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Sexual harassment myths in newspaper editorials: Myth breakers?

Judy Bokorney

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SEXUAL HARASSMENT MYTHS IN NEWSPAPER
EDITORIALS: MYTH BREAKERS?

A Thesis

Presented to the

Department of Communication

and the

Faculty of the Graduate College

University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

of Master of Arts

University of Nebraska at Omaha

by

Judy Bokorney

May 1997

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THESIS ACCEPTANCE

Acceptance for the faculty of the Graduate College,
University of Nebraska, in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree Master of Arts, University
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ABSTRACT

Sexual harassment is an issue that currently appears in the media on a daily basis. As the cultivation and agenda setting/priming theories argue, the media have the power to shape audiences' behaviors, realities, beliefs, morals and myths about issues like sexual harassment. The media can indicate to audiences what issues to think about and what issues are more important than others. Newspaper editorials have the same power to influence readers along with the opportunity to offer opinion or argument on issues. There are many myths about sexual harassment that the American society embraces, and newspaper editorials may combat or perpetuate sexual harassment by either challenging or endorsing those myths. The purpose of this study was to determine if newspaper editorials were referencing sexual harassment myths, and if referenced, were they endorsing or challenging those myths. A content analysis of editorials from four elite American newspapers was the method used. The results showed that the overwhelming majority of newspaper editorial writers were challenging sexual harassment myths. However, most importantly, they overwhelmingly challenged the myth that suggests sexual harassment is a fact of life that women must tolerate. As a secondary analysis, the study looked at the historical impact of the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings on the issue of sexual harassment. Interestingly, the results showed that the majority of sexual harassment myths that were endorsed in this study

occurred during the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings. The Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas findings also suggest the impact the hearings had on the awareness of the issue of sexual harassment in society. The number of editorials written about sexual harassment issues was six times greater after the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings than the number of editorials written about sexual harassment issues before the hearings. Overall, the findings of this study were very important to the issue of sexual harassment. The large majority of newspaper editorial writers of this study are emphasizing sexual harassment issues and challenging sexual harassment myths in their editorials. Hence, they are lowering the tolerance for sexual harassment in society.

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

At the workplace or in an educational setting, women and men continue to find conflict among each other in the form of illegal sexual harassment. Despite the substantial media attention given to sexual harassment, many men and women can't identify with it. Many are confused about what behaviors constitute sexual harassment (Laabs, 1995, Fitzgerald, 1990).

Unfortunately, adding to the confusion and the perpetuation of the phenomenon is the fact that there are myths about sexual harassment that are deemed to be true by some members of society (Payne, 1994). A myth is defined in Webster's dictionary as a popular belief or tradition that is unfounded or false, and which grows up around a person or thing that embodies the ideals and institutions of a society or segment of society. Though the media have devoted much attention to the issue, the media could be functioning as myth makers of sexual harassment (Axelrod, 1993).

The media have played a large role in raising awareness about the issue of sexual harassment within the American society through the coverage of important national news stories such as the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings, the Navy's Tailhook scandal, the Paula Jones and President Bill Clinton sexual harassment case, the multiple accusations of sexual harassment against Senator Bob Packwood, the numerous incidents of sexual harassment in the American armed forces, and many more. How the media present these stories about

sexual harassment can influence what audiences believe. Research has suggested that the media may have the power to shape audiences' behaviors, realities, beliefs, morals, and myths, and indicate what issues to think about and what issues are more important than others. Audiences learn a great deal from the media (Schramm, 1964, Gerbner, 1972, McCombs & Shaw, 1972, Iyengar & Kinder, 1987).

But what if media are presenting myths about sexual harassment? And what if those media include newspaper editorials which not only have the power to influence, but the opportunity to offer opinions about sexual harassment? Nearly 85% of literate Americans occasionally read a newspaper. And 25% of those newspaper readers, regularly read editorials (Bogart, 1981).

If a sexual harassment myth is referenced within a newspaper editorial, whether the editorial writer either challenges or endorses that myth may help shape how society views sexual harassment. An endorsement of a myth may influence societal opinions to cause the perpetuation of sexual harassment. Yet, a challenge to a myth could not only clear up confusion about sexual harassment, but could shape societal opinions to recognize that sexually harassing behaviors are a form of illegal sex discrimination.

The purpose of this research was to determine if sexual harassment myths are being used within newspaper editorials, and if so, how are they being used: Are the editorials accepting the myths or are they rejecting them? Which myths are they accepting or rejecting?

This research included a literature review of the

existing research on both sexual harassment and media influence. Also discussed was the purpose of the research and the methodology used to conduct the research. The results of the study and conclusions drawn from those results also were included.

Sexual Harassment

The first section of the literature review discusses several factors related to the phenomenon of sexual harassment. The discussion begins with a definition of sexual harassment, the pervasiveness of sexual harassment and its negative effects. The review also discusses explanations for sexual harassment by looking at four different explanatory perspectives: biological perspectives, socialization perspectives, organizational perspectives, and discursive perspectives. Finally, one pertinent form of discourse is examined in detail: sexual harassment myths.

What Is Sexual Harassment?

The biggest problem workers have with sexual harassment is that they are confused about what it is (Laabs, 1995). In a recent study, 90% of the employers who responded to the survey said their workers don't share a common definition of sexual harassment (Laabs, 1995). The most frequently cited definition of sexual harassment is the one established by the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission (EEOC).

However, many experts believe this definition is too vague and may add to the confusion in society about the issue (Laabs, 1995, Fitzgerald, 1990). The EEOC definition reads:

Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when (1) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment, (2) submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual, or (3) such conduct has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment (Fitzgerald, 1990).

Under this definition, sexual harassment is categorized according to two types: quid pro quo sexual harassment or hostile work environment sexual harassment.

Quid pro quo sexual harassment occurs in a working environment when the victim is expected to provide the harasser sexual favors in order to maintain a job or receive some type of advancement or promotion. Based on Title IX of the 1972 Education Amendments, where it states an educational institution cannot discriminate on the basis of gender, this also can happen in an educational setting between professors, students and administrators. For example, a professor who promises a better grade in exchange for sexual favors has engaged in sexual harassment (Paetzold & O'Leary-Kelly, 1993).

Hostile work environment sexual harassment was acknowledged as an illegal form of sex discrimination by the U.S. Supreme Court in the case of Meritor Savings v. Vinson

(1986). This case was a watershed for the sexual harassment issue and the first time, many researchers believe, that it was considered a serious phenomenon by the legal community. This type of sexual harassment is broadly defined as discriminatory behaviors, such as insults, ridicule or intimidation, that interfere with an employee's work performance and a healthy working environment. This type of sexual harassment also can occur in an educational institution, not only between professors and students, but between students (Paetzold & O'Leary-Kelly, 1993).

Hadjifotiou (1983) tried to further clarify what behaviors constitute sexual harassment in the workplace by bringing together many definitions. She defined sexual harassment as:

All those actions and practices by a person or a group of people at work which are directed at one or more workers and which: are repeated and unwanted; may be deliberate or done unconsciously; cause humiliation, offense, or distress; may interfere with job performance or create an unpleasant working environment; comprise remarks or actions associated with a person's sex; and emphasize a person's sexuality over her role as a worker.

Unfortunately, both legal and societal definitions of sexual harassment still are evolving. There is no predominant definition that is agreed upon by researchers, the legal system, corporations and institutions. Fitzgerald (1990) argues the lack of a widely agreed upon definition of sexual harassment is likely to continue unless the complex phenomenon is better understood. According to

Fitzgerald, a definition needs to be conceptualized as "both broad enough to comprehend the variety of experiences to which the construct refers, and yet specific enough to be of practical use" (p. 1).

Perceptions of the specific behaviors that constitute sexual harassment are affected by many variables. First, although each individual may define the phenomenon differently, a gender difference in definition exists, whereby females include a broader range of behaviors in their definition of sexual harassment than males (Reilly, Carpenter, Dull & Bartlett, 1982).

Men and women are likely to interpret ambiguous interactions between the sexes differently. Specifically, men evaluate ambiguous, sexual behavior more positively than women. And, when ambiguous, sexual behavior is initiated by a woman to a man, it will be evaluated more positively, but as less likely to occur, than behavior which is initiated by a man to a woman (Gutek, Morasch & Cohen, 1983).

Men and women also differ in their assignment of responsibility regarding sexual harassment. Men are more likely than women to blame women for sexual harassment, and among women, victims are less likely to blame women for being sexually harassed (Jensen & Gutek, 1982).

Researchers discovered that the harasser's actions and apparent intent are major elements people use for defining sexual harassment. Further, the behavior of the victim and information about previous encounters between the harasser and victim "can alter the interpretation of the situation and introduce uncertainty and disagreement about whether

sexual harassment occurred" (Reilly, Carpenter, Dull & Bartlett, 1982, p. 109).

Researchers also have examined sexual harassment in terms of different levels or stages. Fitzgerald (1990) classified the behaviors of sexual harassment in levels of intensity: gender harassment, seductive behavior, sexual bribery, sexual coercion, and sexual imposition. Hickson, Grierson and Linder (1991) looked at the progression of possible stages in acts of sexual harassment: aesthetic appreciation, active mental groping, social touching, foreplay harassment, sexual abuse and ultimate threat. An incident that involves touching will be perceived less positively than behavior that does not include touching (Gutek, Morasch & Cohen, 1983).

Status also influences perceptions of sexual harassment. Ambiguous, potentially sexual behavior which is initiated by a higher status person to a lower status person will be evaluated less positively than behavior initiated by an equal or lower status person (Gutek, Morasch & Cohen, 1983).

Although there may be a disagreement in the literature about what defines sexual harassment, most communication researchers agree on one variable of the phenomenon: sexual harassment is a communication process that involves one person or persons having the power to influence or control another person or persons (Hickson, Grierson & Linder, 1991, Witteman, 1993).

How Pervasive Is Sexual Harassment?

Surveys have found some degree of sexual harassment to be present in most types of work and educational settings (Wood, 1994). "While sexual harassment may have only recently entered the general vocabulary of our society, it certainly is not a new phenomenon...sexual harassment is thoroughly ensconced in our society" (Wood, 1993, p. 10).

As many as 50 percent of all women nationally experience sexual harassment (LaFontaine & Tredeau, 1986). A 1994 survey of 200 employers revealed 74% of the business owners said that sexual harassment is a serious problem facing workplaces today (Laabs, 1995).

According to other surveys, sexual harassment has been experienced by 70% of the women in military service and 50% of the women in congressional offices (Fairhurst, 1986). Surveys of academic environments revealed up to 50% of the students and 30% of the faculty members reported being sexually harassed (Blum 1991). One survey of a small university found 89% of the students experienced sexual harassment at least once, with many experiencing it more than once (Mazer & Percival, 1989).

Actual sexual harassment claims filed with the EEOC have steadily increased, with a 150% rise occurring six months after the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings in 1991 (Duhe' & Stone, 1992). Claims filed with the EEOC in the first half of 1993 increased by 29% over 1992. And, there were 13% more claims filed in 1994 than in 1993 (Laabs, 1995).

Media institutions are not exempt from the

pervasiveness of sexual harassment. The men and women reporting about and commenting on the phenomenon are witnessing, experiencing and using sexual harassment in the newsrooms. For example, a survey of 26 Indiana daily newspapers discovered 68% of the female respondents said they had been sexually harassed (Flatow, 1994). A total of 80% of 102 Washington D.C. women journalists surveyed said sexual harassment is a problem at their workplace, with 60% reporting that it is a problem for them personally (McAdams & Beasley, 1994). And, almost half of the female news directors of television stations that responded to a survey reported being sexually harassed (Duhe' & Stone, 1992).

What Are The Negative Effects Of Sexual Harassment?

Sexual harassment has numerous negative effects on work performance. It can destroy people's careers and educational experiences, and it is an obstacle for equality in the workplace and on campuses across the country (Evans, 1978, Kreps, 1993).

Victims of sexual harassment often report detrimental psychological and physical effects in addition to work performance-related effects. Some may even leave their jobs or drop out of school (Paetzold & O'Leary-Kelly, 1993). Psychological effects on victims include self-blame, anger and disgust about themselves, protecting the harasser, distraction and loss of motivation at the workplace, a dread of going to work, depression, fear and anxiety, disillusionment, and loss of self-confidence and self-

esteem. Physical effects may include loss of sleep and ill health (Jensen & Gutek, 1982, Gutek, 1985).

Employers and educational institutions also suffer negative effects when sexual harassment happens in their environments. Negative publicity, lower employee and student morale, increased absenteeism and turnover, lack of trust, breakdown in communication, increased use of medical plans and possible financial liability (some victims are engaging in multi million dollar lawsuits), are some of the problems that can occur (Popovich, 1988, Laabs, 1995).

Why Does Sexual Harassment Happen?

Researchers have offered a variety of explanations for why sexual harassment occurs at the workplace or on campus. Four major explanations are predominant in the literature: Biological Perspectives, Socialization Perspectives, Organizational Perspectives and Discursive Perspectives.

Biological perspectives. Tangri, Burt and Johnson (1982) found that within legal briefs submitted in sexual harassment cases, a biological explanation often was cited as the reason sexual harassment occurred in the work or educational setting. The biological perspective is described by Tangri, Burt and Johnson (1982) as one "that asserts that sexual harassment is simply a natural sexual attraction between people" (p. 34).

Two general versions of the biological perspective were cited in the legal briefs. The first is that sexual

harassment is not an action used to control or influence another, but simply a natural expression of men's stronger sex drive. The second version maintains that men and women are naturally attracted to each other and this behavior happens in the workplace without intent to harass (Tangri, Burt & Johnson, 1982). Both perspectives of the biological model "deny that sexual behavior at work has the intention or the effect of discriminating against women and reducing women's chances to compete successfully in the workplace" (Tangri, Burt & Johnson, 1982, p. 36).

Sexual harassment as behavior of human nature between men and women is an explanation that most researchers, and hopefully lawyers, today will not accept. In fact, many have called the biological perspective a myth or misconception about sexual harassment that perpetuates the phenomenon (Evans, 1978, Payne, 1993, Egler, 1995, Littleton, 1992, Bohren, 1993).

Socialization perspectives. Sexual harassment is explained in socialization perspectives as involving the expression and enforcement of power through a gender hierarchy (Kramarae, 1992). "Sexual harassment has little to do with physical attraction, provocative appearance, or sex. It has a lot to do with the ways boys and men maintain a gender hierarchy in everyday interaction with girls and women" (Kramarae, 1992, p. 117).

