



# Media Influences on Cultural Norms that Perpetuate Sexual Violence and Silence Victims in the U.S. and India: A Cross-Cultural Comparative Analysis

## Citation

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Media Influences on Cultural Norms that Perpetuate Sexual Violence  
and Silence Victims in the U.S. and India:  
A Cross-Cultural Comparative Analysis

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A Thesis in the Field of International Relations  
for the Degree of Master of Liberal Arts in Extension Studies

Harvard University

November 2022



## Abstract

A global culture of sexual violence exists across the world and is found within families, institutions, communities, faiths, and all socioeconomic backgrounds. A sexual violence culture exists when people go to great lengths to protect the perpetrator(s), thus emboldening their actions, and where the media and family silence victims for coming forward with their experience. This cross-cultural analysis between the U.S. and India focuses on the media's influence on cultural norms—norms that perpetuate sexual violence and silence victims of both child sexual abuse and adult sexual assault. The study seeks to show how this issue has evolved over a 40-year span in the two countries.

A structured random sample of articles was extracted from *The New York Times* and *The Times of India* between 1980 and 2019 using the keyword phrase, “sexual abuse.” This phrase was found in both newspaper articles across all four decades. A content analysis was then conducted on the selected sample articles. The sample articles included incident reports on specific episodes of sexual abuse as well as feature articles that reported more generally on sexual abuse.

Among the incident reports, the average age of victims in both countries was young, just 11 to 17 years. Female victims were reported more than males in both countries. Incident reports were typically presented in reports that focused on the criminal justice system. The feature articles discussed sexual abuse in a broader context across a range of social and cultural themes. Such feature articles in particular could be used to sensitize and educate society to challenge cultures of sexual violence. Unfortunately, the

intended audience (perpetrators) and those enabling them most likely are not reading articles about sexual abuse. Thus, the media's message on sexual abuse needs to be made more relevant to the enablers, and specifically, those who know but do not say anything. Silence and covering up is the biggest part of the cycle besides the actual abuse. In both countries the media's characterization of sexual abuse often used inappropriate and even harmful terminology.

Although both countries may be considered patriarchal, women have more individual freedoms in the U.S. Despite these freedoms, however, the U.S. media, like India, shamed, blamed, and ostracized girls and women for disclosing their experience with sexual abuse. In addition, multiple victims of the same perpetrator were reported in both countries as well as multiple perpetrators involved in the abuse. A sexual abuse perpetrator culture clearly exists in both countries.

Societies suffer from their respective media's failure to challenge misguided notions of sexual abuse. This failure contributes to the perpetuation of cultures of sexual violence that in turn leads to sexual abuse. The findings from this thesis research illuminate the media's role in perpetuating a culture of sexual violence. These findings also support and emphasize the need for educating journalists on how to challenge cultures of sexual violence. The media needs to improve society's awareness of and sensitivity to sexual violence, not perpetuate it.

## Dedication

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my family. The topic of sexual violence and overcoming social norms that bind survivors is a road I embarked on before all of my children were born. I will always be grateful to my husband Joey, also a survivor, who stood with me to overcome my own sexual abuse as a child. As married survivors, our life could have turned out much differently than it did, but Joey and I promised each other we would protect our children from the cycle of abuse, which meant we would need to heal. We stood by each other, supporting each other's healing journey, overcoming stigmas, and being shamed, blamed, and ostracized for coming forward. Together, our life is a testament that survivors of sexual abuse can heal and tap into their potential. I am truly grateful to Joey and his spiritual foundation as a husband and father.

I also want to thank my children, Ethan, Lauren, Annalise (Anni), Etianne, and Spencer, who were my motivating force to healing. Preserving their sacred innocence is the greatest achievement of my life. Stopping the cycle of abuse has allowed them to tap into their potential at a young age. My children are my greatest source of strength, love, and joy.

## Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my thesis director, Doug Bond, and my thesis advisor, Arianne Liazos. I am truly grateful for all your help and guidance in helping me navigate through the thesis process on a subject that is dear to my heart. I am grateful for your support and countless hours of wise and experienced guidance and supporting me on this journey. I will always be grateful to have worked on such an extensive project with you and could not have found the fortitude or strength to get through this without you.

I would like to thank Cherie Potts for her meticulous editing of my thesis. Thank you for helping to polish my thesis.

Lastly, as a woman of faith, I want to thank my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for being my greatest source of inspiration and blessings. This journey was no small task, and He gave me strength to push forward.

## Table of Contents

Dedication .....	v
Acknowledgements .....	vi
List of Tables .....	ix
List of Figures .....	x
Chapter I. Introduction.....	1
Glossary of Key Terms .....	11
Chapter II. Literature Review .....	17
Background: New Era of Sexual Violence Awareness .....	18
The United States: Revolutionary.....	19
India: Awakening.....	20
Comparative Analysis of Sexual Violence Awareness.....	21
The Culture of Sexual Violence in the U.S. and India.....	21
Sexual Abuse in the U.S. ....	22
Sexual Assault in the U.S.....	25
Sexual Abuse in India .....	28
Sexual Assault in India .....	32
Comparative Analysis of Sexual Violence .....	36
Chapter III. The Role of the Media .....	38
Types of Media Framing.....	38
Influences of the Media on Society .....	41
Reflective v. Challenging.....	42
Silences Victims.....	43
Empowers Perpetrators .....	43
Media Coverage of Sexual Violence .....	44
Media Coverage of Child Sexual Abuse in the U.S.....	45
Media Coverage of Sexual Assault in the U.S.....	45



Media Coverage of Child Sexual Abuse in India .....	47
Media Coverage of Sexual Assault in India .....	48
Comparative Analysis: Media Coverage of Sexual Violence.....	49
Media Can Influence Social Norms .....	50
Chapter IV. Research Methods .....	53
Hypothesis.....	53
Case Selection Procedure.....	54
Incident Reports and Feature Articles.....	56
Chapter V. Results .....	61
Incident Reports Overview .....	61
Demographic Findings.....	62
Media Framing Findings.....	65
Victim Characteristics.....	72
Perpetrator Characteristics .....	77
Feature Articles Overview .....	82
Chapter VI. Discussion.....	86
Comparison of Episodic and Thematic Framed Articles .....	95
Limitations of the Research .....	97
Chapter VII. Conclusion .....	99
Recommendations for Future Research .....	103
Appendix 1 Case Selection Procedure.....	104
Appendix 2 Explanatory Variables.....	105
Appendix 3 Feature Article Chart.....	108
References.....	109

## List of Tables

Table 1.	Incident Report Variable Framework.....	58
Table 2.	Feature Article Variable Framework.....	59

