"HOLLYWOOD AND BEYOND":

AN INTERSECTIONAL ANALYSIS OF HOW *TEEN VOGUE*

COVERED THE #METOO MOVEMENT

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A Thesis

presented to

the Faculty of the Graduate School

at the University of Missouri-Columbia

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

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by

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DECEMBER 2018

The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the thesis entitled

"HOLLYWOOD AND BEYOND":

AN INTERSECTIONAL ANALYSIS OF HOW *TEEN VOGUE*

COVERED THE #METOO MOVEMENT

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and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ABSTRACT

Using Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality as a lens of analysis, this study asks how the teen magazine *Teen Vogue* reported on the rise of the #MeToo movement and how intersections of race, class and gender were represented in regards to sexual violence. Drawing inspiration from recent critiques of *Teen Vogue's* newfound embrace of politics and social justice reporting, this study used textual analysis to understand who is represented and potentially erased within the magazine's activism-minded brand. This study found that *Teen Vogue* primarily situates its stories about sexual violence within the context of Hollywood and the entertainment industry — powerful executives are seen as perpetrators, and successful actresses are portrayed as both victims and advocates. While *Teen Vogue* attempts to confront the systemic inequalities that enable sexual violence, the magazine approaches the issue as exclusively a gender-based problem, ignoring the overlapping elements of race and class that shape how and why sexual violence occurs.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives.

— Audre Lorde, *Learning From the 60s,* 1982

In October 2017, the *New York Times* published an investigation detailing accusations of sexual violence against American film producer Harvey Weinstein (Cantor & Twohey). The *Times'* investigation included accusations from dozens of women in the film industry, and led to more than 80 women coming forward with their experiences of sexual abuse at the hands of Weinstein. Over a year later, the takedown of the media mogul is looked at as a tipping point in how sexual violence is viewed and discussed. Not only did the scandal prompt further allegations against other men in the entertainment industry, but it also pushed sexual violence into the forefront of public consciousness. While the accusations against Weinstein and other high-profile men mostly stemmed from white women in the entertainment industry, the simultaneous rise of the #MeToo movement extended the conversation about sexual assault to women and men of all ages, races and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Originally coined by African-American activist Tarana Burke in 2006, "Me too" began as a way for women in predominantly Black communities to be connected to resources and express solidarity and empathy in their experiences with sexual violence (Palmer, 2018). Via a MySpace page created by Burke, women and men shared their "me too" stories, shedding light on the widespread and often invisible nature of sexual violence. In the weeks following the allegations against Weinstein, actress Alyssa Milano popularized the phrase on social media, asking people to share their experiences with

sexual violence. Milano later acknowledged Burke as the originator of the phrase, but the

Twitter movement has still received criticism for initially erasing Burke and failing to

give her the same level of support Milano received from the start (Onwuachi-Willig,

2018). A year later, the spirit of the #MeToo movement remains strong, as sexual

violence committed by public figures has continued to hold the attention of national

media outlets. These high-profile accusations echo the less visible occurrences of sexual

violence that everyday women see on a daily basis.

Meanwhile, *Teen Vogue*, a fashion and lifestyle magazine geared towards 15- to

24-year-old girls and women, has recently staked a reputation for branching out from its

traditional fashion and celebrity reporting. Instead, the magazine has increasingly covered

politics, social justice and women's issues (Hughes, 2017). Ramping up its current events

coverage surrounding the 2016 election, *Teen Vogue* has come to be known for its stance

that young women should not have to choose between being interested in fashion or

politics. As former editor-in-chief Elaine Welteroth said in an interview on The Daily

Show, "*Teen Vogue* has as much right to be at the table, talking about politics, as every

young woman does in America right now" (O'Neil, 2017). A 30-year-old woman of

color, Welteroth has been credited as the driving force behind *Teen Vogue's* editorial

shift, realizing that her audience is a generation more plugged into current events and

attuned to inclusivity and representation (Hughes, 2017),

As legacy news outlets like the *Times* reported on scandals like Weinstein's, *Teen

Vogue* kept up, publishing straightforward articles like, "The Harvey Weinstein Scandal,

Explained" (L. Herman, 2017), or "I'm a Rape Survivor and the Harvey Weinstein

Allegations Feel Like a Tipping Point" (Shaw, 2017). Welteroth left the magazine in

January 2018 (Bloomgarden-Smoke, 2018). While *Teen Vogue* has since discontinued its print edition, the magazine still maintains its "rebellious, outspoken [and] empowering" voice online (Hughes, 2017). Along with other political and social justice news, *Teen Vogue* continues to cover the #MeToo movement through a mix of news and opinion pieces.

This study seeks to examine how these two cultural moments — the #MeToo movement and *Teen Vogue's* increased attention to social justice and identity — intersect. In other words, how is *Teen Vogue's* presumed tone change and commitment to more socially progressive reporting reflected in its coverage of the #MeToo movement? Media commentary examining how *Teen Vogue's* tone has become more progressive and activist-minded has primarily focused on the magazine's coverage of the 2016 presidential election. Beyond that, little has been said about how the magazine covers specific issues like sexual violence and racist discrimination. While the Internet praises *Teen Vogue* for its sudden "wokeness," there is less research into how the magazine actually represents feminist values, and whether its content takes into account how race, class and sexuality intersect (Doyle, 2016). For a magazine that takes pride in its coverage of "politics, social activism and sexual identity," it is important to understand how thoroughly intersectional identities are being represented, if at all. Activism aside, *Teen Vogue* is owned by Condé Nast, which also boasts ownership of high-brow magazines like *The New Yorker, Vogue, GQ* and more. Condé Nast's products craft a world as glossy and perfect as its magazine pages, offering readers the promise that they, too, can achieve wealth and fame. As a product of the company, *Teen Vogue*

and its definition of activism and social justice must fit into Condé Nast's affluent business model.

How news is presented to teenage readers is an often overlooked but important grounds for research, as teen magazine readers are highly susceptible to being influenced by the media messages they are exposed to (Durham, 2008; Kettrey & Emery, 2010). However, while feminist analyses of teen magazines have explored issues like gender roles and body image, there is a lack of academic research on the specific messages and ideologies being presented in regards to sexual violence (Durham, 2008; Kettrey & Emery, 2010; Schlenker, Caron, & Halteman, 1998). Building on the surge of awareness brought on by the #MeToo movement, this study seeks to fill a hole in the literature, using Crenshaw's (1989) intersectionality theory as a lens to analyze how *Teen Vogue* has portrayed the #MeToo movement and sexual violence to an audience of young women.

Legal scholar Kimberle Crenshaw (1989) formalized intersectionality theory to offer a legal framework addressing simultaneous racial and sexist discrimination. Using Black women as an example, Crenshaw (1992) describes the "dual vulnerability" (p. 1468) placed on Black women. And yet, most frameworks of understanding oppression lack the ability to analyze how "the dynamics of racism and sexism intersect in our lives to create experiences that are sometimes unique to us" (p. 1468). Intersectionality seeks to describe how experiences of racism are shaped by gender, and vice versa. The same can be said for class, sexual orientation, and religion. When applied to sexual violence, intersectionality allows women to realize that often, sexual violence is simultaneously

motivated by both race and gender (Buchanan & Ormerod, 2002; Calafell, 2014; Crenshaw, 1992, 1994).

Mainstream media outlets often have difficulty recognizing and articulating the multidimensional nature of sexual violence (Onwuachi-Willig, 2018). And historically, within the feminist movement, there has been a tendency to focus stories of sexual violence on the highly successful woman, who, despite "her clear ability to make it on men's terms" still faced discrimination (Crenshaw, 1992). For these reasons, this study uses intersectionality theory as a framework to examine *Teen Vogue's* coverage of the #MeToo movement, offering a more specific take on traditional feminist analyses of teen magazines. Specifically, this study is rooted in Crenshaw's conceptualization of intersectionality, but is also informed by feminist scholars who have expanded upon her work as it relates to the media and applying the theory as a methodology.

Teen Vogue's leadership changes and noted shift to prioritizing articles about identity and representation, timed with the rise of the #MeToo movement, create an opportunity to explore how controversial topics like sexual violence are presented to a teenage audience. For Welteroth to say that her readers likely "consider themselves activists," it is necessary to then understand how the *Teen Vogue* brand fits into that mindset (Hughes, 2017). Beyond its tone, *Teen Vogue* was selected because it has the highest web traffic out of the handful of remaining teen magazines — only *Seventeen* has a comparable audience. *Teen Vogue* reaches a large audience comprised of both teenagers and young adult women (Hughes, 2017). These women are in the midst of their formative years and establishing their own feminist identities, all while being inundated with news about sexual violence. The ideas presented in *Teen Vogue* play a role in shaping these

feminist identities, along with how young female readers come to perceive and understand sexual violence as a systemic problem. Because of this, it is important to understand whether or not *Teen Vogue* acknowledges and elaborates upon intersectional identities within feminism, and how the magazine portrays issues like sexual violence and the #MeToo movement. Thus, by examining sexual violence and #MeToo, this study asks: Has *Teen Vogue* truly shifted to an intersectional, nuanced presentation of feminist ideas, or is the magazine constrained to a marketable version of feminism?

This study found that *Teen Vogue* overwhelmingly situates sexual violence in the context of Hollywood and the entertainment industry — powerful executives are seen as perpetrators, and successful actresses are portrayed as both victims and advocates. When sexual violence is discussed outside of that context, the focus is still on high-achieving, successful women in other industries. However, within that framework, the magazine is critical of celebrities — particularly men — who do not use their platform to advocate for change. There are also standout moments where *Teen Vogue* writers will implicitly invoke intersectional theory, describing the compounding oppressions that influence how and why a person experiences sexual violence. These descriptions primarily occur in first-person editorials. While *Teen Vogue* attempts to confront the systemic inequalities that enable sexual violence, the magazine approaches the issue as exclusively a gender-based problem, ignoring the overlapping elements of race and class that shape how and why sexual violence occur.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review explores the key theoretical concepts and background necessary to this study. I begin with an overview of feminist literature regarding sexual harassment and examine how Black feminists have expanded the conversation to acknowledge the interplay of race and class. I then discuss media representations of sexual harassment and assault, including recurring problematic themes. In addition, I provide a historical context of teen magazines and how they have been analyzed by feminist scholars.

Feminism and Sexual Violence

The Centers for Disease Control defines sexual violence as "a sexual act that is committed or attempted by another person without freely given consent of the victim or against someone who is unable to consent or refuse" (Basile, Smith, Breiding, Black, & Mahendra, 2014, p. 11). This covers a range of actions, including forced or attempted penetration, unwanted sexual touching, verbal sexual harassment, or unwanted exposure to pornography. The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) offers a more detailed definition of acts that can be considered sexual harassment, including "unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical harassment of a sexual nature" ("Sexual Harassment," n.d.). Sexual violence can occur anywhere, including schools, the workplace, in public, or even through technology (Basile et al., 2014). The EEOC points out that men and women can be both victims and harassers, and that harassment can occur between members of the same sex. One in every three women and one in every six men will experience some form of sexual violence in their life (S. G. Smith et al., 2017). According to the EEOC, anywhere from 25 to 85

percent of women have experienced sexual harassment in the workplace ("Sexual Harassment," n.d.). Estimates for the number of victims of sexual violence vary, because the crime is vastly underreported.

The feminist movement of the 1970s is widely responsible for transforming rape and other forms of sexual violence into a social problem, rather than an individual and private matter (Chasteen, 2001). Much like the #MeToo movement has done, the anti-rape movement is credited for bringing rape and sexual assault "out of silence and into the public eye" (Chasteen, 2001). Countless researchers have established individual-level characteristics that can make a person more likely to commit sexual violence against women, including experiences of violence in childhood, alcohol and drug abuse, and approval of violence (Yodanis, 2004). But feminist scholars argue that while these individual factors do exist, they are bolstered by the underlying gender inequalities in male-dominated societies (Yodanis, 2004). If sexual violence is to end on the personal level, they argue, first "structures of gender inequality at the societal level must change"(Brownmiller, 1993; Yodanis, 2004, p. 655).

Legal feminist scholar Catharine MacKinnon (1979) was the first to formally argue that sexual harassment legally constitutes a form of sex discrimination violating the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Men's victimization of women had become "sufficiently pervasive in American society as to be nearly invisible," resulting in powerful men taking advantage of powerless women in the workplace as an expression of hegemonic masculinity (MacKinnon, 1979, p. 1). Furthermore, male-constructed and male-defined institutional structures not only meant such violence was unlikely to be stopped, but even "subtly or overtly condoned and encouraged" (Yodanis, 2004, p. 657).

While sexual harassment and assault can occur anywhere, harassment has primarily been examined in a workplace setting. Feminist scholars have declared it to be a long-accepted occupational hazard for women in the American workforce (Acker, 1990; Buchanan, Settles, & Woods, 2008; Siegel, 2004). Scholars have analyzed the workplace as a site where "widely disseminated cultural images of gender are invented and reproduced" (Acker, 1990, p. 140). Due to the male-constructed nature of institutions, sexual harassment becomes part of maintaining and reinforcing the patriarchal hierarchy of workplace organizations (Acker, 1990; MacKinnon, 1979; Siegel, 2004; Yodanis, 2004). In some work environments, the willingness to tolerate harassment is seen as a condition of the job (Acker, 1990; Buchanan & Ormerod, 2002; MacKinnon, 1979). It is important to note the all-encompassing nature of the term "the workplace." For example, women who work in a traditional office setting might perceive sexual harassment differently than women who work as farmworkers or actresses. The severity of experiences and statistical vulnerability women face varies greatly across and within industries as well.

