysis. Each category comprises between three to six codes. The first category focused on how newspapers frame the accuser and her position in society through the use of five codes including: references to the accuser's age, references to both the accuser and accused's age in the same article; language selection in relation to the accuser's occupation with particular focus on use of the word 'junior' prefacing the accuser's occupation; references to the accuser's occupation; and her personal relationship status.

The second category was more specifically focused on the relationship between the accuser and the accused and the effect of the allegations on each of them. The category's aim is to uncover frames adopted in the newspaper articles to reinforce power differentials between men and women in the workplace. The category comprises six codes focused on: language choices to describe both the workplace and personal relationship between the accuser and accused; the accused's occupation, reputation and personal relationship status; and the likely effect of the allegations on the accuser and accused's future career prospects.

The third category aimed to uncover frames that reinforce victim blaming and attempts to undermine the accuser's personal credibility. The four codes focused on language choices that includes speculation about the accuser's motives and her state of mind. The category allows for the identification of new codes in the analysis, such as the inclusion of additional personal information about the accuser, with the intent of further undermining the accuser's credibility.

Complementing this category was a fourth category focused on language choices with the intent of undermining the validity and credibility of the allegations. The four codes focused on the extent to which newspaper articles accurately report the allegations or use specific language to sensationalise or trivialise the allegations. The analysis also calculated the number of times the word 'sex' is used in newspaper headlines and articles without inclusion of the word 'harassment'.

The fifth category aimed to uncover the extent to which each case is framed as an individual act, rather than an example of a broader systemic issue and workplace behaviour. The category comprised three codes focused on which page of the newspaper the article appears and the number of times the article included reference to the case being symptomatic of a wider workplace issue, such as the inclusion of relevant statistics or similar, reported cases. A related code was newspaper articles' inclusion of information or quotes by female activists and/or relevant advocacy organisations.

Given the McLachlan case was reported following the emergence of #MeToo in 2017, a sixth category was identified for this case to address a central tenet of the research proposal: the extent to which #MeToo has changed the way NewsCorp frames women who accuse high-profile men of sexual harassment. This category focused on the extent to which newspaper articles position the case as a consequence of #MeToo, calculating the number of times #MeToo was referenced in the article and in which of the following contexts: as empowering McLachlan's accuser and/or as an example of a broader systemic social issue that #MeToo has uncovered.

The method chosen is consistent with that adopted by feminist scholars who examine media representation of women and sexual violence. The application of the same five categories and codes to both sexual harassment cases provided opportunity to clearly identify if persistent trends exist in NewsCorp's framing of women involved in sexual harassment cases or if changes are evident in how the woman accuser and her accusations are framed. The inclusion of a sixth category allowed for analysis of the extent to which the McLachlan case was directly identified in NewsCorp's coverage as an example of the #MeToo movement's impact. The method's allowance for additional codes to be identified during the analysis will further strengthen the evidence base to address the thesis' premise.

Results of the content analysis

Key differences are identified in NewsCorp-owned newspapers' framing of female accusers between the David Jones and Craig McLachlan cases. Of the sixteen David Jones articles analysed, eight articles disclosed Kristy Fraser-Kirk's age. Two articles described Fraser-Kirk as being a 'junior' employee, while four articles included reference to the presence of her parents at court or following the case's settlement. When considered together, these references frame Fraser-Kirk as young, naive and inexperienced.

The extent to which this frame reinforced Fraser-Kirk as being immature and lacking control over her case was reflected in *The Sunday Times* headline, 'DJs sex case fiasco', in which the article referred to Fraser-Kirk as having received 'poor PR and legal advice' (Moran J., 2010). The article also quoted a male 'workplace law expert' referring to the lawsuit amount as 'unrealistic' and the case as having 'wrecked Ms. Fraser-Kirk's career' (Moran J., 2010). In comparison, Christie Whelan-Browne's age was not revealed in any of the 20 McLachlan case articles analysed. This omission mitigates the potential to use the accuser's personal information to undermine her credibility and suggest an imbalance of experience and maturity between the accuser and accused.