Gender socialization begins at birth, when boys and girls are responded to and handled differently. At the preschool age, children know what their gender is and what

behaviors are associated with their gender. They also are aware of the power and privileges of their gender, and that these aspects are unequal between boys and girls (Grauerholz, 1994).

Socialization perspectives claim gender socialization teaches women to ignore their own feelings and to gracefully accept men's advances. Gender socialization also tells women to gage their own self worth by their desirability to men. Unwanted sexual attention becomes hard to define as harassment when women have been raised to seek flattery from men for self-approval. These attitudes conflict with the appropriate role and demands of women in the workplace (Evans, 1978, Tangri, Burt & Johnson, 1982). "Sexual harassment is used in the workplace as a way to remind women of their proper roles...A part of this is that men are trained to take the sexual initiative, and exercising it is a test of manhood" (Evans, 1978, p. 204).

Gender socialization trains girls to acquire the social skills to be sexually attractive, to be social facilitators and avoid conflict, to not trust their own judgment about what happens to them, and to feel responsible for their own victimization. "Sexual harassment is one manifestation of the larger patriarchal system in which men rule and social beliefs legitimize their rule" (Tangri, Burt & Johnson, 1982, p. 40).

Cultural patterns of male-female interactions, like aggressive or dominant male behaviors and passive or subordinate female behaviors, sustain male dominance because society rewards these types of interactions. "Members of

each sex are socialized to play their respective and complementary roles" (Tangri, Burt & Johnson, 1982, p. 40).

Popovich et al (1995) used script theory to predict that students would use stereotypes when describing what they considered to be a typical sexual harassment scenario. They also predicted that these stereotypes would come from the students' socialization: their personal experiences, the stories of others, and the influence from media. The results of the study indicated that the majority of both male and female students envisioned a similar typical sexual harassment scenario: the male boss making persistent or escalating physical contact or inappropriate remarks to the female secretary, with some type of threat or promise connected to it (Popovich, Jolton, Mastrangelo, Everton, Somers & Gehkauf, 1995).

In contrast to the prototypical sexual harassment scenario, the majority of sexual harassment that occurs is the hostile work environment type between people of equal status. Verbal comment is the primary harassing behavior (LaFontaine & Tredeau, 1986, Paetzold & O'Leary-Kelly, 1994). Nevertheless, identifying the typical sexual harassment scenario people envision is important. "Examining such scripts provides us with information about the stereotypes associated with sexual harassment" (Popovich, et al., 1995, p. 318) As Grauerholz (1994) argues, many of the stereotypes that people have about sexual harassment are learned from the socialization they encounter and experience in society. These stereotypes can foster sexual harassment and set women up as victims.

Organizational perspectives. Tangri, Burt and Johnson (1982) offered an organizational perspective to explain why sexual harassment happens in the workplace. They concluded that working environments are structured to foster a climate for sexually harassing behaviors to occur among employees. Specifically, those employees who are low in organizational power (e.g., trainees, temporary or part-time workers), low in income level, on probation, newcomers, and low status workers who are highly dependent on their job, are most likely to be victims. These structural factors create a power differential that may enable sexual harassment. Jobs that provide employees with no personal space or require overtime work, business trips, or convention attendance also increase the opportunity for harassment. "Since work organizations are characterized by vertical stratification, individuals can use their power and position to extort sexual gratification from their subordinates" (Tangri, Burt & Johnson, 1982, p. 37).

Workplace norms vary from one occupation to another, and the power differential only is one of several characteristics of the organizational perspective for explaining sexual harassment (Tangri, Burt & Johnson, 1982). Gutek and Morasch (1982) extended the idea that a power differential in the workplace contributes to sexual harassment by suggesting that the relative difference in the positions that men and women occupy provide an atmosphere for sexually harassing behaviors. The sex-ratio at the workplace causes sex-role spillover, "the carry-over into

the workplace of gender-based expectations about behavior" (p. 56), and sometimes leads to sexual harassment. There are three types of sex-role spillover: Sex-ratio of the occupation, Sex-ratio of the job and Sex-ratio of the work role-set.

The Sex-ratio spillover of the occupation is caused when one gender dominates the occupation and the numerically subordinate gender receives differential treatment. The subordinate gender may perceive the differential treatment as harassment. The Sex-ratio spillover of the job occurs when sexually harassing treatment is attached to the job itself and every worker in that job role is treated the same. This can lead to the victim being unaware of the harassment. The Sex-ratio spillover of the work role-set occurs when a workplace has one numerically dominant gender occupying the jobs. The dominant gender rarely interacts with the other gender affecting and skewing employee's behaviors and experiences at work (Gutek & Morasch, 1982).

Women in traditional male occupations are especially susceptible to sexual harassment. Researchers found 75 percent of these women experienced the phenomenon with peers shown as the most frequent source of harassment, followed by supervisors, subordinates and clients. Workers who worked in male-dominated occupations longer experienced more harassment, and workers who were married or older reported lower levels of harassment. "...the percentage of women reporting sexual harassment was higher among those who rated their company low on the equal employment opportunity scale than among those who rated their company high on this

variable" (LaFontaine & Tredeau, 1986, p. 441).

Gutek (1985) developed the "sexualization of the workplace" perspective which argues appropriate workplace behavior should not include sexual behaviors. These sexual behaviors, which are socialized behaviors between men and women, contradict expected work roles and cause sexualization of the workplace, thus, causing sexual harassment among employees. Gutek believes sexual harassment is one of many characteristics of the sexualization of the workplace that contribute to inequality for women in a working environment.

Discursive perspectives. Many communication researchers have taken a discursive perspective to explain sexual harassment by examining the role discourse plays in relation to the phenomenon. Wood (1993) said sexual harassment has plagued women throughout time but until recently there was no name for it. And, as long as unwelcome and unwanted sexual advances were not called harassment, they were not seen as harassment. According to Wood (1993), "...the importance of naming is that we lift something out of the booming, buzzing confusion and isolate it for attention: in naming we argue that something merits our notice" (p. 10). However, old definitions of sexual harassment, such as flirtation or natural behavior between men and women, are not as quickly reformed in the culture at large (Wood, 1993).

Ehrlich and King (1994) argued that language or discourse serves the dominant class in society. The authors

propose that "...a particular vision of social reality gets inscribed in language, a vision of reality that does not serve all of its speakers equally" (Ehrlich and King, 1994, p. 59). The researchers examined how nonsexist language, developed by feminists, has been changed in society from a feminist view to the view of the male-dominant status quo. They discovered that nonsexist language often is altered through contemporary discourse coming from media, institutions and organizations. As a result of the alterations, nonsexist language often is not used nor interpreted in its intended way but with sexist stereotypes and distinctions.

Ehrlich and King (1994) focused on the print media and its common practice of maintaining sexist stereotypes and distinctions. They illustrated examples of print media portrayals of sexual harassment where the most distinguishing characteristics were omitted from the definition of sexual harassment, giving audiences an incorrect meaning of sexual harassment. According to the author, "...terms get redefined and depoliticized by a speech community that is not predominantly feminist and is often sexist" (Ehrlich & King, 1994, p. 59).

In order to occur, sexual harassment depends on discourse that perpetuates oppressive gender ideologies (Wood, 1994). Wood presented five conclusions regarding how discourse can sustain sexually harassing behaviors: 1) ideology and consciousness are constructed by discourse; 2) discourse produces and reproduces ideologies; 3) discourse produces subjectivities or standpoint; 4) discourse governs

self-control and social control by instilling in individuals the normalcy of social practices, structures, ideas and feelings; and 5) discourses are neither neutral nor universal because they emanate from particular standpoints.

Clair (1994) said there are three types of discursive framing techniques that perpetuate sexual harassment: trivialization, denotative hesitancy, and private domain. The first technique, trivialization, perpetuates sexual harassment because the victims are not taken seriously. The harassing incident is described as minor, which helps sexual harassment remain invisible. The second technique, denotative hesitancy, is used to perpetuate sexual harassment by the dominant voice not articulating the issues and interests of the minority group. Domination happens through the use of vocabulary. It is difficult for victims to name, describe, and define sexual harassment without a vocabulary that is developed from the victim's perspective. The third technique, private domain, perpetuates sexual harassment by privatizing the issue. Sexual harassment and responses to it are described as personal, private issues between individuals. Even though sexual harassment occurs in the public domain, patriarchy deems the experience as private, therefore, accountability is reduced and the victims' reactions are isolated.

Clair (1994) said both victims and harassers use these discursive practices to perpetuate sexual harassment and participate in an oppressive system. She suggested that resistive discursive practices are needed to challenge the status quo. New discourse or alternative speech that is the

minority or oppressed voice contesting the discourse of the status quo is what brings about change (Wood, 1994).

In conclusion, four predominant explanatory perspectives offer a variety of reasons why sexual harassment happens: biological factors, socialization factors, organizational factors and discursive factors. They also reveal the complexity of sexual harassment. Is sexual harassment simply natural behavior between men and women? Is it an outcome from the way we teach girls and boys to behave as women and men? Is it a product of the way working environments are structured? Or could it be a phenomenon that exists because of the discourse that society embraces? A combination of all perspectives could possibly explain why sexual harassment exists in society. Thus, the real complexity of the issue may yet be discovered.

Sexual Harassment Myths

A large body of the literature that focuses on sexual harassment from a discursive perspective is devoted to sexual harassment myths. Through discourse, society uses beliefs and rules to create structures by which to live. Myths emerge as social beliefs and eventually become legitimized as rules, and are perpetuated in society because they are unquestionably accepted (Payne, 1994).

Previous studies on sexual harassment myths do not offer a definition of "myth" (Payne, 1994; Evans, 1978; Egler, 1995). However, a myth is defined in Webster's dictionary as a popular belief or tradition that is

unfounded or false, and which grows up around a person or thing that embodies the ideals and institutions of society or segment of society. Researchers have identified a variety of sexual harassment myths that are prevalent in society as one explanation of why sexual harassment occurs.

Evans (1978) said the four most prominent and often used myths about sexual harassment are: sexual harassment is fun, welcome, or desired by women; sexual harassment is trivial, or not serious; sexual harassment only affects women in low-status, or powerless jobs; and sexual harassment is easy to handle.

Biaggio, Watts, and Brownell (1987) offer other myths of sexual harassment: a woman should be complimented, not incensed, if confronted with male sexual interest and should accept the fact that men have been genetically selected for sexual arousal; women use their sexual wit and attractiveness to gain favors from men; and women use sexual harassment to unjustly accuse men to ruin their reputations and endanger their livelihood.

Egler (1995) said there are five universal sexual harassment myths of the workplace: conduct must be sexual to constitute harassment; unwelcome is the same as involuntary; sexual harassment requires a bad intent on the part of the harasser; liability is limited to conduct by supervisors or managers; and the employer is not responsible for harassment by a third party.

Bohren (1993) also summarized the most common sexual harassment myths of the workplace. They included: It's not a problem here; It's human nature so the parties involved will

work it out themselves; Women harass men as much as men harass women; If there is no intent to harass, the employer is not liable; It is hard to determine guilt because it is one person's word against another; and there is not much a victim can do to a harasser or employer.

Littleton (1992) said the U.S. Senate failed to correctly address the allegations of sexual harassment by Anita Hill against Clarence Thomas because the Senators involved did not have a clear understanding of the issue of sexual harassment and because they used myths during the hearings while questioning Hill and Thomas.

In failing initially to take seriously allegations of sexual harassment and in perpetuating myths about sexual harassment that reflect the perspective of a 'reasonable harasser' rather than a potential or actual victim of harassment, several Senators flunked the bar--not only in the court of public opinion, but also in the eyes of the law (Littleton, 1992, p. 1422).

Littleton put forth ten sexual harassment myths that were used during the Hill-Thomas hearings. They include: Because there was no adverse employment consequence for the victim, there was no real sexual harassment; If there was no effect on work performance, there could not have been any sexual harassment; If he didn't touch her, he didn't sexually harass her; Sexual harassment is only committed by perverts; A sexual harassment charge is particularly hard to defend against; It is impossible to tell the difference between legitimate flirting and illegal sexual harassment; The Senators were particularly hypocritical in asking Judge

TABLE I

MYTHS USED FOR STUDY

AUTHORS AND MYTHS THEY RECOGNIZE

#1 Sexual harassment requires intent on the part of the harasser. If it is not intended, it is only harmless fun or flirting.

**Egler: Sexual harassment requires a bad intent on the part of the harasser.
Bohren: If there is no intent to harass the employer is not liable.**

#2 Sexual harassment is a fact of life that women must tolerate.

**Littleton: Victims are powerless to stop sexual harassment.
Bohren: There is not much a victim can do to a harasser or employer.**

#3 The harassing conduct must only be sexual to be sexual harassment.

**Littleton: If he didn't touch her, he didn't harass her.
Egler: Conduct must be sexual to constitute sexual harassment.**

#4 In a sexual harassment charge it is often too hard to determine guilt, so sexual harassment laws and policies are useless.

**Littleton: It is impossible to tell the difference between legitimate flirting and illegal sexual harassment.
Bohren: It is hard to determine guilt in a sexual harassment charge because it is one person's word against another.**

#5 Women harass men as much as men harass women.

**Bohren: Women harass men as much as men harass women.
Biaggio, Watts, and Brownell: Women use sexual attractiveness to gain favors from men.**

#6 Sexual harassment is just human nature (normal sexual attraction) that occurs between men and women.

**Biaggio, Watts and Brownell: A woman should be complimented by unwelcome sexual interest.
Bohren: it's just human nature, they will work it out.
Evans: Sexual harassment is fun, welcome.
Evans: Sexual harassment is easy to handle.**

#7 If sexual harassment occurs and there is no adverse employment consequences for the victim, it was not sexual harassment.

**Littleton: Because there was no adverse employment consequence, there was no sexual harassment.
Littleton: If there was no effect on work performance, there was no sexual harassment.
Payne: If sexual harassment occurs and no punishment is given, it must be acceptable behavior.**

#8 Most sexual harassment charges are fabricated and impossible for innocent men to defend against.

**Biaggio, Watts, and Brownell: Women use sexual harassment to unjustly ruin reputations and livelihood of men.
Littleton: A sexual harassment charge is hard to defend against.**

Thomas about the allegations because they themselves are not subject to any restraints on discriminatory conduct; Because both the accused harasser and his accuser were Black, race was not an issue in the hearings; The overall effect of the hearings must be that women will be silenced; and Victims are powerless to stop sexual harassment.