Legal and Black feminist scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) expanded on MacKinnon's legal model to demonstrate that the legal system does not accommodate for discrimination on the basis of both gender and race simultaneously. Crenshaw's intersectional framework will be expanded upon in the next section of this literature review, but the heart of her argument is that the legal system — and in turn, public perceptions of discrimination — "treat race and gender as mutually exclusive categories of experience and analysis" (p. 139). Failure to recognize how these dimensions of

identity intersect to shape experiences results in an oversimplified understanding of sexual violence and how women of color and poor women are made more vulnerable.

Researchers have built upon MacKinnon and Crenshaw's frameworks to also understand how people of all genders and sexual orientations are affected by sexual violence (Uggen & Blackstone, 2004). Patriarchal practices do not exclusively target women, but also impact men who do not fit into that cultural norm (Connell, 2002). Through surveys and selected interviews with 742 men and women ages 25 to 26, researchers concluded that while power and masculinity are linked to harassing behaviors, aspects like race, class, age, and gender then influence who is more likely to be targeted (Uggen & Blackstone, 2004) Uggen and Blackstone (2004) specifically found that financially vulnerable men face the same risks of sexual harassment as women. Intersectional analyses of power structures have found that while being "male" automatically grants a man certain privileges of authority, other aspects of one's identity, such as race, class, or sexual orientation, lessen that credibility within patriarchal systems (May, 2012).

While the #MeToo movement and the women speaking out against men in the entertainment industry shed light on a mostly white and economically privileged experience, it is important to note that historically, women of color and working-class women have always faced an increased risk of sexual violence (Buchanan et al., 2008; A. Y. Davis, 1983; McGuire, 2010; Siegel, 2004). Primarily, Black women were the first to widely experience sexual harassment and discrimination in the workplace, since they faced the social expectation and financial necessity of employment post-slavery (A. Y. Davis, 1983). In the post-emancipation South, the sexual abuse Black women had faced

as slaves followed them into their workplace as free women — positions their white counterparts rarely took part in (A. Y. Davis, 1983). This will be elaborated upon in the following sections about intersectionality theory and sexual violence.

Intersectionality Theory

The origins of intersectionality theory are rooted within Black feminist thought and critical race theory, offering a framework to analyze power relations and interlocking systems of oppression (May, 2012; Nash, 2017). Formalized by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), intersectionality describes how people within a cross-section of marginalized identities experience different forms of discrimination at once, creating a unique and multi-layered experience of oppression. Intersectionality can be understood as a literal traffic intersection — when an accident occurs in an intersection, it is not because of a single flow of traffic, but because of traffic in multiple directions. This can be applied across race and class differences, and can be expanded to include sexuality, religion, ability and age (Crenshaw, 1989). Including intersectionality in conversations about feminism acknowledges that women are not bonded by a single form of oppression — rather, that the female experience includes a diversity of oppressions depending on a woman's status in the world (hooks, 1984). Crenshaw's conceptualization of intersectionality relies on the positionality of Black women, but intersectional analysis has also been conducted by Latina and indigenous feminists exploring power relations (May, 2012).

While Crenshaw is credited with coining intersectionality, the concept had been discussed by Black feminists for decades before the 1980s (A. Y. Davis, 1983; May, 2012). For example, Maria W. Stewart — one of the first Black women to give lectures

on women's rights — spoke about the connections between race, gender and class oppression in the 1830s, describing it as a political framework that could challenge the oppressive structures faced by Black women (Jordan-Zachery, 2007). Sojourner Truth's famous speech "Ain't I a Woman?" has become a standard reading for university feminist studies classes. But while the speech is often referred to as a defining moment in the women's rights movement, Truth's criticism targeted both the white men and women in the room. White men failed to acknowledge her experiences as a woman; white women refused to acknowledge her experiences as a Black woman for fear of shifting the focus from anti-sexism to anti-racism (A. Y. Davis, 1983; May, 2012).

Intersectional thought maintained prevalence as the civil rights and women's movements were revitalized in the 1960s. Frustrated by the internal racism of the women's movement, Black women broke away to form groups like the Combahee River Collective, where they were free to prioritize issues faced by women of color (Eisenstein, 1977). Black feminism is the only logical solution to combat the simultaneous oppressions faced by women of color, the Collective wrote. In describing their commitment to dismantling all systems of oppression, the women of the Combahee River Collective (Eisenstein, 1977) invoke language that would go on to appear in future research formalizing intersectionality theory:

> "…we are actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression, and see our particular task the development of integrated analysis based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking. The synthesis of these oppressions creates the conditions of our lives."

By the time Crenshaw (1989) formalized intersectionality as a legal language, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 had already made discrimination on the basis of race and sex illegal. However, as she argued, the law did not properly address discrimination on the basis of both simultaneously. While the law addressed oppressions faced by white women and Black men, it did not accommodate for the unique experiences of Black women.

Often in discrimination cases, race and gender are treated as "mutually exclusive categories of experience and analysis," (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 139). Because of how structural systems treat discrimination, society then perceives injustices to occur along a "single categorical axis," (p. 140) be it race or gender — but rarely both. In the case of sex discrimination, the court's tendency to focus on only race- and class-privileged women assumes that only white women can speak on behalf of the female population. Because their race deviates from the norm, Black woman are deemed unqualified to speak for women as a whole. Viewing discrimination through this lens ignores the "unique compoundedness" (p. 150) of oppressions faced by those with multi-marginalized identities.

In her analysis of intersectioanlity, Black feminist scholar Patricia Hill Collins points out that by understanding the social position of Black women, we are more likely to "see, and look for, other spaces where systems of inequality come together" (Allan, 2013, p. 1) under interlocking systems of oppression. Intersectionality opens the door to more inclusive analysis, taking into account how age, sexual orientation, religion and more contribute to how people are "othered" and discriminated in society (Collins, 2009).

As a theory, intersectionality has been adapted by a wide variety of fields, turning it into something of a buzzword (K. Davis, 2008). While there is general agreement that scholars make the mistake of relying on single-axes of oppression, scholars disagree over how to properly use intersectionality as a theoretical framework (K. Davis, 2008; May, 2012; Nash, 2017). Puar (2017) has criticized intersectionality as "a tool of diversity management," a "racial alibi" invoked to avoid the actual work of elevating marginalized identities.

However, when executed correctly, intersectionality becomes a powerful tool to analyze the politics of everyday life, helping scholars gain a deeper understanding of the power dynamics guiding social institutions and systems of oppression (K. Davis, 2008; May, 2012).

Intersectionality, Black feminism, and sexual harassment. Crenshaw (1992) used intersectionality to expand on MacKinnon's original framework of sexual harassment — not only is sexual harassment a form of sex discrimination, but it can also simultaneously constitute a form of racial discrimination (Buchanan & Ormerod, 2002; Crenshaw, 1994; McGuire, 2010; Richardson & Taylor, 2009). When women of color experience sexual violence, there is often an underlying racial connotation, both in what the perpetrator does and how the victim perceives the action (Buchanan & Ormerod, 2002; Crenshaw, 1992; Richardson & Taylor, 2009). In a qualitative study of racially marginalized women who have experienced harassment, some women discussed how they had trouble pinpointing whether their experience was race- or gender-driven (Richardson & Taylor, 2009). Black feminists would argue it is both.

The intersectional component of sexual violence is often ignored. Frequently, sexual violence is talked about with the clarification that it is something that happens to women of all races and income brackets. According to Crenshaw (1992), while the solidarity and sweeping nature of sexual violence are important, there is still a difference between debunking the myth that only poor and minority women face abuse; and ignoring their unique positionality for the sake of wealthier and whiter women who garner more sympathy from politicians and the media. Organized women's movements tend to center conversations about sexual violence around the highly successful woman, who, despite her success, still faces discrimination from men. These stand-out cases are seen as the "strongest symbol of gender subordination," ignoring the many other compelling and complex stories of sexual violence that happen on a daily basis.

Black women have historically found themselves at a higher risk for sexual harassment in the workplace. Following emancipation, Black women entered the workforce in droves out of necessity. In 1890, there were 2.7 million Black girls and women over age 10 living in the United States (A. Y. Davis, 1983). More than one million of them found employment, a disproportionately high number compared to their white counterparts. The sexual abuse faced by Black women under slavery followed them into employment, with no protection from a justice system stacked against them (Crenshaw, 1989; A. Y. Davis, 1983; McGuire, 2010). For women working in domestic service roles, sexual abuse at the hands of the "man of the house" (A. Y. Davis, 1983, p. 91) were considered an occupational hazard (Buchanan & Ormerod, 2002; Buchanan et al., 2008). Speaking out against abuse could lead to unemployment or jail time, a risk women supporting their families were not often willing to take (A. Y. Davis, 1983).

Even today, women of color and women living in poverty find themselves more vulnerable to sexual violence in and out of the workplace (Buchanan & Ormerod, 2002; Buchanan et al., 2008; Richardson & Taylor, 2009). Research has also shown that while women of color are more likely to be victims of harassment, they are less likely to be perceived as such — a problem with historical roots that is furthered by media representations. For example, Black women are seen as sexual beings (i.e. the "Jezebel" trope), while white women are viewed as pure and undeserving of any sexual violence (Buchanan et al., 2008; Crenshaw, 1992; A. Y. Davis, 1983). Because of this, Black women are less likely to be trusted when sharing stories of sexual violence, and are more likely to receive disparate treatment from institutions like law enforcement and the legal system when they do report incidents (Buchanan et al., 2008; Crenshaw, 1992; Davis, 1981). According to Hernandez (as cited in Calafell, 2014), an understanding of "globalized stereotypes of women of color as sexual commodities must be incorporated into how we talk about harassment." Studies have shown that Black women in blue collar jobs tend to report harassment at higher rates, and that women who are dependent on their jobs, hold low-status jobs, and have male supervisors are at a higher risk of experiencing harassment (Mansfield et al., 1991). And yet, these women are often left out of the conversation when it comes to raising awareness and ending sexual violence. Even academia places little emphasis on how women of color experience harassment, with most research being biased to exploring the white middle class experience (hooks, 1984; West & Fenstermaker, 1995).

Media coverage of the #MeToo movement has focused primarily on wealthy women within the entertainment industry (Mendes, Ringrose, & Keller, 2018; Onwuachi-

Willig, 2018; Zarkov & Davis, 2018). While feminist activists of color have been aware of founder Tarana Burke's work for some time now, the hashtag did not go viral until a white actress popularized it on Twitter. That mainstream circles lagged in their coverage of Black women's voices is reminiscent of the women's movements of the 20th century. Much like the sharing of stories seen with the #MeToo movement, Black women had been offering testimonies of their experiences with sexual violence "decades before radical feminists in the women's movement urged rape survivors to 'speak out'" (McGuire, p. xix, 2010). Sister movements of #MeToo like Time's Up promise to aid working class women, but it is too early to tell if true progress will be made. Because of the important intersections of race and class when women experience sexual harassment, it is important to understand how magazines like *Teen Vogue* are presenting the issue to their readers.

Media Representations of Sexual Harassment

Coverage of sexual harassment was primarily absent from media reports leading up to the 1990s. That changed when Anita Hill testified against Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas, saying Thomas had harassed her while he was her supervisor in the Department of Education and EEOC (Black & Allen, 2001). The hearings pushed sexual harassment to the forefront of media coverage and public consciousness (Black & Allen, 2001; Douglas, 1995). Hill's testimony served as a "click" moment, as many women came to the sudden realization of "the workings of patriarchy in their own lives" (Larabee, 2018, p. 8) The Harvey Weinstein allegations of 2017 and the subsequent embrace of #MeToo did the same for a new generation of women.

But while Hill's testimony made discourse regarding sexual harassment more prevalent, media representations of sexual harassment stories have seen little change since. Even in today's media climate, stories are presented as "popular melodramas of evil ogres and beset damsels…[emphasizing] sex over labor conditions" (Larabee, 2018, p. 8).

The mainstream media serve as a way of understanding the construction of gender relations and whose voices are embraced or marginalized by society (McDonald & Charlesworth, 2013). Media portrayals of sexual harassment often rely on over-simplified stories and repeated gender stereotypes, thus reinforcing gender inequalities and perpetuating gender-driven violence (Durham, 2013; Easteal, Holland, & Judd, 2015; McDonald & Charlesworth, 2013).

For example, a survey of 311 articles from the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada and Australia over the course of six months in 2010 found that the media overwhelmingly favor the "classic" harassment story of high-profile men targeting young defenseless women (McDonald & Charlesworth, 2013). This tendency to focus on men with obvious power runs the risk of erasing more everyday occurrences of sexual violence. A recent editorial by Zarkov and Davis (2018) put it as such:

> "…when feminists say it is a matter of 'power relations' we do not actually reduce this power to a number of powerful men. We want to look at larger power structures that allow men — be they 'powerful' or not — to treat women as sex objects." (p. 6).

In addition, news coverage tends to center on scandalous details, and sexual harassment is often framed as a conflict between two employees (McDonald &

Charlesworth, 2013). Turning the issue into the actions of a few moral deviants then ignores sexual violence as a broader systemic issue (Acker, 1990; Easteal et al., 2015; McDonald & Charlesworth, 2013; Yodanis, 2004). Stories with extreme and lurid details are prioritized, limiting what the public then perceives as sexual harassment (Easteal et al., 2015).

Additional research on how harassment is framed has explored the victim-blaming nature of reports and stereotyped characterizations of victims (Durham, 2013; Easteal et al., 2015; McDonald & Charlesworth, 2013). News reports frequently dig up stories of victims' pasts, making their accounts seem less credible (Durham, 2013; Easteal et al., 2015). A victim's past and also their response to the incident then influences whether they are portrayed as an innocent or deserving victim (Burt, 1998; Durham, 2013; Easteal et al., 2015; D. Herman, 1989). This emphasis on discrediting the victim is even more prevalent in cases involving women of color (Crenshaw, 1992).