## List of Figures

Figure 1.	Reported Victim’s Age by Country and Decade.....	64
Figure 2.	Reported Victim’s Gender by Country and Decade.....	65
Figure 3.	Reported Episodic Articles of Sexual Abuse by Country and Decade .....	67
Figure 4.	Reported Type of Abuse by Country and Decade.....	68
Figure 5.	Reported Appropriate Terminology by Country and Decade .....	69
Figure 6.	Reported Characteristics of Abuse by Country and Decade .....	71
Figure 7.	Reported Use of Consensual Language.....	72
Figure 8.	Reported Number of Victims .....	74
Figure 9.	Reported Victim Blaming .....	75
Figure 10.	Reported Awareness of the Abuse .....	77
Figure 11.	Reported Perpetrator Category .....	78
Figure 12.	Reported Number of Perpetrators .....	80
Figure 13.	Reported Perpetrator Legal Consequences.....	82
Figure 14.	Reported Thematic Articles .....	83
Figure 15.	Reported Feature Article Topics .....	85

## Chapter I

### Introduction

Sexual violence is a complex, cross-culturally recognized phenomena. A global culture of sexual violence exists across the world and is found within families, institutions, communities, faiths, and all socioeconomic backgrounds. A sexual violence culture exists when victims are not believed, where people go to great lengths to protect the perpetrator(s), and where the family and media silence the victims for coming forward with their experience. A basic definition of sexual violence, offered by a UN Women study on behalf of the World Health Organization (WHO), is any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, or other act directed against a person by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting (WHO, 2021). For the purposes of this study, sexual violence includes sexual acts against a child or adult, using force and/or coercion, when consent is not obtained. (WHO, 2021). Sexual violence is an all-encompassing, non-legal term for different types of sex crimes and for purposes of this study, the term will be used to represent all types of sex crimes, unless specifically referring to an abuse type.

It is impossible to measure the true magnitude of sexual violence, worldwide, as it is shrouded in secrecy and many cases are unreported as victims may fear coming forward for being shamed, blamed, and ostracized (CDC, 2019). It is estimated to affect millions of children and adults throughout the world each year. For instance, sexual abuse is a type of sex crime that is mostly referenced to a child under 18 years old, and it is

estimated that 150 million girls and 73 million boys under the age of 18 have experienced forced sexual intercourse or other forms of sexual violence and exploitation involving physical contact (Amnesty, 2022). Whereas sexual assault is another type of sex crime mostly referenced to adult victims 18 years and older. A statistic offered by a UN Women study on behalf of the WHO states “global estimates show that 736 million women—almost one in three—have been subjected to intimate partner violence, non-partner sexual violence, or both at least once in their lifetime” (UN Women, 2021). According to UN Women (2021), these are very important numbers to look at due to those who have suffered some form of violence, sexual abuse, sexual assault, or a combination will suffer higher rates of depression, anxiety disorders, unplanned pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases, as well as long-term psychological consequences. Even more alarming is the “initial evidence of intensification of violence against women and girls across the globe” (UN Women, 2021).

Sexual violence has increased in recent years, globally, despite prevention efforts through public awareness programs, social movements, and media coverage. Even legal or policy responses, and “public health efforts to prevent, identify, and respond to” sexual violence lack the effectiveness needed (Mathews & Collin-Vezina, 2019). What makes sexual violence even more complex is how victims are silenced when disclosing or seeking help. The response victims receive when coming forward facilitates the continuance of its destructive practices.

Within a society, “establishment of social norms of acceptable behavior” can be hindered if there is a “lack of reference point against which to evaluate” a person’s conduct that can facilitate the continuance of harmful practices (Mathews & Collin-

Vezina, 2019, p. 133). If individuals within a society believe sexual violence is a social norm, even if they do not agree with it, the lack of reference point can be found within their own societal messaging. That messaging can mean people within that society or those in positions of authority accept it or participate in it as a social norm. Further it is reinforced when individuals witness members of a society engaging in covering up for perpetrators, others participating in abuse, blaming the victim or a lack of social support. The disconnect between a survivor coming forward needing support and responses from abusive or enabling family members, clinicians, legislators, policy makers, media, and their communities limit the capacity to measure, treat, prevent, and respond to sexual violence (p. 132).

Abusive generational patterns are real. They are a core problem as to why abuse continues. Globally, countries have been slow to confront violence against women perpetuating social stigmas against victims of sexual violence. Social stigmas have been barriers to survivors coming forward by their families', social circles, and the media. The belief sexual abuse that occurred in the home is a 'private matter' has been a deterrent to silencing victims for hundreds of years as well as blaming sexual assault victims for their rape. Sexual violence is an issue shrouded in stigmas that include both social and self-stigmas.

“Stigma is a societal creation” (Corrigan & Rao, 2012, p. 468) that involves “stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination” (Corrigan et al. 2009, p. 468). Social stigma is rooted in “negative connotations,” (Kennedy & Prock, 2016, p. 512) such as shame, self-blame, or guilt, and reinforced by negative media representations and attitudes inferred or heard by the family and community (p. 513). Self-stigma is the interpretation

and internalization of negative stereotypes, which may cause negative emotional reactions, such as low-self-worth, poor self-efficacy, and failure to seek help (Corrigan & Rao, 2012, 465). “Self-stigma comprises three steps: awareness of the stereotype, agreement with it, and applying it to one’s self” (Corrigan et al., 2009, p. 75). Internalizing self-stigma by a victim of sexual violence cannot “occur without prior exposure to victim-blaming messages from a broader society” (Kennedy & Prock, 2016, p. 513). Kennedy and Prock continue that “stigma and stigmatization are social processes grounded in societal, community, neighborhood, and family contexts” (p. 514). It is important to explore how a survivor internalizes external messages regarding their sexual violence experience and how those messages silence them.

All countries have their own culture of sexual violence. Although culture is a widely used term, it “can be defined as a set of attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors shared by a group of people” (Papayiannis & Anastassiou-Hadjicharalambous, 2011, p. 440). Cultural elements are not innate to the human experience but are learned and taught through a process called Socialization (Taylor & Thoit, p. 448). Socialization is a process by which “the individual is specifically and intentionally led to develop culturally endorsed attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors” (Taylor & Thoit, p. 449). A sample of entities that teach socialization can include “family, peers, teachers, community elders, and media sources” (Taylor & Thoit, p. 449). Families or media, for example, may recreate the culturally based messages that are rooted in the society’s culture (Taylor & Thoit, p. 449). A society’s culture has its own, “separate system” and is comprised of its “own values, attitudes, and beliefs” (Taylor & Thoit, p. 449). In general, culture identifies what is acceptable and what is not and can be manifested through verbal and

non-verbal cues (Williams, 2011, p. 451 and p. 452). Culture “provides the markers by which behaviors are judged and group membership” is accepted (Williams, 2011, p. 451). In other words, “culture defines one’s thinking and behavior (p. Williams, 2011, p. 451).