Whelan-Browne is referred to as an 'actor' in four articles and McLachlan's former 'co-star' or 'colleague' in three articles. In doing so, these articles avoided inference of an unequal workplace relationship. However, framing of Whelan-Browne's character emerged in three articles, which included a quote from McLachlan's defamation claim against Whelan-Browne, describing her as 'notoriously foul-mouthed'. A *The Daily Telegraph* article expanded on this description and included extensive details of McLachlan's allegations of offensive verbal and physical behaviour initiated by Whelan-Browne. This article

in particular intersperses McLachlan and Whelan-Browne's allegations against each other, presenting a 'he said-she said' scenario. The overall effect is to undermine Whelan-Browne's credibility by suggesting her behaviour may have been a contributing factor that enabled sexual harassment to occur.

While two articles in each case refer to the accuser's relationship status, Whelan-Browne's husband's public support for his wife is quoted. No statement from Fraser-Kirk's partner was included in any of the articles analysed.

Key differences were also identified between the two cases in the extent to which NewsCorp links the publicity the accusations created with likely consequences for the accuser. In 2010, Fraser-Kirk was considered widely in NewsCorp's coverage as having suffered financial loss, 'stress-related health problems' that undermined her future career prospects. In comparison, none of the articles analysed in the McLachlan case sought to link the accusations with potential adverse consequences for Whelan-Browne's career or personal life.

Further evidence of framing unequal power dynamics between Fraser-Kirk and McInnes is evident in NewsCorp's description of McInnes as 'former DJ's boss' in three of the articles. A further six articles referred to McInnes as either 'former CEO' or 'former chief executive'.

The language used to describe McLachlan's occupation, position and professional reputation in the entertainment industry included 'acclaimed stage and screen veteran', 'popular actor' and 'high-profile star'. An Op-Ed referred to Craig McLachlan as a 'great entertainer', 'generous performer' and 'generous man' (Goers, 2018). However, the language choices still contributed to a frame common to both cases: a man whose influence, prominence and future within his respective industry is significantly jeopardised as a consequence of the allegations.

Only one article in the analysis of NewsCorp's coverage of the David Jones case described the 'devastating' impact of the allegations to McInnes' career, reporting that 'he has lost his high-profile job' (Moran J., 2010). In 2018-19, eight articles used various descriptions to highlight the impact of the allegations on McLachlan. These include three articles referring to McLachlan's career as 'annihilated', and two articles indicating McLachlan as 'fighting for his career' and 'having a meltdown' respectively. A *Daily Telegraph* article cited language in McLachlan's defamation claim against Whelan-Browne, referring to McLachlan as having been 'greatly injured in his business, personal and professional reputation and has been and will be brought into public disrepute, odium, ridicule and contempt' (Sexton, 2018). A *NT News* article also described the physical impact of the allegations on McLachlan and his partner, Vanessa Scammell. The article referred to the 'distress and exhaustion etched on their faces' and quoted Scammell: 'the havoc that has been wreaked ... has been devastating' (*NT News*, 2018).

These findings indicate persistent trends in how NewsCorp framed the accuser, who as a consequence of publicly disclosing the allegations, is therefore responsible for damaging the accused's career. While each case identified articles that included reference to other accusations of systemic workplace

harassment by each man, the analysis did not identify commentary or language in either case that frames the accused as accountable for his behaviour and the reason for the most recent allegations.

In each case, the analysis uncovered instances in which a high-profile woman was quoted undermining the validity of the allegations and the accuser's experience, contributing to a frame of the allegations being frivolous. In 2010, *The Courier-Mail* included an observation by fashion designer, Allanah Hill, that the case was a 'glitch' and she wished McInnes had 'touched me up'. Germaine Greer, a prominent feminist academic, is quoted in an Op-Ed article in 2018, indicating McLachlan's career and reputation has been damaged by allegations that are not yet proven to be true. Including these latter comments in particular reinforced a frame that undermines the validity of the accuser's allegations. The frame included the suggestion that even a woman renowned for challenging entrenched inequities between men and women questioned the accuser's claims of a workplace that enabled systemic sexual harassment to occur.

NewsCorp's framing of the David Jones case revealed examples of victim-blaming. The amount of Fraser-Kirk's lawsuit against McInnes and the David Jones board – the largest sexual harassment claim in Australia's history – was cited in NewsCorp's coverage, framing Fraser-Kirk as being motivated by money to pursue her case. When a monetary settlement is reached, three articles referred to Fraser-Kirk as smiling at the case's conclusion, with one of the article headlines referring to Fraser-Kirk as 'collecting' \$850,000 to settle the case. A further two articles reinforced this frame by referring to Fraser-Kirk as continuing to be paid a salary by David Jones while not working during the case's proceedings. Only one article, an Op-Ed by a professor specialising in labour law, Ron McCallum, stated Fraser-Kirk as being 'not at all greedy', citing her intent to donate any money awarded to her to a charity supporting victims of workplace harassment (McCallum, 2010).