While McDonald and Charlesworth (2013) found that over 50 percent of analyzed articles emphasized the victim's version of events in harassment cases, researchers inferred that this could be because of the easy availability of legal documents offering up sensationalist details to reporters. These media trends, combined with emphasizing women's responsibility to not get sexually harassed in the first place, all culminate in an overall conservative framing of sexual harassment meant to "reinforce patriarchal gender norms" (Easteal et al., 2015, p; 104; McDonald & Charlesworth, 2013). Masking conservative values with objectivity normalizes gender inequalities and violence against women (Easteal et al., 2015).

A small body of research applies these concepts to how teen magazines frame violence against women. One study that explored how magazines frame dating violence found that, similar to traditional news outlets, teen magazines frame stories as individual conflicts rather than systemic issues (Kettrey & Emery, 2010). However, the tone of stories greatly differs across platforms — while traditional news articles focus on the drama and scandal of sexual harassment stories, teen magazines treat dating violence as more of a warning for their young audience. Researchers have also found that focusing on narratives driven by victim experiences can be an effective way to connect to younger audiences (Currie, 1999 as cited in Kettrey & Emery, 2010).

Teen Magazines Through History

Throughout history, women's magazines have acted as handbooks to being a good wife and mother, offering articles on taking care of the home, childcare, and interpersonal relationships (Durham, 2008; Kettrey & Emery, 2010; Schlenker et al., 1998). Teen magazines served a similar purpose as they entered the market, offering tips on how to attract boys and be a good girlfriend (Durham, 2013; Kettrey & Emery, 2010; Massoni, 2010; Schlenker et al., 1998). Teen magazines have faced criticism for sexualizing young girls and reinforcing gender stereotypes (Durham, 2008). But the magazines did not start off with that goal.

Founded by Helen Valentine in 1944, *Seventeen* was created as a source of service and fashion information for girls (Massoni, 2010). *Seventeen* portrayed the ideal American teenage girl, offering a mix of stories about fashion, beauty, and — drawing on the patriotic sentiment of World War II — citizenship. Valentine's brainchild was one of the first to recognize teenagers as their own demographic. And while this offered teenage

girls a wide range of editorial content, it also included a wide range of advertisements meant to shape readers as consumers. The underlying consumerism of *Seventeen* was brought to the forefront within five years of its founding. As Valentine, along with her progressive vision, was pushed off the editorial staff, the magazine began to focus primarily on fashion, romance and homemaking (Massoni, 2010). That tension between editorial values and conservative advertisers is still present in the magazine industry — it is not rare to see an article declaring, "Love your body!" alongside an advertisement featuring a size two model (Douglas, 1995; Durham, 2008; Freeman, 2016; Keller, 2011). Similarly, magazines have capitalized on the trendiness of feminism, preaching stories of girl power and empowerment, while ensuring messages do not alienate advertisers (Freeman, 2016; Hughes, 2017; Keller & Ringrose, 2015).

The same editorial values were replicated as teen magazines became more popular throughout the 20th century. By the late 90s and early 2000s, adult magazines began creating "little sister magazines" including titles like *Elle Girl, Cosmo!Girl,* and *Teen Vogue* (Carpenter, 2017). Magazines like *Sassy* and *Jane* also stepped in to attempt to subvert typical teen coverage, offering stories on identity and feminism (Carpenter, 2017). While *Sassy* folded in 1994, a generation of women still pin their feminist awakening on reading the magazine through their teenage years (Jesella & Metzler, 2007).

Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, readers were well aware of the more in-depth reporting inside the "little sister" magazines of major publications (Keller, 2011). For example, *Teen People* reported on immigration and AIDS in the early 2000s (Carpenter, 2017). *Seventeen* was the first teen magazine to include a religion section. And *Elle Girl*

even published a cover story titled, "The F-Word — are you a feminist?" (Carpenter, 2017). Teen magazines have included stories about abortion, date rape, sexual education and dating violence, and editors do feel their own feminist values end up being expressed in the final product (Keller, 2011). For women who grew up reading teen magazines, *Teen Vogue's* shift to highlighting politics and current events was not be seen as the "beginning of a seismic shift on the teen mag scene" (Carpenter, 2017). Rather, it is the culmination of decades of work.

However, editors walk a fine line in their decisions to publish more progressive content. For example, *Seventeen* editors once had to retract a column about vaginal health, because parents deemed the information "too graphic" for their teenage daughters (Durham, 2008, p. 50). Teen magazines face a unique challenge when making editorial decisions: On the one hand, it can be easy to "focus only on the kind of adolescence that is untouched by adversity or trauma" (Durham, 2008, p. 59). But "it would be an ostrich-like move…to blithely ignore the cultural, political, economic and structural realities" many girls face (Durham, 2008, p. 59).

Feminist analyses of teen magazines. Feminist research on teen magazines tends to focus on how traditional gender socialization is expressed in both editorial and advertising content (Douglas, 1995; Gill, 2007; Keller, 2011; Prusank, 2007; Schlenker et al., 1998; Tuchman, 1978). Magazines have often prompted feminist criticism for their unrealistic portrayals of women's bodies and the reinforcement of patriarchal standards (Douglas, 1995; Durham, 2008; Prusank, 2007). Betty Friedan's (1963) *The Feminine Mystique* established that portrayed women as passive and vulnerable, and naturally fulfilled by their devotion to their families. Content analyses have found that regardless

of feminist movements through history, magazine content has shifted minimally (Peirce, 1990, 1993; Schlenker et al., 1998). For example, Peirce (1990) found that in 1972, the number of articles in *Seventeen* about male-female relationships decreased, while the number of articles about self-empowerment increased. However, by 1985, the percentage of intellectual articles reverted back to numbers that reflected the 1960s. A more extensive study spanning from 1944 to 1990 found similar results (Schlenker et al., 1998)

But cultural feminist scholars are increasingly reinterpreting the messages in teen magazines, viewing them instead as "women-centered texts that offer women pleasure and a chance to engage in utopian fantasies" (Keller, 2011). Similar to Radway's (1991) work on readers of romance novels, teenage magazines can be interpreted as sites for female empowerment and resisting patriarchal notions (Keller, 2011; McRobbie, 2009). However, little research has been conducted on how teen readers themselves interpret the messages in magazines. While adult women are able to confront magazine texts with a more critical eye, teen readers are in the midst of socialization and often depend on media for direction in the world (Duke & Kreshel, 1998; Durham, 2008; Kettrey & Emery, 2010; Peirce, 1990). However, one study found that teen readers approach magazines with a dose of skepticism (Keller & Ringrose, 2015). Through interviews with members of a high school feminist club, researchers found that while the girls are happy to see feminism portrayed in magazines, they demonstrate an understanding of how feminism can be turned into something fashionable.

Often, teen magazines embrace a very individualistic brand of feminism, emphasizing personal problems in favor of collective struggles (Gill, 2007). "Girl power" and "empowerment" are celebrated, and magazines are likely to preach a watered-down

and commodified version of feminism (Freeman, 2016). However, it is not rare to come across magazine editors who identify as feminists (Keller, 2011). These feminist editors do feel that despite the politics of magazine production, they are able to incorporate feminist values into their final product — albeit in a way that is disguised. In a world where feminism can be considered taboo, taking too strong of a stance could alienate readers and advertisers (Keller, 2011; Douglas, 1995). The four editors interviewed in a discourse analysis of teen magazines saw their presence in such a mainstream industry to be a form of resistance. But it is debatable whether such subtle integration of feminism by a handful of women could be called "truly revolutionary" (Keller, 2011, p. 7).

In a similar analysis of magazine content, McRobbie (2008) argued that "girl power" as a brand of feminism is limited in its ability to make sense of how gender inequalities impact the social issues real girls face. All four women in Keller's (2011) analysis realized the difficulty of navigating the contradictions between feminism and mainstream magazines. But part of the job is pleasing both readers and editors (Keller, 2011; Schlenker, et al., 1998). In the end, magazine feminism becomes a celebration of "individual agency," promoting girl power values over calling for systemic change (Keller, 2011, p. 8). The feminism of teen magazines recognizes gender inequalities, "yet disavows the social, cultural, and economic roots of these inequalities" in favor of concepts like "individual action, personal responsibility and unencumbered choice" (Keller & Ringrose, 2015, p. 133) Other researchers have come to similar conclusions, pointing out that when teen magazines attempt to advocate for feminist social change, the ideas are often "short-lived, shallow, or contradictory" (Prusank, 2007, p. 162). With so

many contributors, it would not be surprising if *Teen Vogue's* feminist message contradicts itself across the product.

Keller (2015) elaborated on this in a discourse analysis of the online presence of Tavi Gevinson, a fashion blogger-turned-founder of the online teen magazine *Rookie*. Much like the "individual agency" (Keller, 2011, p. 8) magazine editors emphasized in their work, Gevinson's online presence in *Rookie* embodied the can-do girl: independent, self-made, ambitious, and — most importantly — willing to participate in capitalism (Keller, 2015). While Gevinson presented her readers with an accessible form of feminism, she was also crafting her own self-brand. Self-branding and using feminism as a marketing tool then contribute to the watering-down of feminism and also the marginalization of other female voices. Gevinson was successful in emphasizing the importance of feminism for young girls and challenging the thought that girls are apolitical, but it cannot be ignored that her expression of feminism all plays into her own personal product and success (Keller, 2015).

Ironically, Gevinson had the same criticism for *Teen Vogue,* calling on readers to approach content with skepticism and question how publications might benefit from publishing feminist articles (Gilbert, 2016). Going into this study, I too had my own doubts about how *Teen Vogue* was using feminism to shape its product and gain clicks. Sexual violence is an intersectional issue. If *Teen Vogue* is in fact embracing identity issues and confronting race, the magazine would hopefully expand its coverage to include marginalized women like women of color and service workers who frequently experience sexual violence (Yagil, 2008). If feminism is being packaged into something that is cool

and hip for the sake of marketing and turning a profit, then that is harmful to how we educate young women about sexual violence and who it impacts.

Research Questions

This literature review has provided an overview of feminist scholarship regarding sexual harassment, and how black feminists have expanded existing frameworks. It has also discussed how the media typically frame sexual violence as well as an overview of the evolution of teen magazines and feminist criticism of those magazine texts.

Using *Teen Vogue's* leadership and perceived tonal shifts as a starting point, research from a variety of disciplines work together to inform the proposed research questions:

RQ1: How is the #MeToo movement represented through *Teen Vogue's* coverage?

RQ2: In what ways does *Teen Vogue* address the intersections of gender, race and class as it pertains to sexual violence?

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Relying on intersectionality as a theoretical framework, this study uses qualitative textual analysis to assess the ways feminist theory and intersectionality are present in and shape *Teen Vogue's* coverage of the #MeToo movement. Qualitative textual analysis — also referred to as content or discourse analysis — examines the characteristics of text and communication while also paying close attention to how cultural context complicates the text (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Analysis is not limited to just written words — conversation and interview transcripts, along with television shows and web pages are considered texts (Fairclough, 2003). This definition includes visual elements, such as what is shown on television, or which photos are present in a web article. Even tweets — an integral part of *Teen Vogue* web articles —fall under the umbrella of textual analysis.

Textual analysis lets researchers take a deep dive into media content, synthesizing what is being said and how it is being presented with the "underlying ideological and cultural assumptions of the text" (Fürsich, 2009, p. 240). In the tradition of textual analysis, this study asks, what are "the social practices, representations, assumptions and stories about our lives that are revealed" (Brennen, 2013, p. 205) in *Teen Vogue* texts? Through repeated close readings, researchers are able to subjectively interpret the text in question, using systematic coding and analysis to formalize the discovery of underlying themes and patterns (Fairclough, 2003). As Fairclough (2003) writes, textual analysis is an inherently selective process. Researchers choose to ask questions of certain elements of the text, and it is impossible to conjure up a "complete and definitive analysis" (p. 14) of a body of text. For example, in this study I have chosen to focus on representation and

inclusivity in the context of sexual violence, but a number of other themes could have been explored.

General descriptions of textual analysis as a methodological approach can seem vague, but that vagueness allows researchers to tailor their reading strategy to the research questions at hand. Categorizing and analyzing text can be guided by predetermined categories and research questions, or be completely open-ended (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Regardless of analytical approach, textual analysis typically begins with a preliminary soak in the text. As researchers immerse themselves in the work, relevant themes and categories become clearer, along with "ambiguities, unresolved dichotomies, or contradictions" (Fursich, 2009, p. 245). Considering contradictions is particularly important to analyzing teen magazines, as feminist analyses have found that when these magazines attempt to embrace feminist representations, it is often "short lived, shallow or contradictory in nature" (Prusank, 2007, p. 162).

When using textual analysis to examine journalism, media become "a site in which societal debates and representations are played out" (Fursich, 2009, p. 245). Journalists become "cultural intermediaries," (p. 245) with the power to pick and choose which cultural trends to highlight and how they are then presented to audiences. In the case of this study, the selected magazine articles become a version of mediated reality (Fursich, 2009). This research asks what version of reality is *Teen Vogue* choosing to present in regards to sexual violence and the #MeToo movement?

Fairclough (2003) describes texts as "elements of social events" (p. 8), with some having a more "highly textual character" (p. 21) than others. As a movement that took off

on the text-based platform Twitter and that embraces the principle of public discourse, #MeToo fits Fairclough's parameters of what makes an event proper for textual analysis.

Sampling Strategies

Because former editor-in-chief Elaine Welteroth was credited for *Teen Vogue's* embrace of more serious coverage of politics and social justice, this study focuses on #MeToo-related content written under her leadership. The timeframe of October 2017 to January 2018 captures the rise of the #MeToo movement, as well as the end of Welteroth's time at the magazine. Welteroth resigned from her position on January 11, 2018, signing with the talent agency Creative Artists Agency (Bloomgarden-Smoke, 2018).