Despite the drastic increase in media coverage of sexual violence one may ask why the media has not been more effective at helping to challenge social norms that perpetuate the increase in sexual violence and the continuation of negative responses survivors receive upon divulging their abuse. Matthew A. Baum, Dara Kay Cohen, & Yuri M. Zhukov (2018, p. 266) offer an explanation that “political communication scholars argue that, with rare exceptions, news reporting reflects rather than challenges the normative context within which it is produced.” Baum et al., (2018, p. 4) continues that “reporters’ biases mirror the norms of the communities in which they live and work. Reporters and newspapers risk losing audiences if the articles published “conflict with their preexisting norms or values” (Baum et al, 2018, p. 266).

Further, media framing manifests itself through how the media represents a specific topic, the choice of key words, and key phrases or terminology used (Provalis, n.d. p.1). Media framing is “influenced by multiple factors, including the journalist’s personal belief system . . . and journalistic practices in his organization, as well as . . . broader ideological and cultural conditions prevalent in his society” (Provalis, n.d. p.1). News framing by journalists is often highly dependent on the availability of various sources of information and most often represent the outward manifestation of the culture’s theme (P.1).

Besides the family influence, media messages are the second most influential medium in cultivating a person’s ideals (Aquaviva et al., 2020, p. 8). The media can play



a serious role in how the public understands the issue of sexual violence and educate members of society how to respond when survivors come forward. Although, how the media frames the stories told about sexual violence may be representative to how a society already believes, media outlets may have to challenge themselves when representing sexual violence topics that go against their societies' cultural values.

The media can play an important role in helping to change the narrative of sexual violence in our homes and society by changing their narrative, despite the risks, and having a better understanding of the issues and how they frame their writing. The media can influence social change and shift cultural values. For instance, news coverage can put sexual violence issues in front of the public as in the revelations of sexual abuse within the Catholic Church. Continued media coverage forced the church to respond which led to revising abuse policies within the church and victim compensation (Dorfman, 2011). It also revealed how widespread the problem has been in the church. The media can have a powerful impact on society and may be one of the best resources to penetrate the deep-seeded culture of sexual violence.

This research examines how the media influences cultural norms that perpetuate sexual violence and silence victims of sexual violence in both the United States and India. Victims of sexual violence internalize external messages from the perspective of cultural norms and media representations. Victims of sexual violence are often shamed, blamed, and ostracized in both countries when disclosing sexual violence due to deep-rooted cultural beliefs found in family and the media. In most cases there is a disconnect between a survivor who comes forward needing help, and responses from his/her family and society. Exploring the correlation between media influences on cultural norms that

silence victims help to make comprehensible solutions that are more supportive to the victims coming forward and obtaining the help they need. The media has been criticized for not being effective in challenging social norms due to many factors including poor or wrong messaging to the wrong audience.

Cultural norms have been criticized for perpetuating the cycle of abuse. Although many refer to sexual violence as an epidemic shrouded in secrecy, it is actually an epidemic shrouded in a conscious effort of many to cover-up the abusive acts. Although several studies have been done on media influences on sexual violence as well as cultural influences, separately, researchers have not examined the influences of the media on cultural norms that perpetuate sexual violence and silence victims in a cross-cultural analysis between the U.S. and India. Exploring the potential influences of the media on cultural norms is important because with all the awareness, prevention, and education campaigns on sexual violence in both countries for over 50 years, the victims are still silenced, shamed, blamed, and ostracized. Perpetrators also continue to enjoy their exemption from punishment and freedom in impunity.

A cross-cultural analysis was done between the two largest democracies in the world, the U.S and India over a 40-year span. This study examined cultural norms and media influences that silence victims of sexual violence in both the U.S. and India and how this issue has evolved over forty years. The cultural uniqueness of comparing a western and a non-western country adds value to this research. Western culture is said to value individualism and “foster independence and individual achievement; promote self-expression, individual thinking and personal choice . . . and demonstrate flexibility in roles” (Williams, 2011, p. 451). In contrast, individuals from non-western cultures value

group collectivism. Members value interdependence and group success; promote adherence to normative behavior, respect authority, and develop hierarchical roles (Williams, p. 451). According to Reuters, India was the most dangerous country in the world for ‘cultural traditions’ that impact women including acid attacks, female genital mutilation when girls are between six and seven years old, child marriage as young as 8 years old, and abuse. Whereas the United States also made the list in the top 10 for the first time regarding sexual harassment and sexual violence, citing that income does not equate to being protected (Reuters, 2018).

There is limited cross-cultural international literature, specifically between the U.S. and India, on the media’s influence to help deter social norms that enable sexual violence and silence victims. The bulk of previous relevant research has been predominantly focused on individual societies and sexual violence and not a comparative analysis between two countries, such as the U.S. and India. To the best of my knowledge as of this study, research on the relationship between the media and adult sexual assault stories has been done extensively but research on how the media frames stories in the U.S. and India on both ‘adult’ sexual assault and ‘child’ sexual abuse in a comparative analysis has not been done. Research on the relationship between child sexual abuse and media reporting is extremely limited and will be assessed in this study.

This study can close a research gap by conducting a cross-cultural analysis between the U.S. and India on how media’s influence cultural norms to perpetuate sexual violence and silence victims. It is a study on both adult and child victims of sexual violence. The research design of this study included a 1) cross-cultural assessment between the U.S. and India, 2) temporal assessment over four decades, 3) episodic

content analysis of incident reports, and a 4) thematic content analysis of other related articles. The cross-cultural assessment compared the reported sexual abuse found in each country. The temporal assessment in this research examined changes in changes in the articles to determine how they evolved over a forty-year period. Additionally, this study assessed the media framing of articles on sexual abuse, analyzed the type of article written and its influence as either episodic content or thematic content. The study seeks to shed more light on what methods would be effective to help change the media culture that perpetuate sexual violence and silence victims.

I hypothesize that a cross-cultural content analysis between the U.S and India will reveal that media influences have not been effective at helping to challenge social norms that perpetuate sexual violence and silence victims even when global awareness and widespread education have been prevalent in both countries over the past four decades. I conducted a content analysis of relevant articles in *The New York Times* (NYT) and *The Times of India* (TOI) for the periods of 1980-1989; 1990-1999; 2000-2009; 2010-2019.