In comparison, in 2018, two articles included McLachlan's statement that, 'they seem to be simple inventions, perhaps made for financial reasons, perhaps to gain notoriety' (McCabe, 2018, Steele, 2018). However, none of the articles analysed in the McLachlan case included a statement indicating that McLachlan's claims may be or are accurate, thereby seeking to undermine the validity or credibility of Whelan-Browne's accusations.

Across both cases, there is consistency in the extent to which NewsCorp details the nature of the allegations. In 2010, five articles cited language from Fraser-Kirk's lawsuit claim of McInnes having engaged in 'unwelcome sexual advances' or 'unwelcome sexual advances and comments. Another article included the lawsuit's claim of McInnes' 'repeated and unwelcome behaviour'. An Op-Ed referenced the detailed allegations, including 'intimate but unwelcome touching of her bra-strap', within the broader context that such behaviour meets the definition of workplace sexual harassment (McCallum, 2010).

In 2018-19, NewsCorp articles reporting the detail of the allegations against McLachlan cited language in the Victoria Police investigations – 'indecent assault and inappropriate behaviour', with one article including additional detail of 'sexual harassment, exposing himself and bullying'. The subsequent Victoria

Police charges were cited directly in one article as being ‘one count of common law assault, eight counts of indecent assault and one count of attempted indecent assault.’ Where Victoria Police statements and charges were not directly quoted, Whelan-Browne’s allegations were referred to in four articles as ‘sexually inappropriate behaviour’, in two articles as ‘minor sexual assault’, and in one article as ‘sexual misconduct’.

While NewsCorp’s coverage of the David Jones case only referred to the existence of previous allegations against McInnes by David Jones employees without elaborating about the nature of the allegations, one article in the McLachlan case quoted the detailed incidents that comprise Whelan-Browne’s allegations and those of two of her colleagues. The article preceded this information by referring in the opening paragraph to ‘McLachlan attempting to discredit the Rocky Horror co-star’ (Sexton 2018).

While, overall, there appears to be some consistency in the accuracy and fairness in how NewsCorp reported the allegations, this finding is undermined by instances where NewsCorp adopts language that aims to sensationalise each case. In 2010, examples of this language included describing the David Jones case as ‘explosive’, a ‘sexual harassment storm’ and an ‘ugly four-month drama’. Similarly, in 2018-19, the language in two articles variously referred to the McLachlan case as a ‘witch hunt’, ‘a litany of lurid allegations’ and a ‘scandal’.

A clear distinction is identified in how NewsCorp represented the allegations of each case in its headlines. In 2010, all 16 articles analysed included the word ‘sex’ in the headline without also including the word ‘harassment’. The effect of these headlines is to frame the allegations as being about sex, rather than sexually violent behaviour in the workplace and to erroneously suggest to readers – particularly those who do not continue to read beyond the headlines – that the case involves a consensual sexual relationship. This had the effect of further undermining the validity of Fraser Kirk’s allegations. By comparison, in 2018-19, only one of 20 headlines included the word ‘sex’ without clarifying the article’s subject accurately.

The extent to which NewsCorp positions coverage of these high-profile cases is indicative of systemic workplace behaviours in the corporate and entertainment industries reveals key differences over a ten-year period. However, the analysis also identifies further evidence of victim-blaming across the same period. In 2010, five articles cited the fact several David Jones employees previously alleged sexual harassment by McInnes, although the articles did not frame these incidents as indicative of a pattern of unacceptable behaviour by McInnes. In 2018-19, NewsCorp’s coverage of Whelan-Browne’s allegations were reported as one of several allegations and inquiries into McLachlan’s behaviour in other workplace environments.

Three articles in 2010 cited arguments by legal professionals and women’s rights activists that the David Jones case highlighted the need to address systemic sexual harassment behaviours in the workplace. Two articles included the same reference but framed Fraser-Kirk as blameworthy, including being the reason for altering the conduct of future office Christmas parties ‘out of fear of

potential sexual harassment cases' (*The Courier-Mail*, 2010). *The Sunday Times* journalist, Jonathan Moran (2010) also included speculation that 'some women could be put off from coming forward' as a result of the case's publicity.