Myths about sexual harassment will not be dispelled overnight. However, the education process has certainly started. At the very least, the Thomas-Hill controversy has alerted people to the seriousness, and pervasiveness, of sexual harassment (Littleton, 1992, p. 1429).

From all of these myths, eight predominant myths surfaced and were used for this research project (See Table I). Only myths that were suggested by at least two researchers were included in the list. The myths include: 1) Sexual harassment requires intent on the part of the harasser. If sexual harassment is not intended, it is only harmless fun or flirting (Egler, 1995 Bohren, 1993); 2) Sexual harassment is a fact of life that women must tolerate (Bohren, 1993, Littleton, 1992); 3) The harassing conduct must only be sexual to be sexual harassment (Egler, 1995, Littleton, 1992); 4) In a sexual harassment charge it is often too hard to determine guilt, so sexual harassment laws and policies are useless (Bohren, 1993, Littleton, 1992); 5) Women harass men as much as men harass women (Biaggio et al, 1987, Bohren, 1993); 6) Sexual harassment is just human nature (normal sexual attraction) that occurs between men and women (Biaggio et al 1987, Bohren, 1993, Evans, 1978); 7) If sexual harassment occurs and there is no adverse

employment consequences for the victim, it was not sexual harassment (Payne, 1993, Bohren 1993, Littleton, 1992); and 8) Most sexual harassment charges are fabricated and impossible for innocent men to defend against (Biaggio, 1987, Littleton, 1992).

To summarize, the issue of sexual harassment involves many factors. The definition of sexual harassment has yet to be standardized, thus, causing confusion among men and women to what behaviors really constitute the phenomenon. Yet, the research shows sexual harassment is a pervasive dilemma in work and educational environments that needs to be addressed. Victims suffer from a host of negative effects that interfere with their working and educational careers. However, sexual harassment is not easily explained as research shows there are many explanations for the complex issue. And, adding to the confusion of what sexual harassment is and why it happens, sexual harassment myths exist within the discourse of American society, thus, perpetuating the problem.

Media and the Perpetuation of Sexual Harassment

The second section of the literature review discusses the relationship that the media have with the issue of sexual harassment. First, this section discusses the media's role as myth maker and past research on sexual harassment portrayed in the media. Next, media influence theories are addressed. And, finally, this section looks at the influence

of newspaper editorials and their relationship with sexual harassment myths.

Sexual Harassment In The Media

One of the strongest forces of contemporary discourse comes from media institutions (Ehrlich & King, 1994). Unfortunately, media institutions are not exempt from distorting that discourse by using cultural myths of American society (Rivers, 1996). According to Rivers, many journalistic pieces of information, that are otherwise competent stories, get drowned out by cultural myths and misinformation.

I believe most journalists are conscientious and want to do a good job. That their thinking has been shaped by forces and ideas they do not realize they possess is no more an indictment of journalists than it is of all Americans--except that what journalists write and say is so important (Rivers, 1996, p. 16).

According to Rivers (1996), mythology about women pervades our culture and media coverage of women often contains myths. "Feminist scholars have spent the last two decades trying to unravel it" (Rivers, 1996, p. 17). The media theory of social construction of reality proposes that media have the power to be myth makers (McQuail, 1987). This theory contends individuals receive and handle information directly from mass media and that most of the conversation between people is about the media and their contents, whether it be myth or fact.

Social relationships, groups and other institutions are frequently portrayed in media and are responded to, or learned about, as much as in their media representation as in direct experience...It is difficult to see how most society-wide processes of communication could actually take place without mass media (McQuail, 1987, p. 7).

A few communication researchers have looked at the connection between the media and sexual harassment as a discursive explanation for the phenomenon. Skill, Robinson and Kinsella (1995) analyzed prime time situation comedies and found that of a total of 307 sexual behaviors observed, 124 , or 40.4%, were unwelcome and fit the EEOC definition of sexual harassment. The researchers found that women were the recipients of sexually harassing behavior in 64.5% of the cases and were found to initiate it in 32.3% of the cases.

In most cases, 58%, the acts of sexual harassment were treated with humor and laugh tracks, and nearly all, 95%, occurred in a non-working setting. Consequences were rarely seen for the victim or harasser, and most harassment was simply ignored.

The data in this investigation revealed that the majority of sexual harassment behaviors were not central to the story line. While sexual harassment is frequently a part of the background to many programs, its lack of foreground emphasis may also be an important finding. One lesson that television may be instructing us about is that sexual harassment is not an important phenomenon and has no lasting affect on its victims (Skill, Robinson, & Kinsella, 1995, p. 17).

The "lesson" that television is teaching audiences, that sexual harassment is not a serious issue, is one example of how myths can be endorsed by the media. Skill et al. (1995) also note that since there are no consequences given to harassers of the 124 acts of sexual harassment observed on prime time television, the audience may believe the myth that there are no consequences for engaging in sexually harassing acts.

Axelrod (1993) suggested some movies may perpetuate the myth that sexual harassment is just part of the job if a woman wants to be successful. Contemporary life is symbolized to a large degree by the way it is represented in the mass media. Society, as reflected on film, views sexual harassment as normal behavior. "The mass media play an influential role in reinforcing sex-role stereotypes" (Axelrod, 1993, p. 108).

Axelrod examined two mainstream movies about working women. The movies portrayed the women accepting sexual harassment as part of the workplace and accepting male dominance. "The conflict arises when the law says such behavior is illegal, yet the movies accept and condone men sexually harassing working women" (Axelrod, 1993, p. 112).

Using the media influence theory of synthetic experiences, Axelrod argued that audiences can go through synthetic experiences, which are experiences that a person has never personally had before. Through exposure to media, people use synthetic experiences as a basis for forming an opinion of that experience. For example, synthetic experience may be the only reality of sexual harassment for

some audience members. In the end of the movies that Axelrod examined, all the characters are happy with the outcome of their situations. Those happy outcomes suggest that there are no real bad consequences to sexual harassment.

Women see sexual harassment (in the movies) from two angles: 1) speak out and then be fired or ostracized, or 2) accept it and then take advantage of it. If movies continue to portray women giving in to male dominance, thus reinforcing stereotypes, male dominance will continue to be a force in the real world, and sexual harassment will persist (Axelrod, 1993, p. 116).

If the media use myths within their portrayal of sexual harassment it may lead audiences to believe those myths to be real, thus, perpetuating the phenomenon. Media influence theories provide more specific guidance regarding how media are likely to endorse and perpetuate, or challenge and combat, sexual harassment myths.

Media Influence Theories

The late Wilbur Schramm was one of the founding communication researchers who was concerned about the effect that mass media had on its audiences. His central concerns were with what we are learning from the mass media and what impact this learning has on our lives and on society. Is it possible that we are affected in ways that we do not recognize and may not understand by the images and messages we are bombarded with, hour after hour, as we watch television, listen to the radio, read newspapers and

magazines? Could it be that we are deluded in thinking that we alone determine what gets into our heads? (McAnany, 1988)

In 1964, Schramm wrote in his early works:

People who live in societies where the mass media are common sometimes forget how much they learn from the media. Yet for 300 years the printed book has been the strong right arm of public education. Wherever newspapers have been available, they have become the chief reporters on environment beyond the reach of one's own senses; indeed, whole generations of people have formed their ideas of the nonlocal world largely on what they have learned from newspapers (and more recently from radio, films, televisions, and news magazines) (Schramm, 1964).

Today, numerous media influence theories exist in communication literature. While some contend that media have no or little effect on audiences, others contend that media can possibly shape audiences' behaviors, realities, beliefs, myths, and morals, and can indicate what issues to think about and what issues are more important than others (Gerbner, 1969, 1972, 1977, McCombs & Shaw, 1972, Iyengar & Kinder, 1987). Two media influence theories are particularly helpful for understanding how the media may endorse or challenge sexual harassment myths: the cultivation theory and the agenda-setting/priming theory. These theories explain how media could perpetuate or combat sexual harassment by challenging or endorsing myths about the phenomenon.

The cultivation theory. Gerbner (1969, 1972, 1977) developed the cultivation theory through concern about the

relationship between the reality that media depict and the reality that is created in the minds of audiences. The cultivation theory claims that media teach, or cultivate, the values, myths, and moral lessons of society. Media are the dominant storytellers that replace personal experience with mediated messages about reality. Persistent exposure may lead to the adoption of a mediated reality of experiences by audiences (Gerbner, 1972).

The media have acquired such a central role in the everyday life of the American society that they are the dominant source of messages for audiences. Unfortunately, media often project a distorted, deviant, and unrealistic illustration of reality. Gerbner developed the cultivation theory from content analysis research of media messages and images, which showed consistent distortion of reality in such areas as family life, work roles and occupational environments, aging and the elderly, education, death and dying, crime and violence.

Some of these areas, especially work roles and occupational environments, include the dilemma of sexual harassment. Sexual harassment myths and misconceptions are a form of distortion by the media about sexual harassment. If sexual harassment myths are endorsed by the media, audiences may develop a distorted mediated message about sexual harassment that could perpetuate the phenomenon. If the media challenge sexual harassment myths within their portrayal of the issue, audiences may develop a more realistic message about sexual harassment, thus, combating the phenomenon.

According to Gerbner (1969, 1977), the mass media are the basis of community consciousness and self government among groups of people too large to communicate face-to-face. The effects of mass produced and technically mediated messages are to be found in the fundamental assumptions, definitions and premises they contain and cultivate. "Communication is the nutrient culture and not just the occasional medicine of mental life" (Gerbner, 1977, p. 205).

The cultivation theory says that a culture cultivates the images of a society (Gerbner, 1977). According to Gerbner, the dominant communication agencies produce the message systems that cultivate the dominant messages. These dominant communication agencies structure the public agenda which audiences use to support their ideas and actions. "The terms of broadest social interaction are those available in the most widely shared message systems. That is why mass media have been called the 'agenda-setters' of modern society" (Gerbner, p.126, 1969).

The agenda-setting/priming theory. McCombs and Shaw (1972) put forth the agenda-setting theory which offers that the media have the power to highlight and emphasize issues, ideas, topics and events, to a point where individuals would consider these to be more important than other issues, ideas and topics. This theory claims while the mass media may not be able to dictate to audiences what to think, they are capable of indicating to audiences what to think about. Television, newspapers, radio and other media sources process information daily and disseminate it to audiences.

By selecting, emphasizing, and highlighting particular issues and concerns, the mass media bring about a perception that certain aspects or events are more important than others (McCombs & Shaw, 1972).

Emphasizing and highlighting by the media is achieved through choices of what to include or not include in the content of newspapers, magazines, and radio or television programs. Certain issues gain more prominence than others through the presentation of the issue, such as in the placement and space allocated to the issue in a newspaper or magazine, or the amount of time devoted to the issue on television or radio. The result is that audiences learn to consider certain issues, topics or ideas to be more important than others and these issues become more salient (McCombs & Shaw, 1972).

Iyengar and Kinder (1987) further tested the agenda-setting theory, and from that research developed the priming theory. They concluded that audiences do not pay attention to everything. "To do so would breed paralysis. Attention is highly selective; people notice only particular features of special consequence" (Iyengar and Kinder, p. 64, 1987).

The priming theory concludes that audiences pay attention to information that is simple and accessible, rather than undertaking exhaustive analysis of information. Which information is accessible is not a matter of circumstance. Sources of accessible information are many, said the researchers, however one of the most accessible sources of information is the mass media. The more attention a news media pays to an issue--the more frequently the issue

is "primed"--the more audiences should incorporate the information they received from the media about the issue into their overall opinion of the issue.

By emphasizing the issue of sexual harassment within the media and challenging sexual harassment myths within the portrayal of the issue, the media could help combat sexual harassment. However, if the media devote little priority to the issue of sexual harassment, the audiences could perceive the issue to be a trivial one, thus perpetuating the problem. Also, if myths are endorsed within the portrayal of sexual harassment this could add to the pervasiveness of the phenomenon.

According to Gerbner (1977), the mass media ushered in the modern world as we know it. Mass communication changed the production and distribution of knowledge. "The most critical public consequences of mass communications are in defining, ordering and presenting the issues of life and society and not just in influencing who will do what in the short run" (Gerbner, 1977, p. 205).

The cultivation theory and agenda-setting/priming theory each are useful for understanding how the media may shape audiences' beliefs in myths about sexual harassment. The cultivation theory contends the media teach the values, myths and moral lessons of society. The agenda-setting/priming theory suggests the media have the power to emphasize issues to the point where audiences view these issues to be more important than others. Each of these theories help explain how media could perpetuate or combat sexual harassment by endorsing or challenging myths.

Newspaper Editorials

Newspaper editorials are a form of media that can perpetuate or combat the issue of sexual harassment by either endorsing or challenging sexual harassment myths. Editorial writers express their opinions about issues, which can influence how the readers will react to that issue (Garrison, 1990).

Expression of opinion in the news media is a significant right in the United States. In some countries, expression of opinion is not permitted, unless it is the government's opinion. U.S. news organizations take opinion seriously, and considerable space and time are devoted to it on a daily basis (Garrison, 1990).

Editorials are either informative, argumentative or authoritative. Informative editorials attempt to educate the public about issues and public concerns. Argumentative editorials attempt to persuade readers to adopt a particular position on an issue. Authoritative editorials offer expert opinion or advice on an issue. Editorials should achieve four goals: explain the news, fill in background information, forecast the future, and pass moral judgment. In short, editorials explain to, evaluate for and persuade readers about issues (Garrison, 1990).

Editorial writers should be informed on all major and most minor issues. Most editorial writers usually are seasoned reporters with years of journalism experience. Extensive reading and research on the topic at hand are

essential to effective editorial writing (Garrison, 1990).

A survey of editorial writers revealed that 35% believed their editorials had substantial influence on their communities and readers, and 56% believed their work had moderate impact. Only 8% of the editorial writers believed their editorials had very little impact and 0.6% believed they had no impact at all. Also shown in the survey was that larger newspaper editorials influence the opinions used by and topics chosen by smaller newspaper editorials (Editor and Publisher, 1989). Smaller papers are more likely to run editorials that are reprinted from larger papers (Bogart, 1981).

Nearly every literate American (85%) occasionally looks at a newspaper (Bogart, 1981). People who are solidly established in the community are the heaviest newspaper readers because their interests are closely associated with the content newspapers provide (Stone, 1987).