*The New York Times* was chosen for the U.S. due to it being the longest running newspaper in the United States and is the second largest newspaper that focuses on the opinions of the American people. The Times of India was chosen for its reputation of being the most trusted newspaper in India and is the oldest and largest selling English language daily. I used Nexis Uni and the ProQuest database for the four time periods – 1980-1989; 1990-1999; 2000-2009; 2010-2019. A keyword search of childhood sexual abuse, sexual abuse, rape, sexual assault, and sex crimes was done to see which key word phrase appeared in all four decades for both countries. Sexual abuse was the phrase that

appeared in all four decades. Four decades were chosen as it was not until the 1970s that both countries had started raising awareness regarding sexual violence.

Fifty articles were randomly chosen from each decade by dividing the number of articles found with the keyword 'sexual abuse' and dividing the articles found by 50. A content analysis was conducted to determine how the articles were framed by the journalists. There were two types of articles: incident reports that happened with an identifiable victim and perpetrator and feature articles which were written about sexual violence in a broader context of the topic. The incident reports were measured by creating four categories to analyze with additional subcategories: victim demographics (4 subcategories); media framing (9 subcategories); victim characteristics (6 subcategories); and perpetrator characteristics (7 subcategories). Feature articles were measured by creating two categories to analyze with additional subcategories: news frame (2 subcategories) and article topic (12 subcategories).

In sum, this research seeks to understand the ways in which the media influences cultural norms that perpetuate sexual violence which produces perpetrator empowerment and silences victims in the U.S. and India. As sexual violence is a global issue and is growing, finding out what the media can do to publish the right messaging and challenge the right audiences can help prevent sexual abuse and stop perpetrator empowerment, facilitate survivors getting the help they need, and deter family members and society from silencing victims.

## Glossary of Key Terms

*Child/Minor* – “A person under the age of 18, regardless of the age of majority or age of consent. The term minor and child are used interchangeably when meaning a person under the age of 18. It is noted that the term child is the preferred option, as it is the internationally defined term (Convention of the Rights of the Child)” (GSEA, 2017 p. 12).

*Child Sexual Abuse (CSA)* – “Sexual activities with a child who, according to the relevant provisions of national law, has not reached the legal age for sexual activities,” and (b) forced “sexual activities with a child where use is made of coercion, force or threats; or abuse is made of a recognized position of trust, authority or influence over the child, including within the family; or abuse is made of a particularly vulnerable situation of the child, notably because of a mental or physical disability or a situation of dependence” (Radford, Allnock, and Hayes, 2016, p. vii, definition is based on Article 18, Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Convention) UNICEF ). The U.S. legally defined sexual abuse in 1973 and India did not legally define until 2012.

*Child Marriage* – “Usually means an end to a girl’s education, vocation, and her right to make life choices . . . at greater risk for intimate partner violence than girls of the same age who marry later” (UN Women - 1). “Refers to any marriage where one or both spouses are below the age of 18. It is a violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that marriage shall be entered into

only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses” (UN Women – 2).

This is an internationally defined term according to UN Women.

*Culture* – “A set of attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors shared by a group of people, but different for each individual, communicated from one generation to the next” (Papayiannis & Anastassiou-Hadjicharalambous, 2011, p. 440).

*Culture of Sexual Violence or Rape Culture* – “Rape culture is the social environment that allows sexual violence to be normalized and justified. It is rooted in patriarchy and fueled by persistent gender inequalities and biases about gender and sexuality” (UN Women – 2).

*Domestic Violence* – “Domestic violence, also called domestic abuse or intimate partner violence, is any pattern of behavior that is used to gain or maintain power and control over an intimate partner. It encompasses all physical, sexual, emotional, economic, and psychological actions or threats of actions that influence another person. This is one of the most common forms of violence experienced by women globally” (UN Women – 2). Domestic violence can include the following: economic, psychological, emotional, physical, and sexual violence (UN Women – 2). This is an internationally defined term according to UN Women.

*Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)* – “FGM includes procedures that intentionally alter or cause injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. Beyond extreme physical and psychological pain, the practice carries many health risks, including death” (UN Women – 1). This is an internationally defined term according to UN Women. For purposes of this study, it is referred to a procedure used in India.

*Honor Killings* – “Honor killing is the murder of a family member, usually a woman or girl, for the purported reason that the person has brought dishonor or shame upon the family. These killings often have to do with sexual purity and supposed transgressions on the part of female family members” (UN Women – 2). This is an internationally defined term according to UN Women. For purposes of this study, it is referred to a form of violence used in India.

*Media Framing* – “Media framing often manifests itself by the choice of some key words, key phrases and images that reinforce a particular representation of the reality and a specific emotion toward it, and the omission of other elements that could suggest a different perspective or trigger a different sentiment” (Provalis, n.d. p. 1).

*Perpetrator* – “The term perpetrator refers to any person who commits a sexual assault, regardless of whether the victim is a minor or an adult, whereas sexual offender refers to someone who has been convicted of a criminal sexual offence” (INSPQ, 2016).

*Sexual predator* — Term used to describe an “individual who is constantly “on the prowl” for potential targets to sexually assault” (INSPQ, 2016).

*Rape* — Non-consensual vaginal, anal, or oral penetration of a sexual nature of the body of another person with any bodily part or object. This can be by persons known or unknown to the survivor, within marriage and relationships, and during armed conflict” (UN Women – 1). This is an internationally defined term according to UN Women.



*Self-Stigma* – Comprised of three steps: “awareness, agreement, and application of stereotypes. The person must be aware of the stereotypes that describe a stigmatized group ... and agree with them. The person must apply stereotypes to one’s self” (Corrigan et al., 2009 p. 75).

*Sex Abuse/Sexual Abuse* – Sex abuse/sexual abuse are all-encompassing terms that refer to any type of sexual abuse—familial, non-familial, rape, sex-trafficking, prostitution, etc. Sexual abuse occurs in various forms and includes an exhaustive list of violations such as exposing oneself to a child, forced sex of any kind, masturbation, or forced child pornography (United Nations, 2017).

Sexual abuse is a legal term used mainly to describe ongoing sex crimes over a period of time against minors under the age of 18 (United Nations, 2017). Sex abuse/sexual abuse can be used in some contexts for both adult and child sexual abuse and is actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions (United Nations, 2017). This is an internationally defined term, according to the United Nations. The U.S. legally defined sexual abuse in 1973; India did not legally define it until 2012.

*Sex Abuser* – Another name for a sex offender. A person who forces a child or other person to take part in sexual activity with them, often regularly over a period of time. (HarperCollins, 2022).

*Sexual assault* – Forced sexual act with another person who does not consent. It is a violation of bodily integrity and sexual autonomy and is broader than narrower conceptions of “rape,” especially because (a) it may be committed by other means than force or violence, and (b) it does not necessarily entail penetration (United

Nations, 2022). This is an internationally defined term according to the United Nations.