Navigating *Teen Vogue's* online search system to find a comprehensive view of #MeToo coverage created a meticulous challenge for this study. Unfortunately, databases such as EBSCOhost do not include articles from the magazine, and Factiva only includes articles published in the magazine's print edition, which was discontinued in November 2017 (Ember, 2017). However, a keyword search of "#metoo" in August 2018 returned 250 articles. I was able to sort articles by date, making the selection process smoother. *Teen Vogue's* online archive system only offers headlines and a one-sentence summary, so each article was reviewed to make sure it was relevant to this study. For example, some stories included in the search contained no mention of #MeToo. Others off-handedly mentioned the movement without it being central to the article. Selecting specific articles posed a challenge due to the abstract nature of the #MeToo movement, something discussed in greater detail later in this study. The #MeToo movement as we know it in mainstream conversations is framed as more of a chorus of voices online — a

way for individual women and men to share their stories of sexual violence on Twitter —
rather than being viewed as an actual organization working for change. Because of this,
very few articles center on the #MeToo movement specifically. Rather, the #MeToo
movement is primarily used to contextualize other news and opinion pieces — in some
cases, the movement was referenced in articles about other social justice issues.

Because of this, articles were selected based on the following criteria: if sexual
violence was the central to the article's angle; and if #MeToo was mentioned and also
relevant to the article. After filtering through the 250 articles, 51 articles published from
October 2017 to January 2018 were selected for this analysis. Of the 51 articles, 40 are
traditional news articles and 11 are opinion columns.

Strategies for Analysis

Intersectionality as a framework is difficult to formalize, and scholars disagree
over whether it can be used as such in the first place (May, 2012; McCall, 2005). While
its origins are in critical race and Black feminist theory, intersectionality has since been
applied to a variety of academic fields (K. Davis, 2008). However, there is often
confusion as to what it actually means and how it should be applied (K. Davis, 2008;
McCall, 2005). This study relies on Crenshaw's (1992) definition of intersectionality:

> "African-American women by virtue of our race and gender are situated within at
> least two systems of subordination: racism and sexism. This dual vulnerability
> does not simply mean that our burdens are doubled but instead, that the dynamics
> of racism and sexism intersect in our lives to create experiences are sometimes
> unique to us…our experiences of racism are shaped by our gender, and our
> experiences of sexism are often shaped by our race." (p. 1468)

It is also informed by Patricia Hill Collins' (Hill Collins & Bilge, 2016)

conceptualization:

"When it comes to social inequality, people's lives and the organization of power

in a given society are better understood as being shaped not by a single axis of

social division, be it race or gender or class, but by many axes that work together

and influence each other. Intersectionality as an analytic tool gives people better

access to the complexity of the world and of themselves." (p. 2)

When intersectionality is used as a framework, analysis at its most basic level

begins with *asking the other question* (Matsuda, 1991). Moving past that first step is the

challenge faced when using intersectionality as a methodological framework (K. Davis,

2008). Scholar Kathy Davis (2008) offers the following strategy: When reading a work

with intersectioanlity theory in mind, first read and take ample notes for how gender is

portrayed. Then, "ask the other question" (Matsuda, 1991) and think of three additional

differences that could be applied to the text. Choosing one, describe how and why the

example is about that identity. Compare notes between the two categories, paying close

attention to similarities and differences in what was noticed. This exact strategy was not

applied to every text example in this study, but rather was performed as an exercise on a

handful of articles to eventually aid in the coding process. As an exercise, it helped

prepare me as a researcher for deeply questioning the text and analyzing differences and

experiences present within the text. While something like race or class might not be

explicitly mentioned in a *Teen Vogue* text, it is always present, even when unspoken.

While Crenshaw's (1992) conceptualization of intersectionality is rooted in legal

theory, not media theory, it is still appropriate for this analysis of a magazine. *Teen*

Vogue, as a platform based on news and nonfiction writing, utilizes real life examples. As the object of study, it is analyzed for how it frames and presents real life stories. Crenshaw's work on intersectionality and sexual violence helps give this study theoretical grounding. She offers criticism not only on how the legal system handles sexual violence cases, but also how social justice movements and media organizations privilege some victims over others.

This textual analysis took shape through three rounds of reading. While this study relies on intersectionality to guide analysis, initial reading did not embrace the directed approach to analysis, where themes and categories are predetermined based on existing research and theory before reading begins. Because I was unsure of how complex or simplistic *Teen Vogue's* reporting would be, I felt it more appropriate to take a conventional approach, allowing themes to "flow from the data" without any preconceived categories in mind (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005, p. 1279).

The goal of the first round of reading was to get a sense of how *Teen Vogue* reported on the #MeToo movement. What was present? Or absent? What words and phrases were repeated throughout the body of work? During this reading, I took preliminary notes within the text, with recurring themes becoming more apparent the further I read into the selected samples.

I began taking deeper notes during the second reading, problematizing concepts in the margins and noticing when *Teen Vogue's* reporting could be connected to intersectionality theory and media representations. Theory became more prevalent in this stage, as I began to think about Crenshaw's writings on sexual violence and

intersectionality and how that related to what I was reading in *Teen Vogue's* texts. How does the magazine's coverage reinforce or challenge stereotypes and power structures?

Following the second read, I began to organize and categorize my extensive notes on each article, taking note of recurring phrasings and thematic focuses throughout the text. During this stage of analysis, three key themes emerged: how *Teen Vogue* was situating harassment, who was given a voice within the #MeToo movement, and what the magazine defined as change and activism. These themes will be elaborated upon in the findings chapter of this study.

More thorough coding occurred in the third round of reading. Coffey and Atkinson (1996) describe coding as a means of "generating concepts from and with our data" (p. 26). In qualitative research, content analysis and the coding process is a key step to data analysis (Richards, 2015). In textual analysis, coding is an ongoing back-and-forth process of reducing and complicating the data (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). When analyzing *Teen Vogue,* a bulk of the analytical focus was on complicating the data. At first glance, the magazine content may seem simplistic, but therein lies the opportunity offered by textual analysis. By "going beyond the data, thinking creatively with the data, [and] asking the data questions," (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 30) we are able to "expand the conceptual frameworks and dimensions" (p. 30) of how material meant for teenagers can be interpreted.

During this third round, I used a spreadsheet to code each article for the themes outlined below. The coding process took note of which category the article seemed to align with most, while also noting specific quotes that shed light on associated concepts.

This stage helped to form a clearer picture of how *Teen Vogue* reports on sexual violence, as specific quotes and writing techniques within the text reinforced the perceived themes.

Categories	Associated Concepts
Situating Harassment	Descriptions of harassment, setting, victims, perpetrators, treatment of victims, victim resources, rape culture
Voice & Representation	Race, class, age, incorporation of feminist theory, naming, literal visibility, #MeToo leadership, descriptions of the #MeToo movement, movement goals, use of Twitter
Ideas of Change	Cultural shifts, empowerment, courage, speaking up, activism, change, privilege, complicity, responsibility

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

This study examined 51 *Teen Vogue* articles spanning the first three months of the #MeToo movement's rise in mainstream conversations. This section explores the main themes that shape how *Teen Vogue* initially covered the movement from the standpoint of a fashion magazine for teenage girls. There were a number of interesting common threads throughout the sample of articles. For example, the magazine consistently directs readers to resources for sexual violence survivors, and emphasizes mental health for those who have experienced traumatic events. But in situating this analysis within the framework of intersectionality theory, three key themes related to representation and identity were prevalent throughout *Teen Vogue's* coverage of #MeToo: 1) The magazine's tendency to portray high-profile individuals as both typical victims and perpetrators of sexual violence, 2) a primarily vague handling of race when trying to elevate underrepresented voices, 3) and the belief that it is the responsibility of those with privilege and a platform to push the goals of the #MeToo movement forward. The following sections will go into greater detail on the three themes, highlighting recurring trends and how they connect to existing theory on intersectionality and sexual violence. It is also important to note the occasional exceptions within these themes — the moments when authors attempt to complicate and problematize concepts like race, identity and activism. These exceptions will also be elaborated upon throughout the following sections.

Sexual Violence: Stories of the Rich and Famous

In both its Burke and Milano iterations, the #MeToo movement is meant to be a way to raise awareness of the varying degrees of sexual violence experienced by people in and out of the workplace (Palmer, 2018; Park, 2017a). However, while *Teen Vogue*

references the sweeping nature of sexual violence, special attention is given to victims and perpetrators already in the public eye and enjoying professional success. While the #MeToo movement seeks to uncover a spectrum of experiences with sexual violence, the narrow scope of coverage by the magazine centers around experiences in the workplace — specifically as a risk to women in the entertainment industry or white collar careers. Perpetrators are also almost exclusively portrayed as high-profile men with power.

This limited coverage ends up being a double-edged sword. On the one hand, stories out of Hollywood are useful for raising awareness of how widespread sexual violence is. But, this myopic view of who is at risk ignores communities of women that are statistically more vulnerable to sexual violence, and also shapes how the public views who is typically a perpetrator and a victim.

Sexual violence and high-profile women. When discussing sexual violence, *Teen Vogue* separates the population into two categories: there is Hollywood, and then there is everyone else. In this case, *everyone else* typically means women in other high profile and high-power industries, be it the media, politics, sports, or music. Anything beyond those categories gets the vague label of "other industries" (Park, 2018b).

This dichotomy of Hollywood and the rest of the population is present from the start of *Teen Vogue's* coverage of the #MeToo movement. In an article covering actress Alyssa Milano's first use of the hashtag, the movement is described as a way to highlight "just how widespread sexual violence is in Hollywood and beyond" (Park, 2017a). Even the voices selected in the first article reinforce *Teen Vogue's* tendency to rely on the celebrity perspective. Out of the 13 tweets featured in the article, 8 are celebrities tweeting #MeToo in response to Milano. The celebrity tweets do not go into much detail

— for example, tweets by singer Lady Gaga and actress Debra Messing simply state #MeToo. Actress Evan Rachel Wood touches on slut shaming in her tweet, saying that because she was considered a "party girl," she felt she deserved her assault. The remaining five tweets came from accounts of prominent writers and reporters offering short bits of context and stating that just because someone did not tweet "me too" does not mean they are not a survivor.

Splitting the setting of sexual violence between "Hollywood and beyond" continues throughout *Teen Vogue's* coverage of the #MeToo movement, with variations of the phrase appearing 28 times across 19 articles. The #MeToo movement is described as fighting "against sexism and sexual misconduct in Hollywood and beyond" (Park, 2018b). When attention turns to seeking change, the goal is to "truly [eradicate] sexual misconduct from Hollywood and other industries" (Park, 2018b). And in the few moments when references to "other industries" do become more specific, special attention is given to "powerful politicians [and] well-known entertainers" (Rearick, 2017a). Sexual violence is described as affecting "millions of people all over the globe…including senators and major Hollywood stars" (Nickalls, 2017b). Across the 51 articles, 21 emphasize the Hollywood experience specifically. Another 15 focus on politics, either addressing female lawmakers who have experienced harassment, or their male counterparts who have been accused. Sexual assault is repeatedly described as a "widespread and far-reaching issue," (Rearick, 2017a) and yet specificity is only dedicated to stories out of Hollywood or Washington.

The sole moment of coverage that breaks past *Teen Vogue's* preoccupation with Hollywood comes during the star-studded 2018 Golden Globe Awards. In a speech at the

ceremony, Oprah Winfrey touched on experiences with assault in her own life, along with women across the world:

 "They're the women whose names we'll never know. They are domestic workers and farm workers. They are working in factories and they work in restaurants and they're in academia, engineering, medicine and science. They're part of the world of tech and in politics and business. They're our athletes in the Olympics and they're our soldiers in the military." (Park, 2018a)

Winfrey then goes on to discuss Recy Taylor, a Black woman who was attacked and gang-raped by six white men in 1944 (McGuire, 2010). "Justice wasn't an option in the era of Jim Crow," Winfrey said, touching on how the justice system has always been stacked against Black women "in a culture broken by brutally powerful men" (Park, 2018a). Here, Winfrey echoes Crenshaw (1989, 1992), who examined how the judicial system reinforces white male power, and how the "successful conviction of a white man for raping a Black woman was virtually unthinkable" in the Jim Crow era (1989, p. 69). It takes Winfrey to bring the "distinct set of issues confronting Black women" (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 69) to the forefront of the conversation and the minds of *Teen Vogue* readers. However, while *Teen Vogue* did publish an article about Winfrey's speech, the bulk of the article is a transcript of what was said with only an introductory paragraph of context. Had Winfrey — one of the biggest names in Hollywood — not said anything, it is not likely Recy Taylor or commentary about Jim Crow would have graced the online pages of *Teen Vogue.*

Focusing on sexual violence in more visible settings is not exclusive to *Teen Vogue.* For example, one study analyzing 282 articles about sexual harassment cases

found that nearly 75 percent of the articles described the experiences of women in positions of authority, such as legislators, senior managers and other high-ranking professionals (McDonald & Charlesworth, 2013). The researchers concluded that while women in lower-skilled positions are more vulnerable to sexual assault, the media "emphasizes sexual harassment that occurs in more visible or high profile workplaces" (McDonald & Charlesworth, 2013, p. 99).

This tendency to tell the stories of sexual violence through the lens of those with privilege then overlooks the experiences of more intersectionally vulnerable women, Crenshaw (1989) writes. When oppression is viewed through a single-axis framework — in the case of *Teen Vogue,* considering only how one's gender puts them at risk for sexual violence — discussion ends up being limited "to the experiences of otherwise-privileged members of the group" (p. 57). For the most part, the female celebrities and politicians being covered by *Teen Vogue* enjoy both race- and class-based privilege. This style of reporting only confronts "a subset of a much more complex phenomenon," in turn, limiting our understanding of sexual violence. As Crenshaw (1993) writes, the media often focus on a few "exceptional women as representative of sexual discrimination while excluding others" (p. 1474).