According to Bogart (1981), "readers do, in fact, pay attention to newspapers' editorial opinions. The typical editorial gets exactly the same level of reported readership (25% of readers) as the typical newspaper article." Editorials get above average readership among men (30% of male readers) and below average readership among women (21% of female readers). Editorials are better read by people who have been to college (31%) than those who did not complete high school (20%). And, Bogart discovered, the more remote the issue on which the paper takes a stand, the more likely readers are to accept its opinions.

Editorial writers could shape readers' opinion on the

issue of sexual harassment. Media influence theories lay the groundwork for the possibility that if newspaper editorials endorse sexual harassment myths, the opinions expressed could perpetuate and sustain the phenomenon. Also, these theories suggest that if newspaper editorials challenge sexual harassment myths, the opinions expressed could combat the phenomenon. But, do the media have responsibility for disseminating information that contains myths and misconceptions about sexual harassment? Researchers of media ethics say yes (McQuail, 1983).

The social responsibility theory of the media says the media should accept and fulfill certain obligations to society because of its special First Amendment status of freedom of the press. These obligations are mainly to be met by setting high or professional standards of "informativeness, truth, accuracy, objectivity and balance" (McQuail, 1983, p. 91).

These expectations should give editorial writers criteria for distinguishing between a desirable form of news from an undesirable form of news or out of place forms of information or knowledge like fiction, propaganda, gossip, ideology or myths (McQuail, 1992). Based on McQuail's perspective, newspaper editorials should not include information that supports or perpetuates sexual harassment myths.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The purpose of this study was to determine the level of sexual harassment myth usage within newspaper editorials, and if they were found, to assess whether the myths were endorsed or challenged by the newspaper editorial. This study also determined which sexual harassment myths were more often endorsed or challenged in the newspaper editorials. A historical perspective was assessed by looking at the number of myths and which myths were referenced before, during and after the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings.

Communication theories and research suggest that the media may have the power to shape audiences' behaviors, realities, beliefs, myths, and morals, and indicate what issues to think about and what issues are more important than others. The literature also has suggested that sexual harassment could be perpetuated in society through the discourse that media uses about the issue of sexual harassment. Of particular interest to this research project is the discourse that includes the dissemination of sexual harassment myths through newspaper editorials.

The social responsibility of the media theory suggests the media have the responsibility to society to disseminate truthful and objective information. However, past research on sexual harassment myths suggests that many myths may be deeply held social beliefs that have become legitimized as societal rules and are unquestionably accepted in society. Extensive reading and research on issues are essential to

effective editorial writing. However, even the best of editorial writers could possibly include sexual harassment myths that he or she may believe to be a social belief, albeit an inaccurate one. Newspaper editorials, through the opinions they disseminate, could possibly have a significant influence on the acceptance or rejection of sexual harassment myths by readers.

Research on other forms of media has shown that the use of sexual harassment myths in the discourse of society could contribute to the pervasiveness and the perpetuation of sexual harassment. The following research questions were addressed:

RESEARCH QUESTION #1: Do newspaper editorials make reference to sexual harassment myths? If so, how prevalent are each of the myths?

RESEARCH QUESTION #2: In the editorials where myths are referenced, do the editorials endorse or challenge the sexual harassment myths? Which myths are endorsed or challenged?

Because of the historical importance of the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings on the issue of sexual harassment, two secondary research questions were addressed to determine the impact of this event on the presence or absence of sexual harassment myths in newspaper editorials before, during and after the hearings. Also addressed, if myths were found before, during and/or after the hearings, was whether the myths were endorsed or challenged.

RESEARCH QUESTION #3: Do newspaper editorials make reference to sexual harassment myths before, during and

after the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings? If so, how prevalent are each of the myths before, during and after the hearings?

RESEARCH QUESTION #4: In the editorials where myths are referenced, do the editorials endorse or challenge the sexual harassment myths before, during and after the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings?

Two other areas looked at in this study involved the gender of editorial writers and the specific topic of sexual harassment the editorials addressed. When possible the sex of the editorial writers was tabulated to determine whether editorials about sexual harassment were predominantly written by males or females. Also tabulated was the specific topic of sexual harassment the editorial addressed to determine what the media considered to be the most sensational or newsworthy sexual harassment issues or stories. The agenda-setting/priming theory suggests the media have the power to highlight and emphasize issues, ideas, topics and events to a point where individuals would consider these to be more important than others.

CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGY

This section of the paper addresses the method used to conduct the study. Specifically, what type of method used, the unit of analysis, sampling of the unit of analysis, coding categories, coding procedures and reliability.

Content analysis was used to address the research questions. In a content analysis, researchers examine a class of social artifacts, which are often written documents. However, content analysis methods can be applied to virtually any form of communication. Content analysis is particularly well-suited to the study of communication because it is capable of answering Laswell's classic communication question: "Who says What to Whom, Why, How, and with what Effect?" (Babbie, 1995).

To answer the research questions, the content analysis involved several steps: selection of the units of analysis (editorials); selection of which newspapers to analyze; getting a representative sample of editorials in the designated newspapers; selecting categories (myths) for coding the editorials; formulating judgmental coding procedures for applying each myth to the editorial; pretesting the method for intra-coder reliability; establishing inter-coder reliability; assessing whether or not the research questions needed to be revised; tabulating the results; and applying the results to the research questions (Babbie, 1995).

Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis was the American newspaper editorial. The units of observation were the eight designated sexual harassment myths identified in the literature review section.

Sampling

Four large metropolitan newspapers were used in the content analysis. They include the New York Times, the Chicago Tribune, the Los Angeles Times, and the Washington Post. As shown in the literature review, larger newspaper editorials often are trend setting in the opinions they offer and can possibly influence the editorial opinions of smaller newspapers.

According to McQuail (1987), the larger metropolitan newspapers, such as the ones chosen for this study, serve as the "elite press" that feature an acceptance into the structure of society as a major institution of political and social life; a highly developed sense of social and ethical responsibility; a journalistic profession dedicated to the objective reporting of events; an adoption of the role of opinion giver or former; and frequently a tendency to identify with the national interest.

The editorials of larger newspapers are often published verbatim in smaller newspapers and smaller newspapers also use larger newspaper editorials as a source of information for developing their own editorials (Garrison, 1990; Editor

& Publisher, 1989).

A Lexis computer search of the four designated newspapers during the years of 1986 to 1996 identified 800 editorials addressing the issue of sexual harassment. Thirty percent of those editorials (n=240) were analyzed for sexual harassment myths. As shown in the literature review, sexual harassment was first recognized as a serious problem in 1986 when the Supreme Court ruled that sexual harassment is an illegal form of sex discrimination, granting workers legal protection from it. Previous to 1986, sexual harassment was a lesser known issue to the general population. This decade provided a representative sample of the discourse from newspaper editorials about the phenomenon of sexual harassment.

All 800 editorials found in the Lexis computer search were examined to determine the time period in which they were written relative to the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas Senate hearings. The editorials were placed into one of three categories: before the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings (editorials dated from 1986 to September 1991); during the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings (editorials dated from October 1991 to December 1991); and after the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings (editorials dated from January 1992 to 1996). Anita Hill testified before the Senators charged with choosing a new Supreme Court Justice on October 11 and 12 of 1991. Editorials specifically written about the actual Senate hearings extended into December of 1991.

Eighty editorials were randomly sampled from each of

the three categories to ensure proper representation from each time frame. All the editorials were numbered. Each set of editorials for the three categories was numbered separately. A separate random sampling was done for each of the three categories by placing a piece of paper with a corresponding number for each editorial into a pile. Eighty numbers were randomly pulled out of the pile and the 80 editorials with the corresponding number were chosen for the study. This procedure was completed three times, once for each category. This procedure resulted in a total sample of 240 editorials. Fifty three editorials (22%) were chosen from the Washington Post, 16 editorials (7%) were chosen from the Chicago Tribune, 83 editorials (35%) were chosen from the New York Times, and 88 editorials (37%) were chosen from the Los Angeles Times. A stratified sampling of the four newspapers was not necessary or appropriate because a comparison of editorial sources was not a focus of the study.

Of the 53 Washington Post editorials coded, 24 were in the "before" time category, 17 in the "during" category, and 12 in the "after" category. Of the 16 Chicago Tribune editorials coded, 4 were in the "before" category, 7 were in the "during" category, and 5 were in the "after" category. Of the 83 New York Times editorials coded, 19 were in the "before" category, 37 were in the "during" category, and 27 were in the "after" category. Of the 88 Los Angeles Times editorials coded, 33 were in the "before" category, 19 were in the "during" category, and 36 were in the "after" category.

Coding Categories

The categories used in the coding process were the eight sexual harassment myths derived from the literature review (See Table I). Any sexual harassment myth that was developed by more than one source in the literature review was selected as a coding category for the content analysis. The eight designated sexual harassment myths were as follows along with fictional examples of both an endorsement and challenge of the myth within a newspaper editorial.

MYTH #1) SEXUAL HARASSMENT REQUIRES INTENT ON THE PART OF THE HARASSER. IF IT IS NOT INTENDED, IT IS ONLY HARMLESS FUN OR FLIRTING. This is a myth because sexual harassment law does not require the victim to prove that the conduct occurred for the purpose of harassing the victim, but that it is enough that the conduct have the effect of harassing the victim (Paetzold & O'Leary-Kelly, 1993).

Example of an ENDORSEMENT of the myth in a newspaper editorial: "Ms. Smith accused Mr. Jones of sexual harassment, however, the alleged victim has no legal ground to stand on because Mr. Jones said he had no idea his behavior was harassing and he had no intention of harassing Ms. Smith."

Example of a CHALLENGE of the myth in a newspaper editorial: "Even though Mr. Jones claims he had no intention of harassing Ms. Smith and that his conduct was only harmless flirting, the alleged victim can charge Mr. Jones with

illegal sexual harassment."

MYTH #2) SEXUAL HARASSMENT IS A FACT OF LIFE THAT WOMEN MUST TOLERATE. This is a myth because workplace sexual harassment is illegal under Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 states it is illegal for educational institutions to discriminate on the basis of gender. And in 1992, the Supreme Court rendered a unanimous decision that victims of sexual harassment can sue for compensatory and punitive damages (Wood, 1993).

Example of an ENDORSEMENT of the myth in a newspaper editorial: "Survey after survey show that sexual harassment is a serious problem that plagues women in the workplace. If a woman is to be successful in the workplace she must learn to tolerate sexual harassment or get out of the workplace."

Example of a CHALLENGE of the myth in a newspaper editorial: "Survey after survey show that sexual harassment is a serious problem that plagues women in the workplace and it is a dilemma that women should not have to tolerate."

MYTH #3) THE HARASSING CONDUCT MUST ONLY BE SEXUAL TO BE SEXUAL HARASSMENT. A wide variety of behaviors have been found to be sexual harassment, such as conduct or language that is explicitly sexual, or the use of lewd, pornographic or sexually explicit materials or other forms of pictorial display that a harasser uses to have power or control over a victim. However, insulting or intimidating behaviors that are not sexual, such as vandalism of personal property,

repeated phone calls, staring, following the victim, or pranks, in a workplace or educational institution also can be sexually harassing conduct that is used to have power or control over a victim (Paetzold & O'Leary-Kelly, 1993).

Example of an ENDORSEMENT of the myth in a newspaper editorial: "Ms. Smith claimed Mr. Jones interfered with her work performance when he repeatedly made intimidating phone calls to her at the workplace. But this is an unjust sexual harassment case that has gone too far. According to Mr. Jones, he did make the phone calls, but he never spoke to her in a sexual way or sexually touched her."

Example of a CHALLENGE of the myth in a newspaper editorial: "Mr. Jones is accused of making repeated intimidating phone calls to Ms. Smith at the workplace and Ms. Smith claimed this conduct interfered with her work performance. Mr. Jones claims he did make the phone calls, but said he is wrongfully accused of sexual harassment because he never sexually touched her or never spoke to her in a sexual way. However, under hostile work environment sexual harassment law, the type of conduct he engaged in is recognized as illegal sexually harassing behavior."

MYTH #4) IN A SEXUAL HARASSMENT CHARGE IT IS OFTEN TOO HARD TO DETERMINE GUILT, SO SEXUAL HARASSMENT LAWS AND POLICIES ARE USELESS. It is true, that sometimes it is one person's word against another in a sexual harassment charge. And alleged harassers can claim they don't know the difference between flirting and illegal sexual harassment. However this is a sexual harassment myth because most

companies and educational institutions have sexual harassment policies that state what behaviors are considered sexual harassment, and many companies and educational institutions thoroughly investigate sexual harassment charges, especially when it is one person's word against another. According to a 1995 survey, 76% of the companies that responded said they investigated a sexual harassment complaint in the past year. Respondents said investigations included interviewing third parties who may have knowledge of the incident (Laabs, 1995).

Example of an ENDORSEMENT of the myth in a newspaper editorial: "Ms. Smith charged Mr. Jones of sexually harassing her, however, like in most sexual harassment cases, Corporation X will never know whether or not he sexually harassed her because it is just his word against hers."

Example of a CHALLENGE of the myth in a newspaper editorials: "Ms. Smith charged Mr. Jones of sexually harassing her. Since the alleged incident happened without any witnesses and it is only her word against his, Corporation X will have to thoroughly investigate the claims filed by Ms. Smith before deciding what action to take."

MYTH #5) WOMEN HARASS MEN AS MUCH AS MEN HARASS WOMEN.

This is a myth because sexual harassment literature shows that women overwhelmingly experience more sexual harassment than men (Gutek 1985).

Example of an ENDORSEMENT of the myth in a newspaper editorial: "Sexual harassment is just another one of those

politically correct issues that women use as an excuse for why they can never be as successful as men in the workplace, when everyone knows women harass men as much as men harass women."

Example of a CHALLENGE of the myth in a newspaper editorial: "Sexual harassment is predominantly a working woman's issue since women overwhelmingly experience more sexual harassment than men in the workplace."

MYTH #6) SEXUAL HARASSMENT IS JUST HUMAN NATURE (NORMAL SEXUAL ATTRACTION) THAT OCCURS BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN. This biological perspective for an explanation for sexual harassment has been acknowledged by many researchers as not an explanation but a myth that perpetuates the phenomenon (Evans 1978, Payne 1994, Egler 1995, Littleton 1992, Bohren 1993).

Example of an ENDORSEMENT of the myth in a newspaper editorial: "Countless sexual harassment cases are popping up among corporate America and corporate America is floundering to control the issue. Too bad corporate America doesn't realize what they are trying to control is merely normal sexual attraction between men and women."

Example of a CHALLENGE of the myth in a newspaper editorial: "Countless sexual harassment cases are popping up among corporate America and corporate America is finally realizing that sexual harassment is not normal sexual attraction between men and women at the workplace, but a phenomenon that has become a serious obstacle for equal employment opportunity for women."