*Sexual Harassment* – “Includes non-contact forms, like sexual comments about a person’s body parts or appearance, whistling, demands for sexual favors, sexually suggestive staring, stalking, and exposing one’s sexual organs at someone. It also included physical contact forms, like grabbing, pinching, slapping, or rubbing against another person in a sexual way” (UN Women – 1). This is an internationally defined term according to UN Women.

*Sexual Violence* – Sexual violence is not limited to but encompasses sexual acts that range from unwanted touching, non-contact forms, verbal harassment to forced penetration, coercion, rape, attempted rape, forced prostitution, sexual exploitation and abuse, trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, child pornography, child prostitution, sexual slavery, forced marriage, forced pregnancy, forced public nudity, forced virginity testing, etc. Sexual violence, as used in this study, “encompasses social pressure and intimidation to physical force . . . rape within marriage or dating relationships, rape by strangers and acquaintances . . . sexual abuse of children . . . and forced marriage” (WHO, 2012). “Sexual violence is any sexual act committed against the will of another person, either when this person does not give consent or when consent cannot be given because the person is a child, has a mental disability, or is intoxicated or unconscious” (UN Women, n.d. (UNWomen-1)). This is an internationally defined term according to UN Women and WHO.

*Socialization* – “A means through which an individual learns about culture, ... the individual is specifically, and intentionally led to develop culturally endorsed attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors” (Taylor & Thoth, p. 449).

*Stigma* – “refers to negative connotations, - i.e., badness, shame, and guilt, - that are communicated to the person around experiences and that then become incorporated into a person’s self-image” (Kennedy & Prock, 2016). Replaced the word “child” with “person” for this research.

*Survivor* – “The term survivor of violence refers to any person who has experienced sexual or gender-based violence. It is similar in meaning to “victim” but is generally preferred because it implies resilience (UN Women-2). This is an internationally defined term according to UN Women.

*Victim* – “A person who is, or has been, sexually exploited or abused” (GSEA, 2017, p.11).

*Witness* – “A person who observed, or has direct knowledge of, something under investigation” (GSEA, 2017, p. 12). This is an internationally defined term according to UN Women.

## Chapter II

### Literature Review

This literature review includes (1) a brief historical background of sexual violence awareness in both the U.S. and India; (2) a sexual violence overview and comparative analysis in each country; and (3) the role of media overview in each country and a comparative analysis. A cross-cultural review examines similarities and differences between the U.S. and India's historical background, sexual violence, and the media's role regarding of sexual violence, as well as possible limitations of our traditional knowledge of people from two very different socioeconomic backgrounds in relation to sexual violence. The comparative review aims to understand the variations of cultural norms between both countries as influenced by their cultural context (Papayiannis & Anastassiou-Hadjicharalambous, 2011, pp. 1-2).

Sexual violence is preventable. This chapter introduces an unfortunate reality of the human condition of sexual violence. People talk about murder being preventable, yet it is present everywhere; likewise, sexual violence is preventable but present everywhere. The global culture of sexual violence represents a lack of humanity on every continent, in every society. No matter how advanced a country may or may not be, sexual violence can be found. It is rooted deep within global societies, and entangled within family systems, legal systems, governments, and institutions. Family systems are the most difficult to pierce and change; institutions comply loosely with regulations. For every 1,000 sexual assaults, 995 perpetrators go free due to lack of reporting or minimal conviction rates

(RAINN, 2022). Governments are aware of sex trafficking and areas where others profit off the vulnerable within their country.

There is also a global culture, especially within police systems, of mistrust, corruption, and fear of reporting. The very schools where children receive an education, seek medical attention, and participate in sports can be vulnerable hotspots. More often than not, child institutions and orphanages are not places of refuge for children but rather places where memories of abuse are formed. Even within every faith across the world, sexual violence can be found.

The media may have a mixed reception from society, being seen as a third party detached from societal pressures on one hand or seen as just another system intermingled within a sexual violence culture. Although the media has numerous opportunities to be an influential force and active participant in helping to reform the way members of society respond to sexual violence, they also may be part of the systematic problem—which could explain why media influences have not been effective at helping to challenge social norms that perpetuate sexual violence and silence victims despite global awareness and widespread education, as stated in the hypothesis. If sexual violence can be found within the many systems in a society, the media has a profound opportunity to separate itself from those societal systems and challenge them.

#### Background: New Era of Sexual Violence Awareness

This section begins with a cross-cultural comparison analysis. Thereafter a longitudinal analysis of temporal changes over a 40-year period is provided.

## The United States: Revolutionary

Although information on sexual violence in the U.S. is readily available today, even as recently as 50 years ago it was not. The 1970s feminist social movement was revolutionary and part of the era that had the greatest impact regarding sexual abuse. Feminists first focused on rape. At that time, opening a place where women who were raped could go or could call into was considered a radical movement. What they did not expect was to find that children under 18 years old would call in and tell them they were raped by a family member, and that it was still going on. This new information was the catalyst for new knowledge about child sexual abuse and saw it as a social and political issue, not the pathology of a parent's issue (Whittier, 2009). They also argued it was common and not rare. The movement decided to add child sexual abuse to its rape awareness campaign. Whittier said:

Their new paradigm for understanding incest and child sexual abuse laid the foundation for widespread changes in public policy and mainstream culture . . . . As a result of their efforts, rape crisis centers opened in hospitals, mental health facilities, and universities. (2009, p. 2)

The anti-rape movement not only published new findings but shared them with the public. Members of the movement believed they lived in a patriarchal society and that rape happened outside the home as well as inside, and that culture legitimizes the sexual access fathers have to their daughters (Whittier, 2009). They believed that incest prepared children to become the next generation of an oppressed group.

In 1974, psychiatric social worker Florence Rush stated that “sexual objectification and victimization of female children by men was widespread” (Rush, quoted in Whittier, 2009, p. 4). Rush's work challenged the view that rape and incest were rare, while stressing that culture and stigma kept victims silent.

The feminist movement of the 1970s was different from earlier social movements. Feminists politicized emotion and identity by focusing their efforts on changing how people think and feel, and the effects of inequality on individuals. Further, they referred to internalized oppression as the catalyst for their social change (Whittier, 2009). It was the cause of the self-help culture. The feminist social movement of the 1970s was not perfect but inspired other movements. Their focus was on “challenging the social forces that shape their lives” (Whittier, 2009, p. 5).

The same cultural issues that the original feminist movements in the U.S. were trying to make were difficult and unfortunately, still quite prevalent today. If we were to stand on the shoulders of the feminists who went before us, we would see a lot of progress has been made as far as services, but the same culture of sexual violence exists today in relation to protecting perpetrators and silencing victims.