However, within its focus on Hollywood, the magazine does show a commitment to sharing the details of survivors' stories in their own words. Readers are taught what sexual harassment and assault look like through nearly verbatim accounts from survivors themselves, rather than clinical sounding definitions. For example, when actress American Ferrera shared her story of sexual abuse as a child on Instagram, *Teen Vogue* quoted her entire post (Elizabeth, 2017). Similarly, a story about female senators sharing

their stories of harassment featured entire paragraphs dedicated to quotes from the women detailing their experiences (Wang, 2017b). This trend seems to demonstrate an understanding of the overall point of the #MeToo movement. If a movement is formed on the value of sharing personal experiences to raise awareness of the nuances and prevalence of sexual violence, then it is only fitting that the magazine describe sexual violence in survivors' own words.

Granted, these stories often come from statements made by celebrities. But in some cases, the influx of celebrities sharing their #MeToo stories helps to contextualize other overlooked instances. For instance, one column used the accusations against Harvey Weinstein to open up a conversation about sexual violence committed by police officers (Blades, 2017). In this column, Blades (2017) describes a possible reason why *Teen Vogue* makes the editorial decision to focus its attention on celebrities:

> "Seeing some of our favorite stars claiming that they had been shamed and
>
> bullied into silence was emblematic of one of the biggest problems of
>
> sexual harassment and sexual assault: the grotesquely high number of
>
> sexual assault survivors who never felt safe enough to report what was
>
> done to them."

Celebrities to *Teen Vogue* seem to act as a symbol — a shorthand way of telling readers that if it happened in Hollywood, it can happen anywhere. If it happened to them, it can, and probably has, happened to you.

In a similar column, journalist Wendy Lu (2017) uses the onslaught of Hollywood allegations to contextualize her own experiences with sexual harassment as an Asian woman with a disability. Lu's column is perhaps the best elaboration on everyday

instances of sexual harassment. Aside from exploring how her multi-dimensional identity

shapes how she experiences harassment, Lu tackles the subtleties of harassment,

specifically the everyday power dynamics at play. "They discovered power and social

status at the expense of making me feel small," Lu (2017) writes about the boys who

would torment her in high school. However, much of *Teen Vogue's* coverage does not

explore these subtle encounters, instead focusing on easy-to-spot exchanges of power.

The effectiveness of using personal stories has been studied in past research on

how teen magazines cover dating violence (Kettrey & Emery, 2010). Most often,

narratives will highlight the individual frame, emphasizing a victim's story of abuse

while adding brief references "suggesting that dating violence is a problem that is broader

than the case being depicted" (p. 1278). *Teen Vogue* structures its stories in a similar

manner. Kettrey and Emery (2010) point out that while the broader cultural implications

of sexual violence remain vague, this "may allow the teen reader to easily identify with

the information conveyed…without bewildering her" (p. 1279).

Perpetrators seen as men with obvious power. Just as *Teen Vogue* focuses

much of its coverage on high-ranking women and their experiences with sexual violence,

the same can be said about how the magazine reports on the men often perpetrating

harassment and assault. Sexual violence always involves power dynamics, but *Teen*

Vogue focuses its reporting on men with literal and obvious power, often that which

comes from money, rank and professional clout.

These are men — and they are always men — who are described as "cultural

juggernauts" (Duca, 2017a) and "powerhouses" (Park, 2018b). They are "formidable"

(Hariri-kia, 2017) and influential figures, in positions that give them the power to

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"[guide] and [direct] our collective understanding of the world" (Duca, 2017a). Some

variation of the phrase "powerful men" appears 35 times in 23 articles. Particularly when

Donald Trump and other politicians are discussed, these men seem to be placed in a

league of their own. One article analyzes how it is problematic for Trump — accused of

sexual violence by several women — to endorse Roy Moore, a Republican Senate

candidate who was accused of molesting under-aged girls while in his 30s (Hariri-kia,

2017). While the #MeToo movement has pushed sexual violence to the forefront of

public consciousness, men like Trump and Moore are still allowed to enjoy power and

prominence. Trump is described as possessing "untouchable power" and "absolute

sovereignty" (Hariri-kia, 2017). As Trump and Moore demonstrate, these men form

alliances, propping each other up despite the accusations against them, creating a

"brotherhood of untouchables" (Hariri-kia, 2017) filled with powerful and highly visible

men. Powerful men come to represent sexism and misogyny in *Teen Vogue's* coverage of

the #MeToo movement, with one article declaring Moore to be a symbol of "the national

discourse about sexual assault" (Diavolo, 2017).

Limiting the perpetrators of sexual violence to highly successful men becomes

problematic, because while feminist scholars theorize sexual violence as an exercise of

power, it is a more complex interaction than men with literal power harassing

subordinates (Buchanan & Ormerod, 2002; MacKinnon, 1979; Richardson & Taylor,

2009; Zarkov & Davis, 2018). Theoretically, the power fueling sexual violence is

abstract, stemming from the power men exercise over women as a consequence of

society's patriarchal structure, and how that shapes gender relations (MacKinnon, 1979;

Richardson & Taylor, 2009). Ignoring the more nuanced power imbalances behind sexual violence erases the everyday occurrences faced by readers.

There is past research that validates the media's tendency to focus on high-power men when covering sexual harassment. The same study by McDonald & Charlesworth (2013) that found that reports of harassment often favor high-achieving women also found that three-quarters of the time, the media favor stories of high-profile perpetrators. It fits the classic case of harassment, showcasing actions "perpetrated by a male who was more senior" (p. 99). Conversely, it is rare for media outlets to highlight peer-level harassment, and rarer still to cover sexual acts committed by a subordinate (McDonald & Charlesworth, 2013).

A reason for emphasizing the high profile rather than the everyday could be journalists reacting to audience expectations and following traditional media practices. Research has shown that in general, society tends to deny "the extent to which male violence happens in private" (Carter, 1998, p. 221). From a media perspective, "violence in the domestic sphere is somehow seen to be 'ordinary'" (p. 221) and not newsworthy. Even though sexual violence may occur in the public workplace, sexual harassment is still framed as a conflict between individuals, relegating it to the private sphere. While the #MeToo movement is pushing that conversation to the forefront, there is still a distinct divide in the coverage *Teen Vogue* reporters dedicate to the highly visible occurrences as opposed to the more everyday instances possibly experienced by their readers.

"The workplace" as a blanket term. Occasionally, *Teen Vogue* writers will place sexual violence within the context of the everyday rather than the celebrity. But

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these discussions often stick to sexual harassment within "the workplace." This is interesting, given the original goals of the #MeToo movement. When it was started by activist Tarana Burke in 2006, "me too" was a way to express empathy and solidarity when discussing sexual trauma (Palmer, 2018). "I needed someone who heard me and saw me…that's how 'Me Too' was born," Burke said, describing the message she hoped to send to survivors of sexual violence (Palmer, 2018). Even Milano's reiteration of the movement centered around sexual assault as a broad concept, hoping to express "the magnitude of the problem" in society (Park, 2017a). And yet, *Teen Vogue* centers much of the conversation around the workplace, describing the #MeToo movement as the "long-fought battle against workplace sexual assault and harassment" (W. Davis, 2017) and as a "reckoning about the treatment of women in the workplace" (Park, 2017b). This reference to the abstract "workplace" appears 19 times in 17 different articles, yet only once is the EEOC definition of sexual harassment even offered (Rearick, 2017d).

Furthermore, instead of focusing on what workplace harassment looks like, *Teen Vogue* pays more attention to the impacts it has on the career woman. Women do not report harassment "in fear of putting [their] career at risk" (Stone, 2018). One article, part of a regular column series by Lauren Duca (2016), laments the women who have been "shamed out of their industries" and who "might have gone on to greatness if only their potential hadn't been kneecapped by fear." Workplace harassment as an EEOC definition is meant to be an all-encompassing term, covering jobs and careers in all socioeconomic walks of life. But the fear of sexual harassment affecting professional ambitions gives the term a very white-collar connotation when used by *Teen Vogue.* In fact, mentions of women working in lower-skilled jobs only appear when referencing the women

interviewed in *Time*'s article on the Silence Breakers — offering a brief rehash of *Time's* reporting, rather than original content by *Teen Vogue.* (Park, 2017c).

Even *Teen Vogue's* attempts at diversifying the different settings in which sexual violence can occur fall flat. One article trying to internationalize the issue is not only pitifully short, but only addresses women within China's media industry (McNamara, 2018c). Following the #MeToo movement in the global context, the article touches on the difficulty of organizing a campaign in China due to government censorship. However, the article offers little context beyond the brief account of a woman "who reportedly quit her job…after her supervisor allegedly tried to assault her in a hotel room."

Two articles exploring sexual violence in the church and in K-12 education do offer alternative perspectives, but offer few specific examples of what sexual violence looks like in these settings (McNamara, 2018a; Rearick, 2017b). For example, the article about assault in the church emphasizes how "heartbreaking" (Rearick, 2017b) it is that someone would have to experience sexual violence in a community meant to offer comfort. The article about sexual violence in the education system focuses more on making sure "people of influence" (McNamara, 2018a) are aware of the issue, rather than actually describing what the issue looks like. This style of reporting fails to demonstrate to readers what violence looks like, and how they might see it in their own lives — an important educational aspect of reporting for a younger demographic. A reason for *Teen Vogue's* omission of such details could be that the stories were driven by Twitter trends. While tweets serve as a way to raise awareness of an issue, *Teen Vogue* writers cannot control what details Twitter users are willing to share about their experiences online.

In her writings on intersectionality, Crenshaw (1992) encourages shifting the focus of sexual harassment beyond working women. Poor and unemployed women still face sexual harassment, and acknowledging their unique experiences is necessary, she writes. If nonwhite working class women "are ever to identify with the organized women's movement, [they] must be able to see themselves in the representations of women" (p. 1473).

Attempts to Elevate Overlooked Voices

This section examines not only who is given a voice in *Teen Vogue's* coverage of the #MeToo movement, but also the ways by which they are represented. Despite *Teen Vogue's* attempts to elevate underrepresented voices — both through social media and its portrayal of the #MeToo movement — the magazine defaults to vague language when confronting issues like race and who is considered a leader within the #MeToo movement. At times, it feels as if writers want to tackle issues of race and class, but lack the proper terminology to do so effectively for their intended audience. Instead, references to race seem to "other" women of color, isolating them in the category of "other minorities."

While this section may seem broad, the three trends explored are all connected by the voices that are amplified and those that are left forgotten. In its portrayal of the #MeToo movement, *Teen Vogue* 1) relies on Twitter as a source of feminist commentary and story ideas, 2) offers an oversimplification of the intersection of race and class in sexual violence, and 3) treats the #MeToo movement like a viral trend, diminishing the work done by founder Tarana Burke and other grassroots activists.

Twitter-driven feminism. This section will go into greater detail regarding how *Teen Vogue* uses Twitter not only as a source of story ideas, but to bring feminist critique into its coverage of the #MeToo movement. Twitter plays a frequent role in *Teen Vogue's* online presence — a typical news story will include a few paragraphs of context, with several tweets layered in showing how the news is being discussed online. Other times, a story will be entirely about happenings on social media, such as Twitter exchanges between celebrities, or trending hashtags. Across the 51 articles, 18 use Twitter to drive storytelling. This is common for the news industry, as more and more reporters turn to Twitter as a source of story ideas and source connections (Korson, 2015; Moon & Hadley, 2014; Swasy, 2016). Social media has come to be seen as a "valuable adjunct to traditional media," and it has become common practice for tweets to be incorporated into articles as digital versions of sound bites (Anonymous, 2011).

Perhaps the most common use of Twitter in *Teen Vogue's* coverage of sexual violence is to elevate feminist voices and critiques. Overall, the magazine's editorial voice seems to embrace feminist values, shooting down concepts like rape culture and victim blaming and attempting to teach its readers how to be better feminists. But this study was inspired by a deeper question — if *Teen Vogue* is openly embracing feminism, what kind of feminist message does the magazine prescribe to? If tweet selection is any indication of feminist leanings, *Teen Vogue* seems to let Twitter drive its feminist standpoints and critiques. Stories follow pop culture, highlighting whatever feminist revelations celebrities and other influencers are having online. If the internet is having a feminist moment, then *Teen Vogue* reflects and amplifies that moment.

In stories related to the #MeToo movement, this not only includes tweets about experiences with sexual violence, but related feminist commentary as well. The magazine often uses Twitter as a way of bringing otherwise-overlooked viewpoints into the conversation. Crowdsourcing content in this manner has become common practice for media organizations, creating a way to gain free content while also democratizing the journalistic process (Korson, 2015). Featured tweets offer feminist critiques of current events, bring more racially diverse voices to the table, and point readers to helpful resources. Curating feminist tweets and layering them into traditional news articles enables *Teen Vogue* to share more pointed and controversial feminist criticisms without needing to overtly take a stance.

The best example of this practice is an article on actress Rose McGowan, a Harvey Weinstein accuser, receiving the green light to produce a documentary series on sexual violence in Hollywood (Gemmill, 2018). At first, the article offers McGowan's statement on the series, saying that she is "proud to share [her] message of bravery, art, joy and survival" (Gemmill, 2018). McGowan describes the series as the opportunity to "have a conversation with everyone" about "seeing beauty everywhere" and "living a brave life" (Gemmill, 2018). The article then shifts to focus on the "pushback" from Twitter users who criticized the approval of McGowan's show, asking why #MeToo founder Tarana Burke was not asked instead. Users touch on the co-optation of Burke's life's work, arguing that McGowan "is not the face of the #MeToo movement," and is instead a "white [woman] taking credit for a Black woman's work" (Gemmill, 2018). "Was Tarana Burke unavailable?" one user asks. However, while quoted Twitter users delve into the co-optation of the movement, *Teen Vogue* writers do little to add context,

or describe the historic tendency of white people co-opting and profiting off the work of Black activists.