MYTH #7) IF SEXUAL HARASSMENT OCCURS AND THERE IS NO ADVERSE EMPLOYMENT CONSEQUENCES FOR THE VICTIM, IT WAS NOT SEXUAL HARASSMENT. This is a myth because whether or not a sexual harassment incident is punished or whether or not a victim suffers adverse employment consequences, sexual harassment is still illegal discriminatory conduct under both the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Education Amendments of 1972 (Wood, 1993).

Example of an ENDORSEMENT of the myth in a newspaper editorial: "Ms. Smith accused Mr. Jones of sexually harassing her, however, it is obvious Mr. Jones will never see the inside of a courtroom because Ms. Smith is falsely accusing Mr. Jones. Mr. Jones could not have sexually harassed Ms. Smith because she did not suffer any severe employment consequences and just recently received a raise and a promotion."

Example of a CHALLENGE of the myth in a newspaper editorial: "Mr. Jones claims that he is being falsely accused of sexually harassing Ms. Smith because she did not suffer from any adverse employment consequences from the alleged incident and recently received a raise and promotion. However, Mr. Jones will most likely find his way to the courtroom because sexual harassment law does not require the alleged victim to suffer in any way from the alleged incident of sexual harassment in order for it to be recognized as illegal sexual harassment."

MYTH #8) MOST SEXUAL HARASSMENT CHARGES ARE FABRICATED AND IMPOSSIBLE FOR INNOCENT MEN TO DEFEND AGAINST. This is a myth because victims of sexual harassment who take their cases to court are required to prove: 1) she is a member of a protected class; 2) she was subject to unwelcome harassment; 3) the harassment occurred because of her sex; 4) the harassment affected a term, condition or privilege of her employment; and 5) the employer(s) should be held liable. The plaintiff must persuade the court by a preponderance of the evidence that all five of these elements are true in order to prevail in her suit (Paetzold and O'Leary-Kelly, 1993).

Example of an ENDORSEMENT of the myth in a newspaper editorial: "Mr. Jones has been falsely accused of sexual harassment by Ms. Smith, but as with all other sexual harassment cases Ms. Smith will walk away with a lot of cash for a crime she never suffered from because Mr. Jones has no way to defend himself."

Example of a CHALLENGE of the myth in a newspaper editorial: "Mr. Jones said he has been falsely accused of sexual harassment by Ms. Smith and said he doubts he will be able to clear his name in court because there is no way to defend himself. However, Mr. Jones will have a fair trial because sexual harassment law requires the victim to have the burden of proof on her side in order to prevail in court."

Coding Procedures and Reliability

The editorials were coded for latent content. Latent

content refers to the underlying meaning of messages. The coder read the entire editorial to look for myths which could appear in sentence or full paragraph form. This method is less reliable than coding for manifest content, which involves looking at visible, surface content, such as specified words or symbols. However, coding for latent content enables the researcher to tap into overall meanings that are not accessible through manifest coding (Babbie, 1995). This content analysis was quantitative in that it involved counting the number of times each myth was referenced and how often each myth was endorsed or challenged. However, the coding process itself was qualitative (i.e., interpretive) in nature.

A pre-study was performed to test the validity and workability of the coding categories. A total of 21 editorials from the Sarasota Herald-Tribune in Sarasota, Florida were coded. (Please see Appendix A for pre-study results.) The pre-study demonstrated that the coding categories were workable and could be applied with reasonable interpretation to newspaper editorials. No changes were made to the coding categories after completing the pretest.

The researcher served as the primary coder (coder #1) for the main study. Coder #1 read all 240 editorials chosen for the study. One additional coder (coder #2) read 24 (10%) of these editorials to establish inter-coder reliability. The 24 editorials were randomly selected by pulling them out of a pile that included all 240 editorials.

Coder #2 was trained to use the coding system. The

training procedure consisted of three stages. First, coder #2 read the introduction, literature review, statement of purpose and methodology sections of this paper. Second, a one on one question/answer session about those sections of this paper was conducted between Coders #1 and #2. And third, after explanation of the coding sheet and editorials, several practice editorials were coded by both coders and problems or differences were discussed.

Coding disagreements were resolved by Coder #1 reviewing the editorials where disagreements occurred to decide if changes needed to be made. However, no coding decisions were changed because almost all of the coding disagreements were because Coder #1 found myths in editorials where Coder #2 found no myths at all. It was assumed Coder #1 was more skilled at finding sexual harassment myths in the editorials than Coder #2.

Coder #2 coded ten percent of the editorials (n=24) to establish inter-coder reliability. The inter-coder reliability formula was a widely used coefficient of reliability for content analysis that is the ratio of coding agreements to the total number of coding decisions: $C.R. = \frac{2M}{N1 + N2}$ (Holsti, 1969). In this formula M is the number of coding decisions on which the 2 coders are in agreement, and N1 and N2 refer to the number of coding decisions made by Coders #1 and #2, respectively. Using this formula, the coefficient of reliability in this study was .63, indicating a somewhat low level of inter-coder reliability.

However, using this formula to check the reliability of each coding category (myth) separately, the coefficient of

reliability for the categories ranged from .40 to .90. Generally, inter-coder reliability of at least .80 is considered optimal. This level was reached for only two myths. The coefficient of reliability for Myth #2 was .90 and the coefficient of reliability for Myth #8 was .80.

As indicated above, however, the coding of latent content typically yields lower reliability levels. Nevertheless, the results of this study must be interpreted as tentative.

The 240 sexual harassment editorials that composed the stratified random sample in this study were coded for the presence or absence of each of the eight sexual harassment myths. Editorials that referenced a myth(s) were further coded as either endorsing or challenging the myth(s).

An editorial's "endorsement" of a myth was defined as support for the myth or a suggestion that the myth was a fact rather than an incorrect social belief. A "challenge" was evident if the editorial did not support the myth or suggested that it was indeed a myth and a false social belief. If the same myth was referenced more than once within the same editorial, it was counted only once. However, if the same myth was both endorsed and challenged within the same editorial it was counted twice, as both challenged and endorsed. Also coded was what newspaper the editorial came from; when the editorial was written (i.e., before, during or after the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings); the gender of the author of the editorial (if available); and the specific topic of sexual harassment to which the editorial referred.

CHAPTER III

RESULTS

This chapter addresses the results of the study. Specifically, it describes how the results answered the research questions proposed in the Statement of Purpose. A set of tables also were included for better understanding of the results.

RESEARCH QUESTION #1: Do newspaper editorials make reference to sexual harassment myths? If so, how prevalent are each of the myths?

Of the 240 editorials coded, 133 (55.4%) did make reference to sexual harassment myths and 107 (45.6%) did not make reference to sexual harassment myths. In the 133 editorials that made reference to sexual harassment myths, myths were referenced a total of 177 times.

In a breakdown of the myths, a total of 2.3% (n=4) of the references were to Myth #1, with 58.7% (n=104) and 3.4% (n=6) of the references being to Myths #2 and #3, respectively. Myths #4 and #5 claimed 11.3% (n=20) and 0.6% (n=1) of the references, respectively, and Myths #6, #7, and #8 respectively received 9.6% (n=17), 4.5% (n=8), and 9.6% (n=17) of the references. (Please see Table II.)

RESEARCH QUESTION #2: In the editorials where myths are referenced, do the editorials endorse or challenge the sexual harassment myths? Which myths are endorsed or challenged?

TABLE II
FREQUENCY AND PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL MYTHS
REFERENCED, ENDORSED AND CHALLENGED
n = total number of myths

MYTHS USED FOR STUDY	REFERENCED CHALLENGED (n=177)	=	ENDORSED (n=32)	+	(n=145)
#1 Sexual harassment requires intent on the part of the harasser. If it is not intended, it is only harmless fun or flirting.	4 2.3%		3 9.4%		1 0.7%
#2 Sexual harassment is a fact of life that women must tolerate.	104 58.7%		10 31.3%		94 64.8%
#3 The harassing conduct must only be sexual to be sexual harassment.	6 3.4%		1 3.1%		5 3.5%
#4 In a sexual harassment charge it is often too hard to determine guilt, so sexual harassment laws and policies are useless.	20 11.3%		3 9.4%		17 11.7%
#5 Women harass men as much as men harass women.	1 0.6%		1 3.1%		0 0.0%
#6 Sexual harassment is just human nature (normal sexual attraction) that occurs between men and women.	17 9.6%		3 9.4%		14 9.7%
#7 If sexual harassment occurs and there is no adverse employment consequences for the victim, it was not sexual harassment.	8 4.5%		3 9.4%		5 3.5%
#8 Most sexual harassment charges are fabricated and impossible for innocent men to defend against	17 9.6%		8 25.0%		9 6.2%
	----- 177 100%		----- 32 100%		----- 145 100%

In the 133 editorials that referenced sexual harassment myths, the myths were referenced a total of 177 times. Of the 177 references, 32 of the myths (18.1%) were endorsed and 145 of the myths (81.9%) were challenged.

Myth #1 was endorsed in 9.4% (n=3) of the references and challenged in 0.7% (n=1) of the references. Myth #2 was endorsed in 31.3% (n=10) of the references and challenged in 64.8% (n=94) of the references. A total of 3.1% (n=1) of the endorsements and 3.5% (n=5) of the challenges were for Myth #3 and 9.4% (n=3) of the endorsements and 11.7% (n=17) of the challenges were for Myth #4. Myth #5 was endorsed in 3.1% (n=1) of the references and was challenged in 0.0% (n=0) of the references. Myth #6 was endorsed in 9.4% (n=3) of the references and challenged in 9.7% (n=14) of the references. A total of 9.4% (n=3) of the endorsements and 3.5% (n=5) of the challenges were for Myth #7. Finally, Myth #8 received 25.0% (n=8) of the endorsements and 6.2% (n=9) of the challenges. (Please see Table II.) (The Discussion section provides examples of editorials that endorse and challenge sexual harassment myths.)

RESEARCH QUESTION #3: Do newspaper editorials make reference to sexual harassment myths before, during and after the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings? If so, how prevalent are each of the myths before, during and after the hearings?

Of the 133 editorials that made reference to sexual harassment myths, 50 editorials (37.6%) were in the "before" category, 48 editorials (36.0%) were in the "during" category, and 35 editorials (26.3%) were in the "after"

category.

Of the 107 editorials which did not make reference to sexual harassment myths, 30 editorials (28.0%) were in the "before" category, 32 editorials (29.9%) were in the "during" category, and 45 editorials (42.0%) were in the "after" category.

As reported previously, in the 133 editorials that referenced sexual harassment myths, sexual harassment myths were referenced 177 times. Of the 177 times sexual harassment myths were referenced, they were referenced 73 times (41.2%) before the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings, 65 times (36.7%) during the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings, and 39 times (22.0%) after the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings.

Myth #1 was referenced 2 times (2.7%) before, 2 times (3.1%) during, and 0 times (0.0%) after the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings, while Myth #2 was referenced 38 times (52.1%) before, 34 times (52.3%) during and 32 times (82.1%) after the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings. Myth #3 was referenced 5 times (6.9%) before, 1 time (2.6%) during and 0 times (0.0%) after the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings, and Myth #4 was referenced 13 times (17.8%) before, 7 times (10.8%) during and 0 times (0.0%) after the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings.

A total of 1 reference (1.4%) to Myth #5 was before the hearings with 0 references (0.0%) for both before and after the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings. Myth #6 was referenced 10 times (13.7%) before, 4 times (6.2%) during, and 3 times (7.7%) after the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas

hearings. Myth #7 received 3 references (4.1%), 4 references (6.2%) and 1 reference (2.6%) before, during and after the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings, respectively. Finally, Myth #8 was referenced 1 time (1.4%) before, 13 times (20.0%) during and 3 times (7.7%) after the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings. (Please see Table III.)

RESEARCH QUESTION #4: In the editorials where myths are referenced, do the editorials endorse or challenge the sexual harassment myths before, during and after the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings?

Of the 73 sexual harassment myths referenced in editorials published before the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings, 7 myths (9.6%) were endorsed and 66 myths (90.4%) were challenged. Of the 65 sexual harassment myths referenced in editorials published during the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings, 21 myths (32.3%) were endorsed and 44 myths (67.7%) were challenged. Of the 39 sexual harassment myths referenced in editorials published after the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings, 4 myths (10.3%) were endorsed and 35 myths (89.7%) were challenged.

The number of times each myth was endorsed or challenged before, during, and after the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings also was tabulated. Myth #1 was endorsed 1 time (14.2%) before, 2 times (9.6%) during, and 0 times (0.0%) after the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings and challenged 1 time (1.5%) before, and 0 times (0.0%) during and after the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings. Myth #2 was endorsed 3 times (42.9%) before, 6 times (28.6%) during,

TABLE III
ANITA HILL/CLARENCE THOMAS HEARINGS TIME LINE
FREQUENCY AND PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL MYTHS REFERENCED
n = total number of myths

MYTHS USED FOR STUDY	BEFORE (n=73)	DURING (n=65)	AFTER (n=39)
#1 Sexual harassment requires intent on the part of the harasser. If it is not intended, it is only harmless fun or flirting.	2 2.7%	2 3.1%	0 0.0%
#2 Sexual harassment is a fact of life that women must tolerate.	38 52.1%	34 52.3%	32 82.1%
#3 The harassing conduct must only be sexual to be sexual harassment.	5 6.9%	1 2.6%	0 0.0%
#4 In a sexual harassment charge it is often too hard to determine guilt, so sexual harassment laws and policies are useless.	13 17.8%	7 10.8%	0 0.0%
#5 Women harass men as much as men harass women.	1 1.4%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
#6 Sexual harassment is just human nature (normal sexual attraction) that occurs between men and women.	10 13.7%	4 6.2%	3 7.7%
#7 If sexual harassment occurs and there is no adverse employment consequences for the victim, it was not sexual harassment.	3 4.1%	4 6.2%	1 2.6%
#8 Most sexual harassment charges are fabricated and impossible for innocent men to defend against.	1 1.4%	13 20.0%	3 7.7%
	----- 73 100%	----- 65 100%	----- 39 100%

and 1 time (25.0%) after the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings and was challenged 35 times (53.0%) before, 28 times (63.6%) during, and 31 times (88.6%) after the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings.