#### India: Awakening

In India, the decade of the 1970s is often referred to as a period of “awakening” for the women’s movement in India’s history of rape. In 1972, the story of Mathura, a 16-year-old girl who was sexually abused by four police officers, helped awaken the Indian populace to the prevalence of rape. Her case went to India’s Supreme Court, which acquitted the four policemen, stating: “Mathura did not raise an alarm and had no visible marks or injury on her body and because she was used to sex, she might have incited the cops to have intercourse with her” (Sullivan, 2014, p. 72). Although there was no proof that Mathura engaged in sexual activity previously, it was assumed to be true because she did not fight back. According to Sullivan (2014): “It was a time for women to express

their united intention to resist future inexcusable treatment of rape victims; and to raise a combined national awareness of rape pervasiveness” (p. 73).

Efforts to inform the public did not stop the incidents of rape or sexual harassment of women. Although India has come further and made changes in laws that protect women, activism remains inadequate in stopping cases of sexual violence.

### Comparative Analysis of Sexual Violence Awareness

Although the U.S. and India have changed laws and spread awareness on the issue of sexual violence, both countries’ awareness campaigns have not achieved the change in cultural norms that would deter sexual violence and discourage the continuation of silencing victims. Both social movements in the U.S. and India used the media to help spread their messaging and both countries should be grateful for the original movements and how laws and social services have evolved. Now, both societies have an opportunity to change the narrative of their messaging and work with the media in creating new types of messaging that directly expose the vulnerabilities of a sexual violence culture and focus on what creates a perpetrator; what empowers a perpetrator; who enables perpetrators, and how to expose those who encourage stigmas that silence victims.

### The Culture of Sexual Violence in the U.S. and India

A keyword search of the term *sexual abuse* brings up results on both childhood *sexual abuse* and *sexual assault*. Therefore, a more in-depth examination of each term relative to each country is explored in this section.



Sexual violence encompasses many sex crimes including childhood sexual abuse and sexual assault. Sexual violence in the home can co-occur with other forms of abuse such as domestic violence, neglect, emotional abuse, and physical abuse. Ninety-three percent of sexual violence offenses are done by a person the victim knows, which in turn creates barriers to speaking out and silencing victims (RAINN, 2022). This section covers the different types of sexual abuse, sexual assault, and sexual violence in the U.S. with examples of each, to provide a more complete understanding of the U.S. culture of sexual violence.

#### Sexual Abuse in the U.S.

In the U.S. it is estimated that one in four girls and one in six boys will be sexually abused by the time they are eighteen years old (NSVRC, 2022). It was not until 1974 that sexual abuse was added in the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA). Children are the most vulnerable population for sexual abuse.

In a monograph examining child sexual abuse the United States, Carson, et al., (2015, p. 7) identified key factors of what perpetuates child sexual assault (CSA) in the United States. Carson reported that male perpetrators account for 96% of reported cases of CSA; adults account for 77% of the sexual offenses; and 23% are perpetrated by juvenile offenders. Carson, et al., (2015, p. 31) found that the culture of perpetrators has four common characteristics: (1) the inability to regulate emotions; (2) lack of social skills; (3) abnormal sexual arousal patterns; and (4) cognitive distortions (i.e., an inability to empathize with the victim's suffering).

Understanding perpetrators of CSA is critical as perpetrators are central to the occurrence of abuse (Carson, et al., 2015, p. 32). The individual history of each perpetrator could include being abused themselves as children and learning what tactics are needed to abuse. Unfortunately, perpetrators have a high recidivism rate and a perpetual tendency to re-offend (p. 31). Perpetrators who abuse a child frequently use cues to initiate and end the abuse, including gifts, games, a location, money, or threats (p. 31). Statements of blame, which evoke feelings of guilt and shame, may be used to ensure the abuse will stay a secret by the victim. Often perpetrators tell their victims no one will believe them or do anything about it (p. 32). Many abused children believe that the perpetrator can and will carry out their threats. Such children are concerned that others would blame them or not believe them, and those fears often hold them captive in silence (p. 32).

Carson's 2015 research indicated that most sexually abused children were victimized by someone they knew personally, such as a family member, extended relatives, family friends, babysitters, or individuals in positions of authority. If the abuse is happening within the family, it is not uncommon to underestimate sibling sexual abuse, as it is the most under-reported type of familial sexual abuse (p. 33). Upon disclosure, family members must choose whether to believe the child or the perpetrator. Disbelief and denial are common responses in an attempt to maintain the false reality of a healthy, functioning family (p. 33). Denial of a child's disclosure puts the child at risk for further abuse and can be extremely confusing, frightening, or upsetting to the child (pp. 33-34).

Parents or caregivers may choose to minimize the possible trauma done to the child in order to maintain a relationship with the perpetrator and/or to prevent an

inconvenient disruption in their lives (p. 34). In any case, the lack of appropriate response upon disclosure can leave the child feeling completely alone and helpless which decreases the likelihood of disclosing a second or third offense (p. 34). Children who try to disclose may find that it results in them being silenced or left unprotected (p. 35). Depending on the response to the abuse, a victim may deny the trauma so as to keep the family intact (p. 35).

In an evidence-based review of the prevalence, potential risk factors, signs, and symptoms of sexual abuse, Sabella (2016) found that CSA is a phenomenon that knows no social, economic, or age-related boundaries. Nor does it know relationship boundaries when abusers include parent, stepparents, siblings, friends, caretakers, or strangers (p. 48). Types of sexual abuse reported in the U.S. include CSA from a family member, non-family member, or trusted adult; online grooming; or sex trafficking. Multiple individual vulnerability factors are age, foster care, being a runaway, and having been previously victimized (Sabella, 2016). Family factors involve divorced parents, living with a parent who has a live-in partner, having a parent or caregiver who has drug and alcohol problems, and/or domestic violence in the home (p. 50). Community and societal factors include living in areas of poverty and high unemployment (p. 50). Mental health indicators include depression, suicide ideation, anxiety, guilt and shame, anger, post-traumatic stress disorder, and eating disorders (p. 50). Physical indicators include having sexually transmitted disease(s), urinary tract infection, painful urination, torn or bloody clothing, pregnancy, bruises on child's mouth, trouble walking, sitting, or standing (p. 50). Other risk factors include having a disability or poor interpersonal skills or low self-esteem (p. 50).

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, there are over 60 million survivors of childhood sexual abuse in America today—that’s approximately 20% of the U.S. population. As many as 90% of those survivors never report their abuse to law enforcement, and more than 30% will never report their abuse to anyone (CMNSAC, 2016).