In 2018-19, several articles placed Whelan-Browne's allegations within a broader context of systemic workplace behaviour by McLachlan. Six articles detailed allegations by Whelan-Browne's colleagues, while a seventh article reported on an internal inquiry of McLachlan's behaviour in another workplace. One Op-Ed sought to frame Whelan-Browne's allegations as having permanently altered how colleagues interacted in the workplace.

The final category of analysis examined the #MeToo movement's influence on NewsCorp's coverage of the McLachlan case. While only four of the 20 articles referenced #MeToo specifically, the context of the references varied widely. Where #MeToo was not referenced directly, the analysis identified examples of the movement's broader influence on how NewsCorp framed the case. Two articles cited the McLachlan case as an example of #MeToo's impact. One article reported the adoption of a #IstandwithCWB by Whelan-Browne's colleagues, following the example of the #MeToo hashtag to demonstrate support for women alleging sexual harassment. An Op-Ed by NewsCorp's Deputy Head of News, Selina Steele, cited the McLachlan case in a broader appeal for men in particular to support those who publicly disclose experiences of workplace sexual harassment. Steele cited these efforts as critical to enabling permanent change in gender relations in the workplace.

#MeToo's influence on how workplace sexual harassment is framed was also apparent in the response by each woman's employer to the allegations. In 2010, three articles focused on the monetary and reputational costs of the case to David Jones. These articles variously refer to the retailer as 'embattled', in 'damage control' and relying on its insurance policy to meet legal costs. Public statements by the company are also disclosed in which David Jones confirmed it would defend the claim, cited the findings of an independent report commissioned by David Jones that verified that 'adequate' procedures existed to address workplace sexual harassment, and questioned the inclusion of allegations by other David Jones employees in Fraser-Kirk's lawsuit.

In comparison, five articles were identified in the McLachlan case that reported television production being halted while allegations against McLachlan are investigated. Whelan-Browne's employer is also quoted in two articles publicly apologising to Whelan-Browne and her colleagues alleging sexual harassment by McLachlan. These articles reported this apology as a response to the women's claims that previous complaints about McLachlan's behaviour were not properly investigated by their employer. Two articles reported the consequences of the allegations on the stage production featuring McLachlan, with one article framing the producer's response to replace McLachlan as 'a devastating blow', but the right decision.

In addressing the research question, these findings confirm that while some frames continue to persist over a ten-year period, in particular blaming the woman accuser for the damage her allegations have caused for the accused's career and reputation, #MeToo changed how NewsCorp framed women in its

reporting high-profile cases of workplace sexual harassment. This is most clearly demonstrated in its description of the accuser, news article headlines, the framing of the employer's response to the allegations, and the public disclosure of support expressed by the accuser's colleagues and family.

Discussion

The emergence of #MeToo is frequently cited as having influenced and empowered women to publicly disclose allegations of workplace sexual harassment (Carey, 2018; Horowitz, 2018). The cumulative effect of the disclosure of several allegations across a broad number of professional industries has uncovered a number of systemic issues, including the prevalence of sexual harassment in the workplace, the manner in which employers respond to specific allegations and how they address systemic workplace cultural behaviours that enable sexual harassment to occur.

The #MeToo social movement also emerged during a period of extensive changes in how audiences consume and interact with traditional media. Social media provided the platform for women to directly and publicly share their experiences, bypassing traditional media and undermining its previously influential role in how workplace sexual harassment was framed. It is within these two contexts that this research has examined the extent to which #MeToo has influenced changes in how Australia's traditional media frames women who accuse high-profile men of workplace sexual harassment.

To achieve the research's central aim, a comparative analysis was conducted of two high-profile sexual harassment cases that were reported on extensively by Australia's largest media company, NewsCorp. Selecting the 2010 case involving David Jones' CEO, Mark McInnes, as part of the analysis allowed for a comparison of how the female accuser was framed in NewsCorp's coverage during an era in which there were comparatively few similar cases involving Australia's corporate and retail sectors that were publicly disclosed.

The 2018 sexual assault allegations against actor, Craig McLachlan, attracted equally extensive coverage in NewsCorp's national and state and territory-based newspapers. The disclosure of the allegations one year after the emergence of #MeToo, allowed for the analysis to not only identify any changes in NewsCorp's framing of the accuser since 2010, but to also be broadened to consider the extent to which #MeToo specifically affected such changes.