The lack of context and explanation in Twitter-reliant stories continues throughout *Teen Vogue's* body of work on the #MeToo movement. Articles tend to offer little information beyond paraphrasing tweets. For example, one article features a tweet by Democratic Rep. Bonnie Watson Coleman. While the tweet references "the legacy of Recy Taylor," little is said in the article about her significance in conversations about sexual assault (McNamara, 2018d). Twitter-driven articles also have a tendency to frame conversations between famous women online as fights, highlighting conflicts between women rather than the actual issue at hand. One article focused entirely on an argument between actresses Amber Tamblyn and Rose McGowan. After McGowan criticized actresses' decision to wear all-black to the 2018 Golden Globes in protest of sexual harassment, Tamblyn "calls out" McGowan for "shaming or taunting the movements of other women who are trying to create change" (Wang, 2017c). At the heart of this Twitter interaction is differing opinions as to what effective activism looks like, and yet *Teen Vogue* chooses to present it as an online spat, referencing a since-deleted tweet by McGowan, along with other actresses chiming in to chastise Tamblyn. A similar article touches on the controversy regarding Taylor Swift's inclusion as a Silence Breaker in *Time's* Person of the Year article (Wiest, 2017). However, instead of offering a discussion of Swift's problematic history of silence on "certain political topics," the article is framed to focus on women online fighting over her inclusion. The sole tweet featured in the article comes from Sophie Turner, an actress in the series Game of Thrones, simply stating "YES" in support of Swift's inclusion (Wiest, 2017).

Teen Vogue's Twitter habits beg the question, were it not for writers noticing these tweets, would these stories have even been thought of? Had singer Demi Lovato not tweeted about the hypocrisy of Donald Trump being chosen as Person of the Year runner up, would *Teen Vogue* had pointed that out (McNamara, 2017d)? Or if Twitter users had not noticed that men on the Golden Globes red carpet were not being asked tough questions about sexual assault, would the editorial staff had noticed (Park, 2018b)?

For *Teen Vogue* to source stories from online feminist commentary reflects Twitter's history as a space for non-white and nonmainstream feminist discussions to gain traction (Kim et al., 2018). Black feminist commentary thrives on Twitter, which offers a place to "speak back and interrupt mainstream feminist discussions that have excluded their point of view" (Kim et al., 2018, p. 151). In this vein, past research has analyzed Twitter as a new tool for alternative media as a way to disrupt traditional news and bring overlooked voices to the forefront. The internet makes information accessible to a wide population, and has been analyzed as a way to "[subvert] state and corporate power, offering a space to voice otherwise marginalized positions" (Dahlberg, 2005, p. 161). The internet and Twitter help amplify these voices by breaking down geographical barriers and getting rid of the distribution constraints that have typically hindered alternative viewpoints from entering the mainstream consciousness (Downey & Fenton, 2003; Watson, 2016). When the average citizen is able to use social media to "promote their own form of interpretation of news," journalists are then able to see and report on how different issues are being perceived around the world (Korson, 2015).

However, while use of Twitter may be a step toward democratizing and decentralizing the journalistic process and turning readers into a more active audience,

the voices being selected still enjoy a great amount of privilege (Dahlberg, 2007; Korson, 2015; Wu, Hofman, Mason, & Watts, 2011). Studies have shown that while Twitter offers an accessible platform for alternative voices, about 20,000 "elite" Twitter users — such as celebrities, corporations, and major media outlets — produce more than half of tweets on the website (Wu et al., 2011). Information may be more decentralized than before the existence of social media, but the flows of content cannot yet be called egalitarian (Wu et al., 2011). In terms of journalistic practices, Dahlberg (2005) writes that while Twitter offers journalists the opportunity to cover a wide variety of perspectives, "the multiplicity of media sources referred to does not result in a great deal of diversity" (p. 165). According to the Pew Research Center, only 24 percent of American adults use Twitter, as opposed to 68 percent who use Facebook (A. Smith & Anderson, 2018). Nonetheless, media professionals are said to view Twitter users as "influencers" dictating what audiences as a whole think (Anonymous, 2011).

Most of the tweets selected by *Teen Vogue* writers come from accounts with a high number of followers. Crowdsourced stories favor high-profile accounts, such as actresses, authors, journalists, bloggers, and politicians. As discussed earlier in this analysis, while thousands of women and men took to Twitter to share their #MeToo stories, *Teen Vogue* only featured tweets from those with fame. The privileged nature of Twitter-driven reporting has two sides: on the one hand, Twitter users must already possess a large platform in order to get picked up by *Teen Vogue*. On the other, the journalists curating tweets have the power of selecting whose voices — and which feminist critiques — are heard.

Struggling to unpack race and class. Throughout its coverage of the #MeToo

movement, *Teen Vogue* centers much of its coverage on gender as a oppressive category.

This singular focus echoes Crenshaw's (1994) critiques of the anti-sexism and anti-

racism movements for focusing on a "single categorical axis" (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 57) of

oppression, rather than the compounded oppressions experienced by those with

intersectional identities. The magazine does make an effort to clarify that sexual violence

is not exclusive to women and that it is something men also experience. But

acknowledgements of more complex and intersecting categories of identity are few and

far between. As a magazine built around the female identity, this is not surprising.

Discourses are often shaped to respond to either anti-racism or anti-sexism — very rarely

is a body of work equipped to tackle both (Crenshaw, 1994). This section will begin by

reviewing moments where *Teen Vogue* writers implicitly discuss intersectional identities

in relation to sexual violence. Then, analysis will shift to exploring how writers often

misinterpret intersectionality and oversimplify race, sometimes forgetting other aspects of

identity beyond skin color all together.

While Crenshaw's (1989) conceptualization of intersectionality is never formally

explained in the sample of articles, *Teen Vogue* writers will occasionally implicitly

discuss intersectional identities and delve into the complexities of race. If

intersectionality is referenced in a news article, it is because a celebrity mentioned it. For

example, in a red carpet interview, actress Debra Messing encouraged the need for

"intersectional gender parity" (Park, 2018b). No explanation of what Messing means or

why it is relevant is offered to readers. More in-depth and accurate explanations of

intersectionality are more frequent in columns written by freelance contributors, rather

than in traditional news pieces. The best examples of this come from two columns previously discussed in this analysis: a column by an Asian-American woman with a disability about her experiences with sexual harassment; and a column about when police officers commit sexual assault (Blades, 2017; Lu, 2017).

While neither of these articles explicitly use the word "intersectionality," both use language often associated with the theory, exploring marginalized identities and how race, gender and class simultaneously contribute to sexual violence. For example, writer Wendy Lu (2017) uses the context of the #MeToo movement and Harvey Weinstein accusations to address how her "multi-marginal identity" forces her to navigate misogyny as a both disabled and Chinese woman. Lu uses her position within intersecting oppressions (racism, ableism, sexism) as an example to then advocate for other marginalized communities, pointing out that "women of color, prison inmates, LGBTQ folks and homeless people are also at a higher risk of being raped or sexually assaulted" (Lu, 2017). Lu tackles the everyday power imbalances of sexual violence, noting that while it is rooted in power and control over other people, it is often driven by prejudice. Her examples range from microaggressions like having "ni hao" yelled by a catcaller, to being accosted on the street by a stranger, only to have a police officer tell her "he's just being annoying" (Lu, 2017). Lu uses these stories to bring the dual nature of assault to readers' attention, pointing out that "who we are, where we come from and what we look like all influence not just whether someone will sexual disrespect us, but how and why" (Lu, 2017).

In his column about sexual assaults committed by those in law enforcement, Blades (2017) confronts a power dynamic that has been in place since the Jim Crow era,

when Black women were targeted for sexual violence because they were considered less-than human, and in turn would receive little to no protection by the law (A. Y. Davis, 1983). Even today, women of color are targeted by police officers because of stereotypes "rooted in slavery and colonialism" Blades (2017) writes. Offering this historical context, the article describes how entrenched racism within law enforcement leads to the increased surveillance of communities of color, increasing Black women's vulnerability to sexual violence at the hands of police officers. Both Lu's (2017) and Blade's (2017) columns echo mast research establishing that when women of color experience sexual violence, it is often simultaneously a racist and sexist act (Buchanan & Ormerod, 2002; Calafell, 2014; Crenshaw, 1994).

Other articles touch on aspects of sexual violence beyond gender, but do not go into as much detail as the previous two columns. For example, an article about sexual violence in the church gives a surface-level view of how religion, race and gender combine to make someone more vulnerable to sexual violence (Rearick, 2017b). Another article offers tips on how to better support Black women in politics (Crumpton, 2017). But while the article mentions that Black women are at a higher risk of sexual assault and face increased barriers to prosecuting sex crimes, it offers little context as to why they are in that unique position.

However, *Teen Vogue* confronts the intersections of identity and sexual violence in a vague manner when race — and to a lesser degree, class — are not central to the article. Much like how the magazine situates sexual violence in "Hollywood and beyond," victims of sexual violence are referenced in ambiguous phrases like "women

and other minorities" or "other marginalized groups" (Weiss, 2017). In one case, a reference to "other minorities" is literally confined to parentheses**.**

Teen Vogue's tendency to erase underrepresented and intersecting identities is most evident when the magazine covers Terry Crews, a Black male actor who came forward with his story of sexual harassment. The article is about men also taking part in the all-black sartorial protest at the Golden Globes to take a stand against sexual violence in Hollywood. While the main focus is on the treatment of women, Crews' story is used to clarify that men are also subject to sexual harassment. However, the article then points out that "people of all identities" can be victims of assault, noting that those who are not survivors of sexual violence must still "support marginalized groups" (Weiss, 2017). Implicit in this phrasing is the notion that anyone who is not a white woman or a Black man is lumped into the catch-all category of "marginalized groups" in need of support (Weiss, 2017).

Scholars adopting an intersectional framework have criticized this type of phrasing before (Bowleg, 2012; Flores Niemann, 2015; Nash, 2017). "Women and other minorities" is problematic because of the "implied mutual exclusivity" of the two populations (Bowleg, 2012). That kind of phrasing ignores the fact that a woman can be both female and a minority, erasing the experiences of women of color and minimizing the "intersectional realities that both link and separate white women, men of color, and women of color (Flores Niemann, 2015). Inequalities are often conceptualized through the experiences of white women and Black men, ignoring the Black women at the intersections (Crenshaw, 1989). According to Crenshaw (1989), confronting social issues

through intersectionality is key in order to fully understand how Black women and other intersecting identities are subordinated.

There are a few articles that attempt to bridge this gap and give a racial analysis of women and sexual violence. However, these articles often written by white women offering shallow attempts at unpacking the Black female identity, treating Black women as a homogenous group. In an article discussing voter blocks in Alabama, Black women are actually referred to as "the group" (Crumpton, 2017), giving the connotation that an identity can be compared to an organization or nonprofit. In some cases, *Teen Vogue* writers subconsciously make it clear who their intended audience is, referring to readers as "us" and Black women as "them" (Crumpton, 2017; Song, 2018). There is no way to know if this othering was intentional or not. But like women's magazines, teenage magazines are often thought to act as an instruction manual for young girls, properly socializing them for the world (Massoni, 2010). On the one hand, it is noteworthy that *Teen Vogue* is explicitly trying to teach its readers to be more inclusive feminists. Telling young girls that women of color should be allowed to "speak for themselves…[and] control their own narratives" (Song, 2018) is an important introduction to intersectionality and inclusivity. But for this to be done at the expense of explicitly othering the Black girls reading as well is problematic.

#MeToo: A viral trend with celebrity backing. While the #MeToo movement began with founder Tarana Burke in 2006, most mainstream understandings pin the start of the movement on Alyssa Milano and the fallout of sexual assault allegations against Harvey Weinstein. However, even after Burke was brought into the limelight as the true founder of the phrase, #MeToo still maintained its connection to Hollywood and social

media. The same sentiment can be found in how *Teen Vogue* authors write about the movement — while the magazine gives credit to Burke from time to time, #MeToo is primarily viewed as a viral trend. To be considered a leader within the movement only requires that famous women be vocal about their experiences with sexual violence, discounting Burke's original commitment to the experiences of women of color.

In looking at the specific phrases used by *Teen Vogue* writers to describe the movement, it is clear that #MeToo is difficult for journalists to conceptualize. Particularly when Milano was the only name attached to the phrase (in the mainstream consciousness at least), there was no clear description of what goals the two words stood for or that it would take off into a fully formed movement. Without a structured organization or clear-cut leaders, *Teen Vogue* journalists initially viewed #MeToo as a Twitter trend, rather than the start of a social movement. At first, it seemed as if *Teen Vogue* writers could not decide whether a hashtag-gone-viral should be called a "Twitter-based movement" (Park, 2017a), an online "campaign" (Elizabeth, 2017), or something else all together. Within *Teen Vogue's* coverage, #MeToo takes on descriptors like a "tipping point," or an "important social media dialogue that's raising awareness about sexual harassment and sexism" (Nickalls, 2017a). As the movement began to solidify into something that would last longer than the 24-hour news cycle, the perceived goals of #MeToo also became clearer. *Teen Vogue* portrays the #MeToo movement as a vehicle by which women and men can share their stories of assault on social media, letting people "highlight their own experiences" and "speak their truths" (W. Davis, 2017; Nickalls, 2017b). #MeToo also turned into a rallying cry and motivator for change — political action is taken "in light

of" the #MeToo movement, or spurred by "the momentum" of stories shared (Rearick, 2017c).