### Sexual Assault in the U.S.

One in five women in the United States have experienced completed or attempted rape during their lifetime (NSVRC, 2022); 81% of women in the U.S. report experiencing some form of sexual harassment and/or assault in their lifetime (NSVRC, 2022); the vast majority (78.7%) of women reported that their first rape occurred before they were age 25; 40.4% were raped before age 18 years (Waechter & Ma, 2015, pp. 2430-2437). This suggests that a significant proportion of the rape in America can be classified as child sexual abuse (p. 2430).

Sexual violence is sexual activity when consent is not obtained or freely given. It is a serious public health problem in the United States that profoundly impacts lifelong health, opportunity, and well-being. Sexual violence impacts every community and affects people of all genders, sexual orientations, and ages. The perpetrator of sexual violence is usually someone the victim knows, such as a friend, current or former intimate partner, coworker, neighbor, or family member (CDC, 2022).

In a study that examined sexual violence in America, Waechter and Ma (2015) indicated that women who experience violence are at greater risk for mental health problems such as increased stress, depression, and posttraumatic stress disorder. Women

who experience rape are also at greater risk for physical health issues and negative social impact issues (p. 2).

Marital rape is a type of sexual violence that occurs when a husband engages in a sexual act with the wife despite her lack of consent and/or against her will. Marital rape often involves violence, physical force, and threats that cause the woman to fear that her husband will physically harm her if she does not consent (NCADV, 2018). All 50 states in the U.S. have enacted laws against marital rape. Approximately 10–14% of married women are raped by their husbands in the United States (NCADV, 2018). Approximately one-third of women report having “unwanted sex” with their partner. Between 14% and 25% of women are sexually assaulted by intimate partners during their relationship and between 40% and 45% of women in abusive relationships are likely to be sexually assaulted during the course of the relationship (NCADV, 2018). Over half of women were sexually assaulted multiple times by the same intimate partner (NCADV, 2018).

Gang rape is another type of sexual violence in the U.S. According to a study comparing gang rape (i.e., multiple offenders) to individual rape (i.e., a single offender), Ullman (2007) found that victims and offenders in gang rapes tended to be younger and there was more alcohol and drug involvement. In Ullman’s comparative study, she reveals that outcomes of those who were gang raped included more severe physical injuries due to a higher level of violence involved; also that gang rape tended to be reported to police and medical authorities more as there were most likely witnesses. Ullman reported that 82.1% of the rapes in her study were perpetrated by single offenders, 9.9% had two

offenders, and 8% had three offenders. Ullman contended that single offender rapes were more often at home or on a date whereas gang rapes more likely occurred indoors and were committed by strangers involving verbal threats, weapons, physical injuries, and substance use.

Gang rape is the least reported type of sexual abuse but the most physically destructive form (Edinburgh, et al., 2014). Unfortunately, the U.S. does not separate gang rape of a child from gang rape of an adult (p. 1541). Cases of perpetrator rape among adolescents are not tracked within the national crime victimization database, and questions about multiple perpetrator rape are not asked in population-based surveys (p. 1541). Prevalence ranged as high as 26% in police database research (p. 1541).

Another form of sexual violence is sexual harassment. Sexual harassment can be physical (unwelcomed or unwanted touching), verbal (disrespectful insults, slurs, or names), or visual acts (drawings or offensive pictures) (Dobbin & Kalev, 2020). In a study on the effectiveness of sexual harassment programs, Dobbin and Kalev found that 40% of women say they have been sexually harassed at work—a number that, remarkably, has not changed since the 1980s (Dobbin & Kalev, 2020).

The authors found that harassment training makes men more likely to blame the victims. They also found that women who file harassment complaints end up, on average, in worse jobs and poorer physical and mental health than do women who keep quiet. Retaliation may be the only thing many victims get after filing a grievance, because most procedures protect the accused better than they protect victims (p. 3). Part of the problem is that confidentiality rules are unenforceable and thus cannot prevent retribution (p.3). According to Dobbin and Kaley, (2020), rates of harassment have not budged for

decades (p.3). Their study showed that the way for corporate cultures to change is to get more people involved in solving the problem, and that company culture is ultimately created by leaders.

Human sex trafficking is another type of sexual violence found in the U.S. Human sex trafficking affects both children and adults. Human sex trafficking can be found in all states in the U.S. It is hard to find reliable statistics related to human trafficking. Adult sex trafficking is defined as “when a person is required to engage in a commercial sex act as the result of force, threats of force, fraud, coercion or any combination of such means, that person is a victim of human trafficking” (USDOS, 2022). Any child under the age of 18 who has been recruited, enticed, harbored, transported, provided, obtained, advertised, maintained, patronized, or solicited to engage in a commercial sex act is a victim of human trafficking regardless whether force, fraud, or coercion is used (USDOS, 2022). In the United States, individuals vulnerable to human trafficking include children in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems (including foster care), runaways, and homeless youth (USDOS, 2022).

### Sexual Abuse in India

In a quantitative and qualitative study examining the determinants and consequences of CSA in India, Choudhry, et al., (2018, p. 1) found that “exposure and perpetrations of CSA is a multifaceted phenomenon grounded in the interplay between individual, family, community, and societal factors.” In a systematic review of 51 studies, Choudhry determined that “sexual abuse remains taboo . . . shrouded in secrecy with a conspiracy of silence around the entire subject” (p. 3). The authors also explained:

Children, under the age of 18, contribute 37% of India’s population, with large proportions experiencing great deprivations such as lack of access to

basic education, nutrition, or health care. In addition, they are susceptible to different forms of adverse childhood experiences including various forms of abuse, neglect, and maltreatment, with child protection remaining largely unaddressed. (p. 2)

Choudhry and his colleagues reviewed a national study to assess the prevalence of child abuse in India and uncovered that around 53% of Indian children in that study, reported experiencing different kinds of sexual abuse including child pornography, forced inappropriate touching, and intercourse (p. 2). Although these numbers need to be interpreted with caution, they do speak to the significance of the problem. However, according to Choudhry, decades of public activism

led to the Government of India passing the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) law in 2012. The act criminalizes a range of acts including rape, harassment, and exploitation for pornography involving a child below 18 years of age and mandates the setting up of Special Courts to expedite trials of these offences. (p. 3)

Unfortunately, even with the passage of the new law, “only 3% of CSA offences, uncovered by national level study in 2007, are reported to the authorities” (Choudhry et al., 2018, p. 3).

Culture plays a serious role in reaching out beyond the family. Many Indian women have experienced sexual abuse since childhood. Choudhry et al., (2018) also reveals that 93% of perpetrators are relatives or known individuals.

Perpetrators of childhood sexual abuse are known to the abused children and many of them are family members. The offenders often known to the victims, take advantage of the accessibility to potential victims and with lack of severe punishment by family members and protective nature of the family members towards the abuser, often leads to the incident getting unreported. (p. 15)



Reactions of the families to the discovery of sexual abuse, even if the perpetrator is the father, uncle, or brother, etc., often causes re-traumatization and hinders reaching out for help (Choudhry et al., 2018, p. 25).