The analysis revealed the extent to which persistent trends exist in NewsCorp's coverage of workplace sexual harassment. Identifying these trends is critical to understanding the extent to which the traditional media's reporting of workplace sexual harassment continues to frame the female accuser as responsible for damaging her own reputation and that of the accused and their employer. The research also sought to uncover how power dynamics between men and women in the workplace are represented in the media and reinforce representations of women as subordinate to men. In doing so, the research aimed to identify opportunities to remove barriers, as reinforced by media framing of women, to gender equality in the workplace.

This research applied Entman's (1993) framing theory as its theoretical framework. To identify how NewsCorp represented the female accuser in its coverage, framing theory enabled an examination of the choices and position of language to describe the woman accuser and the allegations. Framing theory also allowed for consideration of how these language choices and positions are used to influence readers' perceptions of the woman accuser's credibility and the validity of her allegations.

The analysis indicated that while gender bias in media reporting continues to exist, over a ten-year period several changes have occurred in how female accusers of workplace sexual harassment are framed in NewsCorp's coverage. These changes can be considered symptomatic of #MeToo's broader influence on how the media frames women involved in high-profile workplace sexual harassment cases. The analysis uncovered evidence that frames which reinforce unequal power dynamics between men and women in the workplace, and that undermined the woman accuser's credibility and the validity of her allegations, have changed.

Other frames persisted over the analysis period, albeit often in more nuanced terms. Framing the woman accuser as blameworthy in NewsCorp's coverage of the McLachlan case may be considered less overt than is evident in the McInnes case. However, in both cases, framing the accuser as responsible for damaging the male accused's reputation and career is identified as a persistent trend.

This frame is reinforced by the failure in NewsCorp's coverage of each case to link previous allegations against each man with systemic behaviour for which he alone is accountable. NewsCorp also omits the broader context of failures by employers to address a cultural workplace environment that allows such behaviour to be tolerated. This finding reveals the opportunity to consider the concept of power dynamics between men and women in the workplace from a new perspective. Persistent trends in framing the woman accuser and her public disclosure of the allegations as responsible for damaging the accused's career and reputation suggests a shift in how the power balance between the two individuals is presented by the news media. This shift allows two new frames to emerge. The first frame comprises the woman possessing sufficient power over the man to damage his career and reputation. This frame is complemented and reinforced by a second frame of the male accused as the victim, with the second frame suggesting the balance of power has shifted away from him. However, unlike the frequent examples of victim-blaming of the woman accuser in the analysis, framing of the male accused as the victim in NewsCorp's coverage is not linked to his accountability for his behaviour. Nor is there any link in his victimhood and his behaviour as being responsible for damaging his career.

NewsCorp's coverage of Fraser-Kirk's allegations in 2010 feature several news journalistic frames that, when considered together, provide a compelling example of victim-blaming. To achieve this, NewsCorp presents an image to its readers of a young, naive and emotionally unstable woman motivated by monetary gain. NewsCorp frames Fraser-Kirk as solely responsible for adversely affecting her reputation and future prospects, as well as those of Mark McInnes and their employer, David Jones.

To the extent that NewsCorp's coverage refers to workplace sexual harassment as a systemic cultural behaviour, Fraser-Kirk's lawsuit is cited as responsible for deterring other women from making similar claims – providing further evidence of NewsCorp's framing Fraser-Kirk as blameworthy. In doing so, the effect is to misrepresent the David Jones case as an isolated incident. Headlines that consistently refer to 'sex case' without including the word 'harassment' also undermines an accurate representation and understanding of what constitutes workplace sexual harassment.

In comparison, analysis of Whelan-Browne's allegations almost 10 years later indicates a noticeable shift in how the accuser and her allegations was framed in NewsCorp's reporting. However, the concept of victim-blaming of the woman was narrowed. While framing of Whelan-Browne was restricted to describing her professional status as being that of an equal to McLachlan ('co-star', 'colleague') and omitted reference to her age, a majority of the articles analysed continued to highlight the accused's high-profile reputation and the damage the allegations caused for both his reputation and future career prospects.