Myth #3 was endorsed 1 time (14.3%) before, and 0 times (0.0%) during and after the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings and challenged 4 times (6.1%) before, 1 time (2.3%) during, and 0 times (0.0%) after the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings. Myth #4 was endorsed 0 times (0.0%) before, 3 times (14.3%) during, and 0 times (0.0%) after the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings and challenged 13 times (19.7%) before, 4 times (9.1%) during, and 0 times (0.0%) after the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings.

Myth #5 was endorsed 1 time (14.3%) before, and 0 times (0.0%) during and after the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings and was challenged 0 times (0.0%) before, during, and after the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings. Myth #6 was endorsed 1 time (14.3%) before, 2 times (9.5%) during, and 0 times (0.0%) after the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings and challenged 9 times (13.6%) before, 2 times (4.6%) during, and 3 times (8.6%) after the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings.

Myth #7 was endorsed 0 times (0.0%) before, 3 times (14.3%) during, and 0 times (0.0%) after the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings and challenged 3 times (4.5%) before, 1 time (2.3%) during, and 1 time (2.9%) after the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings. Finally, Myth #8 was endorsed 0 times (0.0%) before, 5 times (23.8%) during, and 3 times (75.0%) after the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas

hearings and challenged 1 time (1.5%) before, 8 times (18.2%) during, and 0 times (0.0%) after the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings. (Please see Tables IV and V.)

Two additional issues that did not address the Research Questions were assessed in this study because of the importance of the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings. These issues were (1) total myths endorsed and challenged before, during, and after the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings, and (2) the number of editorials written about the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings compared to other sexual harassment issues or events. (Please see Appendix B and Appendix C for the results).

Another issue that was not addressed in the Research Questions but assessed in this study was the gender of the editorial writer and how often males versus females endorsed or challenged myths. (Please see Appendix D for results.)

TABLE IV
ANITA HILL/CLARENCE THOMAS HEARINGS TIME LINE
TOTAL ENDORSED MYTHS
n = number of endorsed myths

MYTHS USED FOR STUDY	BEFORE (n=7)	DURING (n=21)	AFTER (n=4)
#1 Sexual harassment requires intent on the part of the harasser. If it is not intended, it is only harmless fun or flirting.	1 14.2%	2 9.6%	0 0.0%
#2 Sexual harassment is a fact of life that women must tolerate.	3 42.9%	6 28.6%	1 25.0%
#3 The harassing conduct must only be sexual to be sexual harassment.	1 14.3%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
#4 In a sexual harassment charge it is often too hard to determine guilt, so sexual harassment laws and policies are useless.	0 0.0%	3 14.3%	0 0.0%
#5 Women harass men as much as men harass women.	1 14.3%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
#6 Sexual harassment is just human nature (normal sexual attraction) that occurs between men and women.	1 14.3%	2 9.5%	0 0.0%
#7 If sexual harassment occurs and there is no adverse employment consequences for the victim, it was not sexual harassment.	0 0.0%	3 14.3%	0 0.0%
#8 Most sexual harassment charges are fabricated and impossible for innocent men to defend against.	0 0.0%	5 23.8%	3 75.0%
	----- 7 100%	----- 21 100%	----- 4 100%

TABLE V
ANITA HILL/CLARENCE THOMAS HEARINGS TIME LINE
TOTAL CHALLENGED MYTHS
n = number of challenged myths

MYTHS USED FOR STUDY	BEFORE (n=66)	DURING (n=44)	AFTER (n=35)
#1 Sexual harassment requires intent on the part of the harasser. If it is not intended, it is only harmless fun or flirting.	1 1.5%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
#2 Sexual harassment is a fact of life that women must tolerate.	35 53.0%	28 63.6%	31 88.6%
#3 The harassing conduct must only be sexual to be sexual harassment.	4 6.1%	1 2.3%	0 0.0%
#4 In a sexual harassment charge it is often too hard to determine guilt, so sexual harassment laws and policies are useless.	13 19.7%	4 9.1%	0 0.0%
#5 Women harass men as much as men harass women.	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
#6 Sexual harassment is just human nature (normal sexual attraction) that occurs between men and women.	9 13.6%	2 4.6%	3 8.6%
#7 If sexual harassment occurs and there is no adverse employment consequences for the victim, it was not sexual harassment.	3 4.5%	1 2.3%	1 2.9%
#8 Most sexual harassment charges are fabricated and impossible for innocent men to defend against.	1 1.5%	8 18.2%	0 0.0%
	----- 66 100%	----- 44 100%	----- 35 100%

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

This chapter includes the discussion portion of the paper. How the results answered the research questions and what those results implied on both theoretical and practical levels are addressed. Overall conclusions of the study are discussed along with the importance of the findings of the study. Finally, the limitations of the study and suggestions for future research are given.

Sexual Harassment Myths in Newspaper Editorials

Whether or not newspaper editorials made reference to sexual harassment myths and which myths were made reference to was the first research question addressed in this study. A little more than half (55.4%) of the editorials did make a reference to sexual harassment myths while a little less than half (45.6%) did not.

Of the eight myths used for this study, some were consistently referenced while others were hardly referenced. However, one myth was overwhelmingly referenced. By far, the most referenced myth suggests that sexual harassment is a fact of life that women must tolerate (Myth #2 in this study). This myth received 58.7% of the references, more than half of all references to all the myths.

In contrast, the least referenced myth was almost nonexistent in this study. The myth that suggests women harass men as much as men harass women (Myth #5 in this

study) only received one reference (0.6%).

Theoretical Implications

Several implications are evident from these findings. First, since more than half of the newspaper editorials coded in this study referenced sexual harassment myths, it can be concluded that sexual harassment myths are a major part of the discourse that exists in the newspaper editorials used in this study. Second, and more importantly, with more than half of the references to the myth that suggests sexual harassment is a "fact of life," it appears that this myth was particularly prevalent in the newspaper editorials. This myth is a sweeping statement about sexual harassment and may describe the sentiments or emotions that were attached to sexual harassment issues in editorials written between 1986 and 1996.

The agenda-setting/priming theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Iyengar & Kinder, 1987) suggests the media have the power to make audiences think some issues are more important than others by highlighting them. The editorial writers of this study used their agenda-setting/priming influence by referencing and discussing sexual harassment myths. Thus, they may have persuaded readers to believe that sexual harassment is an important issue. Also, by overwhelmingly making reference to the "fact of life" myth, editorial writers in this study emphasize that this myth is prominent part of sexual harassment discourse in society.

The least referenced myth, that suggests women harass

men as much as men harass women, also has implications. It is possible that this myth was only referenced once because most of the editorial writers in this study believe this is an unimportant myth. Such a lack of reference or "agenda-setting/priming" to this myth by the editorial writers could mean that this is not a common misconception of sexual harassment.

Challenged and Endorsed Sexual Harassment Myths **In Newspaper Editorials**

The second research question addressed the editorials that referenced myths and whether or not the myths in those editorials were either endorsed or challenged. The most important finding of this study is that sexual harassment myths overwhelmingly were challenged by newspaper editorial writers. Only 18.1% of the myths found in newspaper editorials were endorsed while the large majority, 81.9%, of the myths found in newspaper editorials were challenged.

The myth that suggests sexual harassment is a "fact of life" (Myth #2) was challenged most consistently. This myth was found in 58.7% of the newspaper editorials that made reference to sexual harassment myths, and 64.8% of all challenges were toward this myth.

Time and again decisive challenges were offered to newspaper readers to not accept this "fact of life" myth. For example, in the Nov. 10, 1992 issue of the Los Angeles Times the editorial writer charges:

It is certainly in employers' best interests to have a very clear policy regarding sexual harassment so that they put every one of their employees on notice that this conduct will not be tolerated.

In the June 27, 1992 issue of the Los Angeles Times the editorial writer states about sexual harassment in the Navy:

Prof. Anita Hill's charges of sexual harassment by now-Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas last September riveted the nation and sparked a long-overdue dialogue between men and women about the nature of harassment and ways to eliminate it. That sometimes painful dialogue must continue, both inside and outside the Navy, and the sexist attitudes that caused the intolerable behavior at the Tailhook convention must change.

And, in the November 28, 1993 issue of the Chicago Tribune the editorial writer discusses a Supreme Court sexual harassment case:

Have women yet achieved position of power and wealth equal to men's? Nah. But this case makes that goal just a little more possible. The work world of the 90's is too competitive a place for sexual harassment. Such conduct detracts from productivity. Hopefully, true fossils who mourn the loss of freedom to demean women will retire, and fossils in training will be disciplined or fired for sexual harassment. The most likely result of this case is freeing the work environment from every kind of insidious discrimination. What was acceptable in the past ('Hi, babe. Get my coffee. Call my wife.') will not be tolerated in the future.

These examples are only a few of the many that consistently challenged the myth that sexual harassment is a fact of life that women must tolerate. Further, these

challenges appeared in editorials throughout the 1986 to 1996 time frame of the study. Of the 104 references to this myth, 35 were challenged before the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearing, 28 were challenged during the hearings, and 31 were challenged after the hearings. These findings strongly suggest that a majority of newspaper editorial writers of this study believe sexual harassment is not a fact of life that women must tolerate, and that editorial writers have held this belief fairly consistently during the past decade.

The second-most and third-most challenged myths were each referenced in about 10% of the newspaper editorials. Myth #4, which views sexual harassment laws and policies as useless because it is difficult to determine guilt, was challenged in 11.7% of the total number of challenges. Myth #6, which portrays sexual harassment as human nature and normal sexual attraction, was challenged in 9.7% of the total number of challenges. Very few editorials endorsed these myths.

For example, in The New York Times on June 24, 1986 an editorial challenges Myth #4 by discussing the Meritor Savings v. Vinson (1986) Supreme Court decision:

The decision does not answer all questions. The problems of proof and credibility are innumerable. However, the right to equal treatment need not be limited to freedom of economic discrimination, as the Court has now made plain. A woman need not endure unwelcome advances that create a hostile or offensive working environment.

And, in the April 3, 1994 issue of the Los Angeles Times an

editorial writer challenges Myth #6 when discussing the widespread sexual harassment in the Los Angeles Police Department:

Anyone skeptical of the truth of these accusations need only attend the City Council Personnel Committee hearings currently in progress. The first-person horror stories, ranging from improper comments to rape, being told to council members are appalling, especially in the light of the LAPD's efforts to recruit more women. Even more appalling is the message implied by the reported responses of management to these complaints: This is what happens when men and women work together; we have more important things to do...It is time the City Council and mayor work together to make available the resources needed to deal with misconduct in the LAPD. The relatively few dollars involved would be a pittance when compared with the harmful consequences of anything less.

These editorials, collectively with others like it, could etch away at the misconceptions about some important issues surrounding sexual harassment like the laws and policies pertaining to the phenomenon and what behaviors constitute sexual harassment.

Theoretical Implications of Challenges to Myths

There are many theoretical implications for the number of challenges to sexual harassment myths in the newspaper editorials used for this study.

The cultivation theory (Gerbner, 1969) contends the media teach the values, myths and moral lessons of society. The agenda-setting/priming theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972, Iyengar & Kinder, 1987) suggests the media have the power to

emphasize issues to be more important than others by making information about those issues more accessible to audiences. In light of these theories, the findings of this study suggest that newspaper editorial writers in this study may be helping readers to shape their beliefs about sexual harassment in a way that rejects common sexual harassment myths. By emphasizing the issue of sexual harassment and challenging myths about sexual harassment, especially the overwhelming rejection of the "fact of life" myth, a large majority of newspaper editorial writers are suggesting that sexual harassment is wrong. To the extent that readers' beliefs about sexual harassment are influenced by the content of newspaper editorials, editorial writers are not acting as myth makers but may be helping to reduce tolerance for sexual harassment within society.

The editorial writers of this study are addressing the socialization explanation for sexual harassment through the overwhelming number of challenges to the myth that suggests that sexual harassment is a "fact of life" that women must tolerate (Myth #2). According to Kramarae (1992), sexual harassment is explained in socialization perspectives as involving the expression and enforcement of power through a gender hierarchy. Challenges to this "fact of life" myth could imply that the editorial writers of this study may believe that this type of socialization of girls and women is wrong. The findings suggest that many editorial writers of this study are writing about this "fact of life" perspective of sexual harassment and challenging its merits.

The challenges by the editorial writers in this study

to Myth #4, that portrays sexual harassment laws and policies as useless because it is hard to determine guilt, addressed the organizational explanation for sexual harassment. According to Tangri, Burt and Johnson (1982), the organizational perspective concludes that working environments are structured to foster a climate for sexually harassing behaviors to occur among employees. The many editorial writers in this study who challenged Myth #4, the second-most referenced and challenged myth, suggests they do not accept this explanation for sexual harassment as inevitable. By influencing readers to believe that sexual harassment laws and policies are useful in helping to create a healthy working environment, the editorial writers of this study are contending that it is possible and appropriate to change working environments that foster sexual harassment.

Tangri, Burt and Johnson (1982) also offered the biological explanation for why sexual harassment occurs in society. This perspective suggests that sexual harassment is natural sexual attraction between people. Many of the editorial writers of this study challenged this biological perspective as an explanation for sexual harassment by challenging Myth #6. As the third-most challenged myth, Myth #6 suggests that sexual harassment is just human nature and normal sexual attraction between men and women. These findings suggest that the biological explanation for the occurrence of sexual harassment is not one that most editorial writers of this study will endorse.

Practical Implications of Challenges to Myths

There are practical implications of the challenges to the second-most and third-most referenced and challenged myths (Myth #4 and Myth #6, respectively).

Practically, these findings could aid in the clarification of the definition of sexual harassment and the policies developed to control the phenomenon. These two myths view sexual harassment laws as useless because it is difficult to determine guilt and portrays sexual harassment as human nature and normal sexual attraction (Myths #4 and #6, respectively). Fitzgerald (1990) said the lack of a widely agreed upon definition of sexual harassment is likely to continue until the complex phenomenon is better understood. According to Laabs (1995), most employers said their workers don't share a common definition of sexual harassment. The same survey also said that most employers thoroughly investigate sexual harassment claims because it is often one person's word against another.

The newspaper editorial writers in this study who challenged Myth #4 may have influenced their readers to understand that guilt in a sexual harassment case can be determined through correct use of sexual harassment laws and policies, and thus, those laws and policies are useful and essential for stopping sexual harassment in working and educational environments.

The large number of challenges to Myth #6 by the editorial writers of this study could combat the problem of confusion with the definition of sexual harassment. The

challenges to this myth that portrays sexual harassment as normal sexual attraction could help readers to understand that sexual harassment is not normal, but a phenomenon that includes harassing and intimidating behaviors on the part of the harasser to control the victim.