In a way, this language aligns with how founder Tarana Burke has described the intention of the movement. In her words, #MeToo is meant to communicate "empowerment through empathy"(Palmer, 2018), showing women that they are not alone in their experiences with sexual violence. However, the #MeToo movement as it is known in connection to Milano has received criticism for ignoring Burke's role in founding the movement and "failing to recognize the unique forms of harassment and the heightened vulnerability" women of color face (Onwuachi-Willig, 2018). The same failure to recognize Burke as a founder and also how the movement was co-opted by famous white women recreates itself in *Teen Vogue's* portrayal of movement leaders.

The *New York Times* reported Burke as the original creator of "Me Too" just days after Milano's tweet went viral (Garcia, 2018). Yet the first mention of her in *Teen Vogue's* coverage comes a month after Milano's original tweet. The magazine does not point out how her movement was co-opted by white women until two months later in December. Out of 51 articles, only 12 mention Burke as the founder of #MeToo. Of those 12, 4 point out that she was almost not given credit for her work. The co-optation of Burke's work to end sexual violence is only brought up in articles directly having to do with race and identity. For example, two of the articles discuss the lack of representation at the Golden Globes, while another offers tips on how to "support Black women after the Alabama Senate election" (Crumpton, 2017). The most pointed confrontation of racism within the #MeToo movement occurs in an article criticizing actress Rose McGowan for

"using her white privilege to take the spotlight away from non-white, non-famous women who need to be heard" (Gemmill, 2018).

While this moment stands out, *Teen Vogue* authors overwhelmingly ignore the racial dynamics at play when establishing the leadership of the #MeToo movement. In some cases, mentions of Burke read like an afterthought, placed at the end of a paragraph detailing Milano's use of the hashtag (Park, 2017b). At other times, Milano is spoken about as if she is a collaborator with Burke who "resurfaced" (Park, 2017b) and "promoted" (McNamara, 2017b) the hashtag. Another article calls actresses Rose McGowan and Amber Tamblyn "outspoken figureheads" of the #MeToo movement (Wang, 2017c). This article leads to the question of what action it takes for *Teen Vogue* to label someone as a leader within the movement. Judging by *Teen Vogue's* coverage, the act of being vocal is enough to push a celebrity into the status of "figurehead."

When Burke is actually called upon as founder and a leader of the #MeToo movement, descriptions of her work lack precision. Much like *Teen Vogue's* previous vague references to race and class differences, Burke's work is centered around "marginalized girls and women" (McNamara, 2017b) and "underprivileged communities" (Gardner, 2017), with few additional details.

There are several implications to portraying #MeToo as a celebrity-led movement. For *Teen Vogue* to consider famous women as the face of the movement erases Burke's years of grassroots work. The concerns of the #MeToo movement then come to reflect issues faced by an overwhelmingly white and wealthy group of women. That is not to say that white women cannot be effective allies, but little is done to bridge the gap between those with fame and everyday women.

Seeking Cultural Change From Those With Power

Throughout *Teen Vogue's* coverage of the #MeToo movement, the need for change is frequently brought up. This idea of seeking change ranges from individual actions readers can partake in, to suggestions for systemic and societal changes. As discussed in earlier sections, *Teen Vogue* frames sexual violence as a single-issue struggle. This focus on gender as the sole motivator for sexual violence leads to the magazine describing the change as the dismantling of patriarchal and rape culture. The responsibility to seek change is then placed on those with existing platforms and privilege — specifically men and celebrities.

Cultural change: dismantling sexist oppression. One phrase holds prominence in *Teen Vogue's* coverage of the #MeToo movement: the need for "cultural change" (Elizabeth, 2017) in order to put an end to sexual harassment and assault. The phrase first appears in *Teen Vogue* coverage the day after Milano's #MeToo tweet went viral (Elizabeth, 2017). The magazine goes on to talk about "the possibility of sociocultural change" (Shaw, 2017) and pursuing a "cultural movement" (Wang, 2017b). The country is in the midst of a "cultural pivot" (Wiest, 2017), with #MeToo and the sweeping allegations against high-profile men being the "tipping point" (McNamara, 2017e), according to *Teen Vogue*.

Initially, "cultural change" comes across as simply vague phrasing. It is brought up in a variety of contexts, including articles about harassment in the workplace and Hollywood, the actions of politicians, rape on college campuses, and even two articles about social justice T-shirts. *Teen Vogue* writers use the term sweepingly, applying it to any and all situations related to sexual violence.

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But the context of the buzzword reveals two aspects of what it means to "change the culture" (McNamara, 2017e) according to the magazine. First, *Teen Vogue* presents itself as committed to ending rape culture. But on a broader scale, "changing the culture" is often used in connection to patriarchal culture. As *Teen Vogue* puts it, now is the time to "[force] men to take accountability for their contributions to a culture that allows rampant sexual harassment and assault" (Wang, 2017a).

Teen Vogue writers confront rape culture in a variety of ways. In some cases, the need to "dismantle rape culture" (Wang, 2017a) is directly invoked. But more subtle references to this form of "cultural change" are present throughout the sample of articles. For example, the need for society to support, listen to, and believe victims appears in a variety of contexts encouraging change. *Teen Vogue* also confronts the shame and stigma surrounding sexual violence, writing that the real shame should be placed "on the perpetrator" (Park, 2017c).

One article, in which a sexual assault survivor criticizes society's tendency to discredit rape victims, encapsulates *Teen Vogue's* overall message regarding the need to dismantle rape culture. In the article, Shaw (2017) challenges the notion of what a good victim looks like:

> "In the court of public opinion, which infuriatingly translates into actual courts of law, the 'perfect rape victim is brutally raped by a stranger, is threatened with a weapon, and fought like hell during her attack. Only then is a victim's story deemed credible."

The same society that discredits women who come forward with their stories also enables men like Harvey Weinstein to commit such acts, Shaw writes. She goes on to

dispel more rape myths, noting that rape culture is fueled by society's "automatic denial and silencing of victims' truths." The tendency to assume a victim "asked for it" or is not traumatized because of her subsequent behavior feeds into that culture. Above all, Shaw writes, survivors should be listened to and believed, echoing her fellow *Teen Vogue* contributors.

Shaw's key points, as well as those expressed throughout *Teen Vogue's* coverage, demonstrate an understanding of what feminist scholars have written regarding rape culture. Scholars have described the United States has having a rape culture, due to how sexuality and violence are often seen as connected (D. Herman, 1989). In an overview of how rape culture has shaped America, Herman (1989) describes how rapists are produced by a culture that "encourages the socialization of men to subscribe to values of control and dominance" (p. 49) over women. The same can be said for other forms of sexual harassment and assault — "minirapes," (p. 45) as she calls them. A common rape myth is that sexual violence must include physical struggle for victims to be believed, or that violence must be perpetrated by a stranger in order for it to be unwanted, a problem Shaw (2017) reiterates (Burt, 1998; D. Herman, 1989). Often, when victim stories do not fit this template, they are more likely to be distrusted by law enforcement, the media, and the general public (D. Herman, 1989). Victims who do come forward with their stories of assault are often made to feel "as if they were the persons on trial" (Herman, 1984, p. 50), having their stories picked apart and discounted in the courts and in media.

Within *Teen Vogue's* coverage, specific ways for readers to combat rape culture are primarily limited to being vocal about sexual violence. The magazine urges readers to "speak out when [they] witness or hear about sexual assault or harassment" (Shaw,

2017). A majority of *Teen Vogue's* calls to action place emphasis on individual behavior rather than systemic change. One article encourages an act of protest fitting for a fashion magazine, advertising a T-shirt that proclaims "Believe Women" (Hardy, 2017b). However, this might be appropriate for a magazine geared toward a younger audience. As one columnist puts it, "sweeping cultural changes can't happen without smaller, everyday ones" (Shaw, 2017).

But beyond speaking up, *Teen Vogue* does not shy away from embracing political action on the individual level. There is power in the polls, readers are told in multiple articles. A more extensive example of this appears in the magazine's "Thigh-High Politics" columns, where writer Lauren Duca includes a to-do list for readers, including suggestions like calling representatives and making donations to groups like Emily's List (Duca, 2017b). In a column about sexual violence and politics, Duca criticizes men on both sides of the political aisle for their abusive actions and complitcy in ending sexual violence. She goes to encourage readers to run for office themselves, signaling an awareness that the magazine's actual audience is older than its intended audience.

Beyond references to society's rape culture, *Teen Vogue* also broadens its view of "cultural change" by describing how patriarchal culture enables and sometimes encourages sexual violence. Multiple articles include gender-specific calls to action. In a column celebrating grassroots activism, former Texas state senator Wendy Davis (2017) offers the image of high school girls testifying in Senate hearings led by a gaggle of middle-aged lawmakers to prove that the "tides are changing" against the men who hold power. Columnist Duca (2017a) condemns the "warping force of sexism" in an article about women being held back in the workplace due to sexual violence. While *Teen*

Vogue will occasionally clarify that men can also be sexually harassed, sexual violence is primarily discussed as something that strictly affects women. The magazine frames being harassed is a "guaranteed part of the female experience," (Duca, 2017b) and #MeToo is viewed as a way to break with societal norms that "[oppress] half our population" (Hariri-kia, 2017). Readers are warned of potentially being "complicit in silencing and shaming women" (Shaw, 2017).

Connecting female oppression to the patriarchy first fully emerged during 1970s second wave feminism (Easteal et al., 2015; MacKinnon, 1979). Male dominance over women manifested itself in both the public and private spheres, scholars wrote, and was maintained through "industrial, political, religious, legal and other establishments such as the media" (Easteal et al., 2015, p. 106). Patriarchal societies are said to be predisposed to sexual violence due to the gender imbalance of power (Scully, 1990). While there are several individual-level characteristics that contribute to whether someone will commit acts of sexual violence, the likelihood of those factors flourishes in male-dominated societies (Yodanis, 2004). Translated into the workplace, sexual harassment occurs when the gendered hierarchy of society manifests itself in organizational structure (Acker, 1990).

However, while *Teen Vogue* successfully confronts the gender-specific nature of sexual violence, the additional layered oppressions of race and class are rarely discussed. Instead, women are treated as a uniform class of their own, which "conflates or ignores intra group differences" (Crenshaw, 1994, p. 1). As a form of feminist discourse, *Teen Vogue* fails to consider the intersections of racism and patriarchy (Crenshaw, 1994).

This omission is problematic because women of color and women living in poverty are statistically at a higher risk of facing sexual violence (Buchanan & Ormerod, 2002). And yet, very rarely are these sort of statistics brought up in *Teen Vogue* articles. When discussing action and the need for a cultural change class is all but ignored. Only once is the word "socioeconomic" brought up, in an article criticizing the lack of racial and economic diversity at the 2018 Golden Globes and in Hollywood (Song, 2018). Even then, the article goes on to lament the lack of racial representation in Hollywood, only paying attention to wealth when it is connected to white men. The inherent privilege of being on the red carpet is all but ignored.

While brought up more often than class, race tends to only be mentioned when convenient. For example, an article about the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas Supreme Court hearings only mentions Hill's race once — seven paragraphs into the story. Instead of highlighting the role race played in the hearings, the article only includes an interview with former Vice President Joe Biden, who uses the platform to say he "owes her an apology" and that "we've got to change the culture" (McNamara, 2017e). *Teen Vogue's* tendency to view sexual violence as a "single-issue struggle" overlooks communities of women who are statistically more vulnerable due to their race and class (Lorde, 1984).

On the few occasions that race is brought up in connection to seeking change, it is often in the context of white women. Black women are mentioned to demonstrate the failure of white women to be proper allies. For example, one article offers a list of suggestions for how readers (who are assumed to be white) can "help support the efforts of Black women…because our world would not exist without them" (Crumpton, 2017). Even then, the suggestions are not that different from *Teen Vogue's* suggestions to

support women as a whole. Readers are encouraged to support, listen to and trust Black women. In another case, race is invoked as a way to congratulate white women — specifically, actresses —for using their privilege to elevate the voices of women of color (Song, 2018). Using the Golden Globes as an example, the magazine points out that women of color were only truly heard when white actresses "forced them into the conversation" (Song, 2018).

When race and class are taken into account, *Teen Vogue's* calls for "cultural change" take on empty meaning, repurposing protest language to appeal to an audience wanting to feel like activists. Even Burke herself has said "centering and elevating voices that are often drowned out" is central to the work of the #MeToo movement (McNamara, 2017b). Several *Teen Vogue* articles make the same argument, but rarely put it into action. Rather, *Teen Vogue* does make a pointed argument that the responsibility of "elevating" drowned out voices lies on those who already possess a platform.

Responsibility of those with power. *Teen Vogue* places the responsibility of enacting change on a variety of different groups. While some attention is paid to survivors and the general public, the magazine takes the strongest stance when it comes to celebrities — it is the responsibility of those with existing platforms and privilege to uplift others and speak out against sexual violence. Ideally, those in Hollywood should be vocal, taking their activism beyond putting on a pin or posting a tweet. As implied by *Teen Vogue's* coverage, the standards of effective activism are higher for two key groups: men and celebrities — and more specifically, male celebrities.

The magazine's emphasis on men's responsibility in enacting change is interesting, given that adult men are not their target demographic. Regardless, men are

told they must "take accountability for their contributions" to a culture that enables

sexual violence (Wang, 2017a). One writer brings up the sudden paranoia men feel in the

workplace, pointing out that it would be more effective for men to consider how they

treat women rather than worrying about actions being misinterpreted (Duca, 2017a). At

the center of it all, men are told they need to be "stepping in and speaking out" when they

encounter situations involving sexual violence (Wang, 2017a). Women should not be the

only ones expected to do the work in ending sexual violence, the magazine says (Song,

2018).