The extent to which #MeToo has influenced changes in NewsCorp's framing of women accusers of workplace sexual harassment is apparent in its inclusion of public reactions to the allegations. While Fraser-Kirk's partner had a silent, passive role in NewsCorp's 2010 coverage, Whelan-Browne's husband was quoted directly as being publicly supportive of his wife. NewsCorp also featured in its coverage Whelan-Browne's colleagues' public support for her, adopting a #MeToo-style hashtag. In comparison, references to other allegations of sexual harassment against McInnes by women who do not publicly disclose their identity, reinforced a frame of Fraser-Kirk as an isolated woman, and her allegations as an isolated incident, rather than a pattern of behaviour initiated by McInnes.

The employer's response in each case was also indicative of a shift in how the woman accuser was framed. David Jones' response to the 2010 allegations was framed as defensive and unsympathetic to Fraser-Kirk. In comparison, Whelan-Browne's employer publicly apologised for previous failures in its investigations of allegations against McLachlan and expressed commitment to support Whelan-Browne and other accusers. By way of example, *The Daily Telegraph* in 2018 published an Op-Ed by NewsCorp's Deputy Head of News, Selina Steele, in which she appealed to men in particular to support those who allege workplace sexual harassment as a means to effect permanent, positive change in workplace gender relation. Its publication could be considered part of a determined effort by NewsCorp to change how it frames workplace sexual harassment.

Conclusion

This research has uncovered opportunities for further improvement in how NewsCorp frames female accusers and their allegations. Framing the woman accuser, rather than the male accused, as responsible for damaging his reputation and future career prospects continues the long-term trend of victim-

blaming of the woman, which is a consistent issue identified in the literature (Royal, 2019; Blumell & Miglena, 2018; Waterhouse-Watson, 2016; Bonnes, 2013; Alat, 2006).

Framing the female victim as blameworthy also continues to undermine representation of the male accused as accountable for his own behaviour. This is particularly evident in cases where, similar to the McInnes and McLachlan cases, the media coverage includes reference to other, similar incidents involving the accused and/or reports of a workplace environment in which sexual harassment was allowed to occur.

Only two years have lapsed since Alyssa Milano's #MeToo tweet. During that period, Australia's news media has been dominated by coverage of several high-profile workplace sexual harassment cases across a broad range of professions and industries. This research has limited its focus to one of these cases, involving actor Craig McLachlan, which received extensive media coverage across Australia.

While framing of the woman accuser and the allegations continues to evolve, this research has uncovered opportunities for the news media to address how it frames such cases. These opportunities are most relevant within the context of providing safe working environments for women and addressing workplace cultures that allow men to engage in sexually offensive behaviour with impunity. While this research has been limited to one case in the post-#MeToo era, further research could be undertaken to examine the extent to which these findings are clearly identified in other high-profile sexual harassment cases.

A key contributing influence to improving the media's framing of women will be media consumers' increasingly direct participation in public debates on how women are framed in traditional media coverage. The scope of this research did not allow for consideration of the extent to which Australian women's participation in online public discussions about workplace sexual harassment may have influenced NewsCorp's framing of the issue. However, such participation provides a rich field of data for researchers to draw from to further examine whether changes in how media frames workplace sexual harassment in the post-#MeToo era are consistent, and the extent to which Australia's traditional media continues to engage in victim-blaming of the woman.

A changing traditional media and social media landscape also provides new research opportunities to examine how each media influences the other, and the effect of those influences on how traditional media frames workplace sexual harassment in its coverage. These new research opportunities will also identify opportunities for the traditional media to continue to improve its framing of gender workplace relations and support ongoing efforts to remove societal barriers to gender equality.

The research revealed new insights into how the woman accuser's credibility and the validity of her allegations are framed. Additional codes identified as part of the analysis focused on the public responses to the allegations by the accuser's colleagues and employer. The analysis indicated key differences over a ten-year period and contributed to how each woman was framed in NewsCorp's coverage. The extent to which these changes persist in the post-

#MeToo era could inform future analysis of how other parties in the workplace contribute to and influence the traditional media's representation of women and workplace sexual harassment.

The research also uncovered two new frames that suggest when a woman publicly accuses a high-profile man of workplace sexual harassment, a shift in the power balance between the genders occurs. These frames shift the concept of victimhood to the male accused, reinforcing the frame of the woman as blameworthy for damaging his career, rather than framing him as accountable for his own behaviour. These key findings provide opportunity for future research to consider the concept of victim-blaming and gender power dynamics in media framing of sexual violence from a new perspective. Further analysis and findings of these frames will assist in addressing current trends in media framing that continue to undermine the woman accuser's credibility and the validity of her allegations.

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