Theoretical Implications of Endorsements to Myths

There were some endorsements of sexual harassment myths by the newspaper editorial writers in this study, but not as many as some of the sexual harassment literature would predict. Using a discursive explanation for sexual harassment, Erhlich and King (1994) said that nonsexist language often is altered through contemporary media to sexist stereotypes and distinctions. The researchers focused on the print media and said it had a common practice of giving readers an incorrect meaning of sexual harassment. The relatively low number of endorsements of sexual harassment myths in this study suggests that the editorial writers are not engaging in the common practice of giving readers an incorrect definition of sexual harassment. Further, as stated earlier, the many challenges to certain sexual harassment myths (Myths #4 and #6) by the editorial writers of this study could be helping readers to better understand the correct meaning of sexual harassment and its laws and policies.

Clair (1994) recognized three discursive framing techniques that perpetuate sexual harassment: trivialization, denotative hesitancy, and private domain.

She suggested that resistive discursive practices are needed to challenge the status quo and to bring about change. The findings of this study suggest the majority of editorial writers are not using Clair's discursive framing techniques to perpetuate sexual harassment. By not endorsing sexual harassment myths but challenging them, the editorial writers of this study are using resistive discourse to reduce tolerance for sexual harassment in society.

Overall Implications of Research Questions #1 and #2

Overall, the findings of Research Questions #1 and #2 are optimistic. Though more than half of the newspaper editorials used in this study referenced sexual harassment myths, the overwhelming majority of those references to sexual harassment myths were challenges by the editorial writers. The editorial writers of this study used their power to influence readers in an ethical manner by challenging sexual harassment myths. Thus, lowering the tolerance for sexual harassment in society.

There is not much research about sexual harassment in the media and the few studies included in that research found a great deal of sexual harassment perpetuated in the media (Axelrod, 1993; Skill, Robinson and Kinsella, 1995). Though this study can only conclude about the editorials published in the four newspapers used in this research, the findings could imply that editorials are not like other forms of media when disseminating information about sexual harassment. Since the other two studies dealt with prime

time television shows and movies as units of analysis, it could be implied that television and movies are not held to the same standards of informativeness, truth, accuracy, objectivity and balance as newspaper editorials (McQuail, 1983). The majority of newspaper editorial writers of this study did not act as myth makers by including information in their editorials that supported sexual harassment myths. Instead, by challenging sexual harassment myths, the majority of newspaper editorial writers of this study fulfilled their obligation to society by meeting their professional standards of informativeness, truth, accuracy, objectivity and balance.

Though we see myths being challenged within the newspaper editorials of this study, sexual harassment continues to plague society. Progress has been made for lowering the tolerance for sexual harassment, however, social change is long coming. There are many other influences in society that perpetuate sexual harassment, like sex discrimination in the workplace, a lack of effective sexual harassment policies in working and educational environments that provide serious consequences for the harasser, a low number of victims reporting sexual harassment, and the list goes on.

The degree of influence that newspaper editorials have on society is not known and there are some researchers (Bogart, 1981) who suggest that the level of readership of newspapers is declining. Thus, even if editorials consistently challenge sexual harassment myths, the impact of these challenges on public understanding of sexual

harassment could be overwhelmed by forces which either perpetuate the myths, or may be fostering sexual harassment other ways.

The Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas Hearings

There is no doubt that the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings played a very important part in the dissemination of information to societies around the world about the phenomenon of sexual harassment, especially here in the United States. Of the 240 editorials coded in this study, 25% of them were devoted to the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings. An additional 2% of the editorials were written about Anita Hill after the hearings concluded.

Research Question #3 asked if newspaper editorials made reference to sexual harassment myths before, during and after the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings. A total of 37.6% of the myths referenced were before the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings, 36.0% of the myths referenced were during the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings, and 26.3% of the myths referenced were after the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings. These findings show that the total number of sexual harassment myths referenced decreased as time went on in the study.

Viewing each myth separately, the number for each myth referenced decreased as time went on except for one myth, Myth #8. Myth #8, which suggests most sexual harassment charges are fabricated and impossible for innocent men to

defend against, was referenced 1 time before the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings, 13 times during the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings, and 3 times after the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings in the editorials used for this study. These findings suggest that fabrication of sexual harassment was considered an important issue during the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings.

Research Question #4 addressed the editorials that referenced sexual harassment myths and whether those editorials either endorsed or challenged the myths before, during and after the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings. While the number of challenges to sexual harassment myths in the newspaper editorials that referenced myths decreased as time went on, the number of endorsements of sexual harassment myths had a different trend.

The highest number of endorsements (n=21) occurred during the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings. Only 7 endorsements of sexual harassment myths occurred before the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings and 4 endorsements occurred after the hearings. During the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings, the myth that suggests sexual harassment is a fact of life that women must tolerate (Myth #2) was endorsed most (28.6%). Myth #8, which views most sexual harassment charges as fabricated and impossible for innocent men to defend against, was endorsed a close second-most (23.8%) during the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings. These two myths are indicative of some of the negative sentiments about sexual harassment that encompassed those Supreme Court nomination hearings.

According to Littleton (1992), many of the Senators questioning Anita Hill used myths about sexual harassment during the Supreme Court nomination hearings. This was evident in the editorials coded in this study that were written during the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings. It appeared many Senators did not believe Hill and felt she was using sexual harassment as a way to destroy Thomas' chance at being the next Supreme Court Justice. The senators also showed a real lack of concern about the alleged sexual harassment by Clarence Thomas. They seemed to trivialize the importance of even addressing the issue.

As sources of information for journalists, some Senators may have been the reason that Myth #2 and #8 were heavily endorsed in the media during this time frame. Statements from Senators who did not believe Anita Hill and/or who trivialized the alleged sexual harassment probably influenced the general comments that appeared in the newspaper editorials. These comments could have taken the form of the endorsements of Myth #2 and Myth #8. However, it is important to note that Myth #8 also was challenged during the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings more often (18.2%) than in other time periods. These findings suggest not only the emphasis put on this myth during the hearings, but also reveal that some editorial writers recognized and challenged the myth, even though their sources may have endorsed it.

For example in the October 8, 1991 issue of the Chicago Tribune the editorial writer endorses both Myth #2 and #8 during the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings:

After months of scrutiny and two weeks of exhaustive hearings before the Senate Judiciary Committee, Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas suddenly finds himself publicly accused of sexual harassment by a former assistant. The charge came at the 11th hour, just two days before the full Senate was scheduled to vote whether to confirm Thomas. This should not stop the Senate from proceeding with the vote it had planned for today, or from approving the nomination...These types of allegations are sensational and not serious...The crucial facts about Clarence Thomas were known before this charge came to light. He has a record of achievement in public office, a demonstrated intellectual seriousness about the law and an admirable courage in defending unpopular points of view. It would be a shame if a lurid, last-minute accusation were to deprive the country of his service on the Supreme Court.

In the October 11, 1991 issue of the Los Angeles Times, the editorial writer endorses Myth #2, the "fact of life" myth during the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings:

Women are fragile. Women are dangerous. Women are not equal to men. Those are the messages coming out of Washington. By taking Anita Hill's charges seriously, Congress and the media are insulting American women and teaching the country a dangerous lesson. Hill's charges are trivial--or at least they ought to be. Hill has declared that Thomas asked her out several times and that he described pornographic movies to her. Such accusations are no big deal.

In the December 29, 1991 issue of the Chicago Tribune, the editorial writer challenged Myth #8:

This is the year when women lost their credibility, the year when we were all dismissed as crying wolf...The allegations made by several outspoken women--Patricia Bowman, William Kennedy Smith's accuser; Anita Hill; Roseanne Arnold; and

Latoya Jackson-- have not been so outrageous. Yet we fail to believe them...I felt a chill hearing the announcement that Thomas was named to the Supreme Court. The harrowing weeks of humiliation endured by Hill were swept aside. The weeks of being forced to repeat or listen to again and again the vulgarities and overtly degrading comments she claims she was told and the sexual harassment she allegedly received were for naught. We figured she must be lying...Liars, liars, liars. We call all the women liars. Perhaps life will be simpler if in any confrontation involving a man and a woman's credibility, the loser is already decided. Now that, I know, is a lie.

Overall, the findings that addressed Research Questions #3 and #4 reflect on the importance of the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings to the issue of sexual harassment and its relationship with the media. The number of newspaper editorials used in this study that covered the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings reveals the great amount of media attention these four newspapers gave to this event. Thus, as the agenda-setting/priming theory suggests the newspaper editorials of this study may have increased the awareness and importance for the phenomenon of sexual harassment by highlighting the issue and making information about sexual harassment available to readers.

The high number of endorsements of sexual harassment myths in the editorials used in this study during the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings suggest there was a high level of oppressive discourse about sexual harassment during the hearings from some of the newspaper media and their sources. These findings could imply that the some of the newspaper editorial writers of this study could have contributed to the perpetuation of sexual harassment during the Anita

Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings.

The Importance of the Findings of this Study

The findings of this study offer limited good news for the phenomenon of sexual harassment. Today, sexual harassment issues continue to be highlighted by the news media. Yet, sexual harassment continues to permeate society.

The agenda-setting/priming theory contends if the media emphasize sexual harassment and make knowledge about it accessible to the masses, audiences will pay attention to the issue and consider it to be an important one. And, as the cultivation theory contends, if the media challenge myths about sexual harassment, audiences also will learn not to accept myths about sexual harassment. This research offers important evidence that the majority of newspaper editorials in this study are emphasizing the issue of sexual harassment and are doing it with a positive spin by challenging sexual harassment myths. Hence, the majority of newspaper editorials in this study are combating sexual harassment.

Gerbner said (1972) the media have acquired such a central role in the everyday life of American society that they are the dominant source of information for audiences. The importance of this study is that the findings offer an optimistic view of Gerbner's statement. If the editorial writers of this study are ethically using their influential role in society by emphasizing the dilemma of sexual harassment and challenging sexual harassment myths, these

findings suggest a lower tolerance for sexual harassment from newspaper readers. Editorials are only one of many influences on beliefs about sexual harassment. Although the findings of this study offer good news, it is limited good news.

This study can only offer conclusions about the four newspapers used in this research and the overall influence newspaper have on society is unknown, but if the elite newspapers of this study do influence smaller newspapers to devote coverage to sexual harassment issues and to challenge sexual harassment myths, the findings of this study could be more far reaching.

The findings that pertained to the importance of the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings are relevant to the issue of sexual harassment. Before the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings, sexual harassment was a lesser known issue. However, during the event so much media coverage was devoted to the issue of sexual harassment that the phenomenon became a household term. The four newspapers of this study extensively covered the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings. No other sexual harassment topic or event of this study came close to receiving the number of editorials that was devoted to the hearings. Further, these elite newspapers have the power to set trends for smaller newspapers. The few days that Anita Hill sat before the senate committee charged to find a new supreme court justice opened a door for victims of sexual harassment. Her courage to speak up and be the minority voice to contest the discourse of the status quo caught the attention of the media and the masses.

Limitations of the Study

The results of this study suggest some limitations. The major limitation of this study is high subjectivity and low reliability of the methodology. In spite of the careful procedures I used to train my coder, the level of agreement between coders was somewhat low. Different training procedures and descriptions of coding categories may be needed in future work. It also is possible that a coder who began with more knowledge about the subject of sexual harassment would be able to recognize more sexual harassment myths within the text of a newspaper editorial. My coder was an intelligent colleague, but he had little prior experience with the subject of sexual harassment.

A coder's age, gender, socialization and personal experience with sexual harassment also may influence his/her judgments of sexual harassment myths. Certain editorial comments on sexual harassment by an editorial writer might be viewed as a myth by one coder but not another. As stated in the literature review, sexual harassment is a complex phenomenon that people define, interpret and perceive in different ways. Because of these influences, this type of study most likely always will have high subjectivity and lower reliability.

A second limitation of this study is that the list of sexual harassment myths that was examined was not exhaustive. As the coding process progressed, it was apparent there are several other myths about sexual

harassment being challenged and endorsed within the text of newspaper editorials. Some examples of other myths found in this study include: Sexual harassment is a private matter; Sexual harassment is only committed by perverts; Sexual harassment is not a serious issue; If you don't complain about sexual harassment, you must not have been sexually harassed; or If you are not touched, you are not sexually harassed. Also, a specific myth was connected to the alleged sexual harassment of Paula Jones by President Bill Clinton. One editorial writer suggested that the charges against Bill Clinton were false because Paula Jones was suing for money. His reasoning was because when Anita Hill testified before the Senate committee she was not doing it for money but for justice. He compared Jones to Hill and said because Jones is suing for money her accusations must be false.

A third limitation of the study is the number of newspaper editorials examined. A larger sample of newspaper editorials from cities across the United States would provide more comprehensive findings about the level of reference, endorsement and challenge of sexual harassment myths.

Suggestions for Future Study

The results of this study suggest several directions for future research. First, future research should investigate the historical presence of sexual harassment myths. Do certain myths appear more often in certain periods of time? Are some myths eventually dispelled over time? As

myths disappear from the discourse of society, do new myths appear? For example, there was a time when some members of society believed that women asked for sexual harassment because of the way they behaved or dressed. However, this myth was not included in this study because it was not mentioned in recent literature as a current sexual harassment myth. Further, an ad-hoc analysis of the data revealed that the myth never once appeared in the editorials coded.

Also, the historical impact of the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings on the issue of sexual harassment should be examined. The present study found that there was a decrease in references to most sexual harassment myths after the Hill/Thomas hearings concluded. Future research could include statistical analysis of the frequency of myths referenced, endorsed and challenged in the newspaper editorials before, during and after the hearings.

Gender of editorial writers could be specifically studied in their connection to sexual harassment myths. Exploratory analysis of the data in this study suggested that female editorial writers may be less likely to endorse sexual harassment myths than male editorial writers. Do male editorial writers endorse or challenge more myths than female writers? Are there specific myths about sexual harassment that more female writers challenge than male writers? Are there more female writers (or editorial boards), per capita, choosing to write about sexual harassment than male writers (or editorial boards)?

The relationship that editorial writers have with their

sources and how that affects their job performance also could be studied. This study showed that 45% of the editorials did not reference sexual harassment myths. Why? Is it because the editorial writers did not want to write editorials that are too controversial and risk offending much needed sources of information? Who are the editorial writers that are not referencing sexual harassment myths? Why would they back away from referencing sexual harassment myths?