One article in particular offers specific suggestions as to how men can use their

position to enact change. Inspired by the Twitter hashtag #HowIWillChange, the article

begins by explaining that while #MeToo is a way to offer solidarity and support, the onus

to speak out against sexual violence should never be placed exclusively on survivors

(Wang, 2017a). Rather, men should use the cultural moment as a chance to learn and

grow. Some of the suggestions are similar to those *Teen Vogue* offers to women: like

speaking up in meetings when someone says something sexist, or reporting known

assailants. The article also suggests donating to a women's shelter or to low-income

women through the United Nations. But the article does take a male-specific stance

regarding the moralistic reasons for enacting change. In one tweet, a man evaluating his

past actions states, "the standard I walk past is the standard I accept." Similarly, men are

encouraged to speak up and report because they "have less to lose than the women doing

the same." Implied throughout all this is the notion that without the help of men, the

prevalence of sexual violence in society will never change.

Specifically pertaining to men in Hollywood, *Teen Vogue* is apt to point out the "minimal effort" actors put in by "dressing in a black suit and donning a pin" (Song, 2018). Rather, these prominent men should be "using their position to move the conversation forward" (Song, 2018). Holding men in Hollywood accountable becomes most prominent during the magazine's Golden Globe coverage. One article about men's decision to also take part in wearing all black points out the laziness of such activism, as most men already wear black to awards events (Weiss, 2018). The article criticizes the "surface-level" moves of men in Hollywood, saying that the men who wear black should also "remember to do the hard work of truly eradicating sexual misconduct in Hollywood and other industries," even at the expense of their own careers. Receiving a pat on the back for simply tweeting about women's issues is not enough, the writer says.

The same standard is often applied to all celebrities throughout *Teen Vogue's* coverage of the #MeToo movement. As the magazine puts it, those in Hollywood must "back up their statements and stances shared on social media" (Rearick, 2017a). Especially at awards shows, if an actor does not speak up, the magazine views it as missing "a vital opportunity to show their support" (Rearick, 2017a).

On the other hand, *Teen Vogue* does label some celebrities as worthy activists. The actresses who are thought of as "lobbying for systemic change" are those who are vocal about issues of sexual assault, but also use their platform to elevate others (Wang, 2017c). For example, actresses at the 2018 Golden Globe awards are celebrated for inviting activists to share the red carpet with them. Interestingly, articles centering around this moment are the only ones to feature a more extensive biography of #MeToo founder

Tarana Burke, proving *Teen Vogue's* own point — when famous women use their

privilege to amplify others, the media are more likely to listen and follow suit.

However, *Teen Vogue* does walk a fine line when discussing celebrity activism.

As described by the *New York Times Magazine, Teen Vogue* can only be so rebellious —

for the sake of advertising revenue, the magazine can only be "outspoken about issues

that have already been widely agreed upon" (Hughes, 2017). While the magazine does

confront obvious hypocrisy within Hollywood, it cannot get too controversial. *Teen*

Vogue may be embracing the activist and "woke" brand, but it is still a fashion magazine

that relies on both celebrity coverage and advertisers' money. Burning bridges over what

effective activism looks like is dangerous for a platform that is already seeing dwindling

readership.

This struggle between wanting to offer criticism but staying within widely

acceptable coverage makes *Teen Vogue's* thoughts on change and responsibility a bit

confusing. For example, at the 2018 Golden Globe Awards, actors and actresses wore all

black in solidarity with survivors of sexual violence. Throughout *Teen Vogue's* coverage

of the night, it is unclear as to whether or not the fashion protest is seen as enough. One

article, highlighting political moments of the night, called the move "an important

message by way of fashion" (Rearick, 2018a). Another took the opposite stance and said

wearing black should not be treated as "the sole contribution that makes a difference"

(Cerón, 2017). The writer, a sexual assault survivor herself, calls the all-black protest "an

ineffective kind of activism." As a survivor, Cerón writes, she could not car less what

color dress an actress wears on the red carpet. Overall, *Teen Vogue's* stance on the

effectiveness of protest through fashion seems to come down to a matter of personal

choice — if someone feels empowered by wearing black, and that that action makes a difference, "then more power to them" (Cerón, 2017).

That seems to be the overwhelming response to celebrity activism in women's magazines across the board. So long as a display of support feels empowering, then it is considered admirable. In the past, fashion magazines have been criticized for using "empowerment" to promote commoditized feminism — the thought that even "maxing out your credit card was a feminist act" (Freeman, 2016). In some cases, this "anything goes" attitude is now being applied to what effective activism looks like.

Throughout its coverage of the #MeToo movement, *Teen Vogue* consistently angles the story around the celebrity and those who have reached professional success. But in focusing on what celebrities can do to be better activists, the magazine truly is painting the movement to be one built by celebrities and for celebrities. Tarana Burke and other activists become footnotes, mentioned only because they were in the presence of those with fame. The implications of this are vast. The potential erasure of the experiences and injustices faced by marginalized women has been a constant theme throughout this analysis. But beyond that, magazines' tendency to embrace celebrity feminism throws structural inequalities to the wind (Keller & Ringrose, 2015). Feminism and social justice built on branding embraces personal responsibility and individual action as the best strategy to reach gender equality, rather than acknowledging and unpacking the social and economic roots of inequalities. It may feel good and appeal to *Teen Vogue* readers who wish to envision themselves as activists, but it is not the final solution to eliminating sexual violence. *Teen Vogue* is a gateway to understanding feminism; an introduction to the buzzwords surrounding the #MeToo movement and

sexual violence. *Teen Vogue's* brand may be shaped around feminism and social justice, but it is still just that — a brand.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

This study illuminates the complex and sometimes contradictory ways a fashion magazine for teenage girls covers a social justice movement. Using Crenshaw's (1989) intersectionality theory, this study sought to understand if and how a teen magazine acknowledges and represents the intersections of gender, race, and class when reporting on sexual violence and the #MeToo movement. Past feminist analyses of teen magazines have examined the magazines as a whole, rather than focusing on one particular subject (Peirce, 1990, 1993; Schlenker et al., 1998). Similarly, teen magazines are often studied for their use of postfeminist values, or how articles reinforce or challenge gender norms. This study sought to understand how a complicated and relevant topic is being presented to young women readers — particularly when a magazine is in the process of rebranding itself as a source of sharp content for activist-minded readers (Hughes, 2017).

The crux of this analysis is *Teen Vogue's* tendency to represent the #MeToo movement as primarily a celebrity-led effort. The #MeToo movement — even as described by *Teen Vogue* — is meant to advocate for all survivors. Yet, the magazine overwhelmingly portrays the movement as being spearheaded by the white, wealthy, female, and famous. As a consequence, grassroots activists like Tarana Burke become a footnote to actresses like Alyssa Milano and Rose McGowan. This can be seen in the specificity surrounding celebrity-centric stories, whereas descriptions of Burke's work are vague, lack context, and are confined to parenthetical statements or the end of paragraphs. Her work to help women of color is occasionally mentioned, but with little attention paid to her actual motivations, or the added vulnerabilities these women face because of their race or class.

Throughout all this, the #MeToo movement is treated like a viral trend. In doing so, reporters limit themselves to only writing about extreme and prominent stories — those that come from celebrities who already enjoy visibility and a strong following. This contributes to the assumption that celebrities are the key players within the #MeToo movement, while also ignoring the messier, more complicated stories lived by everyday women. Treating the #MeToo movement as just a viral hashtag leaves out the women who lack the resources to access Twitter, or who cannot share their stories for safety reasons. A person must possess a certain amount of privilege — economically, geographically, etc. — before it is safe for them to go public with stories of violence. While *Teen Vogue* does make an effort to validate those who do not share their #MeToo stories, it is often in the context of mental health, rather than personal safety and livelihood.

Teen Vogue's focus on those with fame and its failure to acknowledge how sexual violence plays out across socioeconomic backgrounds reinforces past research regarding fashion magazines and their tendency to embrace corporate feminism (Durham, 2008; Gill, 2007; Keller, 2011). Within corporate and commodity feminism, feminist ideas and values are appropriated for commercial gain, replicated in a way that waters down the issues at hand (Keller & Ringrose, 2015). In the context of *Teen Vogue,* inequalities between men and women are easily recognized and confronted. But the deeper social, cultural and economic roots of those inequalities are ignored, replaced by concepts like individuality and the empowerment of personal choice (Gill, 2007; Keller & Ringrose, 2015). This is particularly noteworthy, given the high-class ownership of *Teen Vogue.* For Condé Nast to ignore issues of race and class, in favor of a more refined, celebrity

representation of sexual violence is no surprise — the media company's appeal is built on the fact that it does not force readers to come face to face with socioeconomic divisions.

Puar's (2007) critique of intersectionality theory confronts its co-optation for the sake of corporate gain and diversity management. Intersectionality is often invoked but rarely acted upon, she writes. While corporations lament the need for greater diversity, a person's "difference" is treated like a checked box, "simply [wishing] the messiness of identity into a formulaic grid" (Puar, 2007, p. 211). This corporate use of feminism recreates itself in media representations, as seen by *Teen Vogue's* vagueness of language whenever race and class are brought up. Intersectionality is called upon as an important concept, but rarely defined or described correctly. Similarly, Black women are often referred to as a homogenous group, and only in articles about representation and inclusivity. While much has been written about commodity feminism in relation to gender roles and sexuality, this study sheds light on how commoditized feminism shapes how magazines present controversial issues to their readers.

Interestingly absent from *Teen Vogue's* reporting is an emphasis on age. Throughout the samples, only one article dealt directly with issues in K-12 education. For a magazine built around the teenage audience to forego incorporating age into its reporting on sexual violence demonstrates two things; firstly, that editorial staffers recognize a shift in the magazine's demographic. But also, that the magazine's preoccupation with celebrity stories means that stories relevant to its core audience are ignored.

The magazine is also inconsistent with how it defines sexual violence. Terms like sexual misconduct, assault, harassment, and violence are used interchangeably. This

sloppiness in writing collapses the experiences around sexual violence, ignoring the varying severity surrounding incidents.

Despite *Teen Vogue's* preoccupation with celebrity experiences, there are moments in the magazine's coverage of the #MeToo movement that push beyond surface-level discussions. Use of Twitter creates a way to elevate a variety of feminist critiques. Research has shown that women of color foster communities and amplify ideas through social media — similarly, curated tweets are the place where commentary from women of color thrives on *Teen Vogue's* website (Kim et al., 2018). Through first-person columns, *Teen Vogue* creates a space for writers to elaborate on distinct and detailed experiences of oppression and sexual violence. These personal accounts also allow writers to tie in concepts from feminist theory like intersectionality in an accessible manner. These moments are fleeting across the sampled articles, but demonstrate that there is potential for *Teen Vogue* and other entertainment-based media outlets to highlight race and class in a responsible and accurate way.

A possible limitation to this study is the time frame selected. I chose to limit analysis to articles published during the overlap of the rise of the #MeToo movement and former editor-in-chief Elaine Welteroth's time leading the magazine. That decision was made based on Welteroth being credited as the driving force behind the magazine's tonal shift. However, *Teen Vogue's* coverage of the #MeToo movement has continued since Welteroth's departure. How the magazine's coverage has evolved in the past year could alter these current findings

According to Crenshaw (1993), discourses are often shaped to confront either racism or sexism. This is a longstanding critique of the failure to build coalitions between

the anti-racism and anti-sexism movements that replicates itself when media embrace a stance as well. As a gender-specific form of media, it makes sense for *Teen Vogue* to center its coverage of #MeToo and sexual violence around sexism. But if the magazine's leadership wishes to cultivate its activist editorial stance, more comprehensive coverage is necessary. Writer and cultural commentator Roxane Gay (2014) has described feminism built around fame as a gateway to understanding feminism, rather than the movement itself. The same can be said for the way feminism and activism against sexual violence are portrayed by *Teen Vogue* — a good introduction, but sometimes problematic and not quite complete.

Some could argue that intersectionality is too complicated of a subject to communicate to readers within *Teen Vogue's* target demographic. I believe that assumption is offensive and does a disservice to readers. Previous research has found that female teen readers actively engage with media representations of celebrity feminism (Keller & Ringrose, 2015). These readers have been exposed to feminist concepts enough to realize the problem of turning feminism into something fashionable. Within academia, teen readers have been an overlooked perspective, but that does not mean they are incapable of comprehending concepts like intersectionality and how it shapes sexual violence.

Possibilities for future research are vast. This same analytical lens could be applied to different magazines for a variety of subjects, such as domestic violence, education, drug use, etc. Beyond subject matter, this analysis was exclusively based on my interpretation of content and theory as a researcher. It would also be beneficial to understand how *Teen Vogue* writers evaluate their own work, as well as how readers

engage with and critique content. Do actual *Teen Vogue* readers think celebrity-centered content is effective? Would they rather read more relatable content, or are they satisfied with the current product? Do they engage with the magazine for enjoyment, while also realizing the underlying problems and implications of coverage? The questions are endless, and would open up opportunities to not only understand teen readers from an academic standpoint, but from a content strategy standpoint as well.

Applications of these findings also extend beyond academia — journalists often lack the time and separation to realize the problematic portrayals that can emerge in deadline reporting. Lessons and potential editorial changes pulled from this analysis include the need to increase and diversify first-person columns; an increased effort to shift reporting onto more relatable and everyday content (rather than celebrity experiences); and more incentive to incorporate interviews with experts and feminist scholars. In holding a mirror up to journalistic practice, this study could be a starting point for reporters and editors hoping to improve the quality of their coverage of sexual violence and serving underserved communities.

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