The role that newspapers play in challenging or endorsing sexual harassment myths also could be studied. Do certain newspapers devote more space to the topic of sexual harassment? Which newspaper endorses or challenges more myths about sexual harassment? Are there certain myths that certain newspapers challenge or endorse more often? Finally, are any of these questions related to the region of the country in which the newspaper is located? For example, in this study the number of sexual harassment editorials published in the Chicago Tribune was much lower than the number of sexual harassment editorials published in the New York Times, Washington Post and Los Angeles Times.

A survey of victims of sexual harassment who officially charged their harassers to find out what sources of information helped them to step forward and seek legal retribution could be a topic of future study. How important is the role of newspaper editorials in this process? What other forms of communication influence victims of sexual harassment to step forward?

Since past research on sexual harassment in the media

is limited, the number of ideas for future study is unlimited. This line of research could add insight not only to the phenomenon of sexual harassment but to the influence the media have on this issue and how that influence could affect similar issues. The importance of this type of research is that it can offer a specific perspective about the relationship between issues like sexual harassment and the media of this nation.

**APPENDIX A
RESULTS OF THE PRE-STUDY**

The Sarasota Herald-Tribune of Sarasota, Florida was used as the source of editorials for the Pre-study. A total of 21 editorials that addressed the issue of sexual harassment were chosen and coded for sexual harassment myths. The editorials were chosen from the 1986 to 1996 time period used in the formal study.

Eight sexual harassment myths were used as coding categories in the pre-study. They included:

MYTH #1) SEXUAL HARASSMENT REQUIRES INTENT ON THE PART OF THE HARASSER. IF IT IS NOT INTENDED, IT IS ONLY HARMLESS FUN OR FLIRTING.

MYTH #2) SEXUAL HARASSMENT IS A FACT OF LIFE THAT WOMEN MUST TOLERATE.

MYTH #3) THE HARASSING CONDUCT MUST ONLY BE SEXUAL TO BE SEXUAL HARASSMENT.

MYTH #4) IN A SEXUAL HARASSMENT CHARGE IT IS OFTEN TOO HARD TO DETERMINE GUILT, SO SEXUAL HARASSMENT LAWS AND POLICIES ARE USELESS.

MYTH #5) WOMEN HARASS MEN AS MUCH AS MEN HARASS WOMEN.

MYTH #6) SEXUAL HARASSMENT IS JUST HUMAN NATURE (NORMAL SEXUAL ATTRACTION) THAT OCCURS BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN.

MYTH #7) IF SEXUAL HARASSMENT OCCURS AND THERE IS NO ADVERSE EMPLOYMENT CONSEQUENCES FOR THE VICTIM, IT WAS NOT SEXUAL HARASSMENT.

MYTH #8) MOST SEXUAL HARASSMENT CHARGES ARE FABRICATED AND IMPOSSIBLE FOR INNOCENT MEN TO DEFEND AGAINST.

RESEARCH QUESTION #1: Do newspaper editorials make reference to sexual harassment myths? If so, how prevalent are each of the myths?

A total of 20 editorials referenced sexual harassment myths in the pre-study and one editorial did not reference sexual harassment myths. A breakdown of how often each myth was referenced was as follows:

Myth #1) 1 reference
Myth #2) 13 references
Myth #3) 3 references
Myth #4) 2 references
Myth #5) 0 references
Myth #6) 4 references
Myth #7) 3 references
Myth #8) 7 references

RESEARCH QUESTION #2) In the editorials where myths are referenced, do the editorials endorse or challenge the sexual harassment myths? Which myths are endorsed or challenged?

Of the 33 myths referenced, a total of 29 myths were challenged and 4 were endorsed. The breakdown of which myths were challenged or endorsed were as follows:

Myth #1) 1 challenge
Myth #2) 13 challenges
Myth #3) 1 endorsement, 2 challenges
Myth #4) 2 challenges
Myth #5) 0 references
Myth #6) 4 challenges

Myth #7) 3 challenges

Myth #8) 3 endorsements, 4 challenges

RESEARCH QUESTION #3: Do newspaper editorials make reference to sexual harassment myths before, during and after the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings? If so, how prevalent are each of the myths before, during and after the hearings?

There were no editorials used in the pre-study from before the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings. Of the 21 editorials in the pre-study, 10 addressed the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas issue during and around the time of the hearings. Of the 21 editorials used in the pre-study, 11 addressed issues of sexual harassment after the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings.

All of the 10 editorials written during the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings referenced sexual harassment myths. A total of 16 myths were referenced in those 10 editorials. A breakdown of which myths and how often they were referenced during the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings was as follows:

Myth #1) 0 references

Myth #2) 6 references

Myth #3) 1 reference

Myth #4) 1 reference

Myth #5) 0 references

Myth #6) 2 references

Myth #7) 0 references

Myth #8) 6 references

A total of 10 of the 11 editorials published after the

Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings referenced myths. Of the 10 editorials that referenced myths, a total of 17 myths were found. The breakdown of which myths and how often they were referenced were as follows:

Myth #1) 1 reference
Myth #2) 7 references
Myth #3) 2 references
Myth #4) 1 reference
Myth #5) 0 references
Myth #6) 2 references
Myth #7) 3 references
Myth #8) 1 reference

RESEARCH QUESTION #4: In the editorials where myths are referenced, do the editorials endorse or challenge the sexual harassment myths before, during and after the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings?

There were 10 editorials referencing a total of 16 myths during the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings. A total of 13 of the 16 myths found were challenged and 3 were endorsed. The breakdown of which myth and how often it was challenged or endorsed during the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings was as follows:

Myth #1) 0 references
Myth #2) 6 challenges
Myth #3) 1 challenge
Myth #4) 1 challenge
Myth #5) 0 references
Myth #6) 2 challenges

Myth #7) 0 references

Myth #8) 3 endorsements, 3 challenges

There were 10 editorials after the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings referencing a total of 17 myths. Of the 17 myths, only one myth was endorsed and the remaining 16 were challenged. The breakdown of which myths and how often they were endorsed or challenged were as follows:

Myth #1) 1 challenge

Myth #2) 7 challenges

Myth #3) 1 endorsement, 1 challenge

Myth #4) 1 challenge

Myth #5) 0 references

Myth #6) 2 challenges

Myth #7) 3 challenges

Myth #8) 1 challenge

A third area addressed in the pre-study was the sex of the editorial writer. All 21 editorials were coded for the sex of the editorial writer. A total of 10 of the editorial writers were female and 11 were male. Of the 33 referenced myths, 21 references came from female writers and 12 references came from male writers. Of the 33 myths referenced, 4 were endorsed and 29 were challenged. All 4 endorsed myths were done by male editorial writers. There were 21 challenged myths from the female writers and 8 challenged myths from the male writers.

A fourth area addressed in the pre-study was the topic of the editorial pertaining to the issue of sexual

harassment. Of the 21 editorials coded, 11 of them were about the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings, 8 were about the allegations of sexual harassment against Sen. Bob Packwood, one was about classroom free speech vs. sexual harassment, and the last one was about sexual equality addressed at the Women's Conference in Beijing.

HIGHLIGHTED RESULTS

**Myth #2, Sexual Harassment is a Fact of Life that Women Must Tolerate, was overwhelmingly referenced (13 times) more than the other myths. The second most referenced was Myth #8, Most Sexual Harassment Charges are Fabricated and Impossible for Innocent Men to Defend Against, with 7 references.

**Myth #2, Sexual Harassment is a Fact of Life that Women Must Tolerate, was overwhelmingly challenged. Of the 13 times it was referenced it was challenged every time. Myth #6, Sexual Harassment is Just Human Nature (Normal Sexual Attraction) That Occurs Between Men and Women, and Myth #8, Most Sexual Harassment Charges are Fabricated and Impossible for Innocent Men to Defend Against, were the second most challenged myths with 4 challenges each.

**Myth #8, Most Sexual Harassment Charges are Fabricated and Impossible for Innocent Men to Defend Against, was the most endorsed myth with 3 endorsements out of the 4 total endorsements. The other myth endorsed was Myth #3, The Harassing Conduct Must Only be Sexual to be Sexual Harassment.

**Of the 4 endorsements, all were written by male editorial

writers.

**Of the 29 challenges, 21 were written by female editorial writers.

**Myth #2, Sexual Harassment is a Fact of Life that Women Must Tolerate, and Myth #8, Most Sexual Harassment Charges are Fabricated and Impossible for Innocent Men to Defend Against, were the most referenced myths during the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas Hearings, with 6 references each.

**Myth #2, Sexual Harassment is a Fact of Life that Women Must Tolerate, was the most referenced myth after the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings.

**Of the 4 endorsements, 3 of them were Myth #8 (Most Sexual Harassment Charges are Fabricated and Hard for Innocent Men to Defend Against) and were written during and about the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings.

**Of the 4 endorsements, only one myth (Myth #3 The Harassing Conduct Must be Sexual to be Sexual Harassment) was written after the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearing and in an editorial about classroom free speech vs. sexual harassment.

**Myth #5, Women Harass Men as Much as Men Harass Women, was the only myth that was not referenced in any of the editorials.

**Only 1 editorial of the 21 coded for sexual harassment myths did not reference a sexual harassment myth.

APPENDIX B

TOTAL NUMBER OF MYTHS ENDORSED AND CHALLENGED BEFORE, DURING
AND AFTER THE ANITA HILL/CLARENCE THOMAS HEARINGS

As an additional issue that was not addressed in the research questions, the total number of myths endorsed and challenged before, during and after the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings was assessed.

As reported earlier, 32 myths (18.1%) were endorsed and 145 myths (81.9%) were challenged. Of the 32 endorsed myths, 21.9% (n=7) of the myths were endorsed before, 65.6% (n=21) of the myths were endorsed during, and 12.5% (n=4) of the myths were endorsed after the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings. Of the 145 challenged myths, 45.5% (n=66) of the myths were challenged before, 30.3% (n=44) of the myths were challenged during, and 24.1% (n=35) of the myths were challenged after the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings.

These results also show the highest number of endorsements of sexual harassment myths (65.6%) occurred during the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings. The other percentages show a consistent drop in the number of both challenges and endorsements to sexual harassment myths as time went on.

APPENDIX C
THE 15 MOST REFERENCED SEXUAL HARASSMENT
TOPICS IN NEWSPAPER EDITORIALS

An additional issue that was not addressed in the research questions was the number of editorials written about the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearing compared to other sexual harassment issues or events.

There were 36 different sexual harassment topics covered in the 240 newspaper editorials coded. Since there was one topic covered in each editorial, every editorial was put into only one topic category. The breakdown of the 15 most referenced sexual harassment topics is shown in Table 6.

The days that Anita Hill testified at the hearings for Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas overwhelmingly received the most coverage among the editorials coded in this study with 60 editorials, 25.0% of the total number of editorials, devoted to this event. All of these editorials were written during the hearings. There were 5 additional editorials, 2.1% of the total number of editorials, that were written solely about Anita Hill after the hearings.

A total of 19 (7.9%) of the editorials covered the issue of sexual harassment as it pertained to women's rights or equal rights for women, and 17 (7.1%) of the editorials were written about the issue of sexual harassment as it pertained to women in the military. And, an additional 5 (2.1%) editorials were written about the sexual harassment that took place at the Navy's Tailhook convention.

Sexual harassment of women working in and around the United States Congress was discussed 7.9% (n=17) of the time and 4.2% (n=10) of the editorials were devoted to Supreme Court decisions about sexual harassment, the Civil Rights Act of 1991, sexual harassment in local or state governments, and sexual harassment at educational institutions, respectively.

A total of 9 (3.8%) of the editorials respectively covered the issues of sexual harassment at work; the sexual harassment of female firefighters, police officers and sheriff deputies; and the alleged sexual harassment of Paula Jones by President Bill Clinton.

The sexual harassment of multiple female employees by Senator Bob Packwood was written about in 7 (2.9%) of the editorials and a total of 5 (2.0%) of the editorials were written about the struggle between sexual harassment policies and the freedom of speech/expression.

APPENDIX C
THE 15 MOST REFERENCED SEXUAL HARASSMENT
TOPICS IN NEWSPAPER EDITORIALS

	TOPICS	FREQUENCY (n=240 EDITORIALS)	PERCENTAGE (OF TOTAL)
1)	ANITA HILL / CLARENCE THOMAS HEARINGS	60	25.0%
2)	WOMEN'S RIGHTS/EQUAL RIGHTS FOR WOMEN	19	7.9%
3)	SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN THE MILITARY	17	7.1%
4)	SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS	17	7.1%
5)	SUPREME COURT DECISIONS ABOUT SEXUAL HARASSMENT	10	4.2%
6)	CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1991	10	4.2%
7)	SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN LOCAL/STATE GOVERNMENT	10	4.2%
8)	SEXUAL HARASSMENT AT EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS	10	4.2%
9)	SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN WORKING ENVIRONMENTS	9	3.8%
10)	SEXUAL HARASSMENT OF FEMALE FIREFIGHTERS, POLICE OFFICERS AND SHERIFFS	9	3.8%
11)	THE ALLEGED SEXUAL HARASSMENT OF PAULA JONES BY PRESIDENT BILL CLINTON	9	3.8%
12)	THE SEXUAL HARASSMENT OF MANY EMPLOYEES BY SENATOR BOB PACKWOOD	7	2.9%
13)	THE SEXUAL HARASSMENT OF NAVY PILOTS AT THE TAILHOOK CONVENTION	5	2.1%
14)	THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICIES AND FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION/SPEECH	5	2.1%
15)	ANITA HILL	5	2.1%

APPENDIX D**GENDER OF THE EDITORIAL WRITERS**

Of the 240 editorials coded, 145 of the editorials (60%) contained bylines, where the gender of the editorial writer was given. Of the 145 editorials with bylines, 58% (n=84) were male writers and 42% (n=61) were female writers.

Of the 84 editorials written by males, 11 editorials (13%) endorsed sexual harassment myths, 34 editorials (40%) challenged sexual harassment myths and 39 editorials (46%) did not make reference to sexual harassment myths. Of the 61 editorials written by females, 2 endorsed sexual harassment myths (3%), 31 editorials (51%) challenged sexual harassment myths and 28 editorials (46%) did not make reference to sexual harassment myths. These results suggest that the male editorial writers in this study tended to endorse more and challenge fewer sexual harassment myths than the female editorial writers in this study. Males and females were equally likely to make no reference to sexual harassment myths.

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