In the current study by Choudhry et al., (2018), multiple factors were identified relative to sexual abuse in India. The types of sexual abuse reported were child sexual abuse, child marriage, female genital mutilation, sex trafficking, online grooming, child pornography, and even dowry deaths (p. 23). Vulnerability factors included socio-economic stressors: previous CSA victim; perpetrator known to the victim; and accessibility: trafficked, born to a commercial sex worker; child labor; lived in an orphanage; street child; rag picker; or homelessness made children more susceptible to being exploited for a meal or money (p. 23). Family practices include a culture of silence around CSA, lack of family support, negative or harmful family attitudes, early exposure to sexual acts and behaviors, and traditional family norms of silence around sexual abuse (p. 23). Societal and community factors include a patriarchal societal norm with power differentials across class and gender and poor law enforcement with lack of safety for women (p. 23). Mental health and physical outcomes include depression, feelings of guilt and shame, HIV infections, and sexually transmitted diseases (p. 23). Other common factors include survivors experiencing relationship challenges that increase their risk of domestic violence, violent behaviors, and increased risk of perpetration of CSA as adults (p. 23).

Child marriage is a controversial type of sexual violence in India. According to UNICEF, child marriage in India endangers the lives of girls, whether because of domestic violence, marital rape, or early pregnancy. It also deprives young girls of

numerous human rights, including the right to education and the enjoyment of their childhood (UNICEF, 2019). The implementation in 2006 of the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act resulted in some reduction in the overall percentage of early marriages (Manjoo, 2014). However, UNICEF reports that a high prevalence of such marriages still exists. Child marriage is against the law in India, yet culturally continues to be practiced every day. “Of the country’s 223 million child brides, 102 million were married before turning 15” (UNICEF, 2019, p. 4). A girl’s risk is higher in rural areas, poorer households, or among those with little or no education. The majority of child marriages result in adolescent pregnancies.

Female genital mutilation is a devastating type of sexual violence. “Female genital mutilation (FGM) involves the partial or total removal of external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons . . . FGM is mostly carried out on young girls between infancy and age 15” (WHO, 2022). It is still used in parts of India where it exists among the Dawoodi as well as other smaller Bohra sub-sects including the Suleimani and Alavi Bohras. This community traces its ancestral and ideological roots to 10th and 11th century Egypt and Yemen. While it is a small community in India, it still amounts to more than 500,000 Indians. In fact, a Sahiyo study found that 80% of girls in this community had undergone FGM. Moreover, 66% of them were 6 to 7 years old. Traditional cutters, also called *mullanis* (female Muslim religious leaders), perform most FGM procedures, although some healthcare professionals do as well (Thelwell, 2021).

## Sexual Assault in India

All cultures have their own versions of sexual violence, and India has many forms. “Violence against women in India are systematic and occurs in the public and private spheres” A study by Manjoo (2014) found that violence against women

is underpinned by the persistence of patriarchal social norms and inter- and intra- gender hierarchies. . . . Women are discriminated against and subordinated not only on the basis of sex, but on other grounds, such as caste. . .and tradition. . . . The manifestations of violence against women are a reflection of the structural and institutional inequality that is a reality for most women in India. (p. 3)

The definition of rape in Section 375 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) includes all forms of sexual assault involving nonconsensual intercourse with a woman (IPC, 2022). However, Exception 2 of Section 375 *exempts* unwilling intercourse between a husband and wife over 15 years of age from Section 375’s definition of “rape” and excludes such acts from prosecution. India is one of 36 countries that still have not criminalized marital rape (Makkar, 2019).

Marriage in India is steeped in traditions and deep-rooted cultural beliefs and practices are passed down (LSI, 2022). Survivors of sexual violence face huge barriers in accessing justice, including community pressure to drop the case, discriminatory attitudes of police and judicial officers, insufficient legal aid, and discouraging conviction rates (Equality Now, 2022). These challenges are often magnified if the survivors are members of India’s marginalized communities, particularly if they are Dalits, Adivasis, or Muslims (Equality Now, 2022). According to the National Crime Records Bureau of India (2021), there were 28,153 registered rape cases or 4.3 rapes per 100,000 in both state and union territories and 226 deaths for murder by rape or gang rape.

Other types of sexual violence are found in the Indian Penal Code, Section 509 called the Insult to the Modesty of Women. This form of sexual violence includes words, gestures, or acts intended to insult the modesty of a woman (IPC, 2022). There were 7,250 incidents reported in 2020. Another form of sexual violence is found in Section 354 of the Indian Penal Code named an Assault on Women with Intent to outrage her modesty consists of assaults or criminal force with 86,745 incidents reported in 2020.

Another type of sexual violence in India is found in dowries. A dowry includes property, goods, or money given by either side in the case of a proposed marriage. The dowry can be a source of joy for the bridegroom and his relatives but a curse to the bride's parents, who must bear enormous costs to satisfy the demands of the bridegroom's family (LSI, 2022). Demands do not necessarily stop after marriage. In many instances, the in-laws can inflict harassment, insults, and mental and physical abuse, which can escalate to domestic and sexual violence in the home (LSI, 2022).

Extreme versions of dowry issues are called dowry deaths, which often occur soon after marriage when the groom or the groom's family is dissatisfied and kills the bride. Although Indian laws against dowries and dowry deaths have been in effect for decades, it has been criticized for being ineffective. In 2020, it was reported that 10,488 families participated in a dowry exchange that is prohibited by law and 7,045 dowry deaths occurred (NCRB, 2022). The Dowry Prohibition Act was passed in 1961 and is intended to prevent the giving or receiving of a dowry. In 1986, dowry deaths were added to Section 304-B of the law. A related consequence of dowry issues can also occur when the bride, in an effort to stop the harassment, commits suicide.

Acid attacks are considered a form of sexual violence. According to the National Commission of India, an acid attack is “any act of throwing acid or using acid in any form on the victim with the intention of or with the knowledge that such person is likely to cause to the other person permanent or partial damage or deformity or disfiguration to any part of the body of such person” (LSI, 2022). Acid attacks are also discussed in Section 326-A of the Indian Penal Code. Domestic violence is cited as one of the leading reasons why acid is thrown by a family member because of dowry issues, refusal to have sex, or refusal to obey. There were 142 reported cases of acid attacks on women in 2020 (NCRB, 2021).

Sexual violence can also be about controlling the birth of an unborn baby. In India, customary practices in families and communities point to a pattern of daughter aversion and son preference (Manjoo, 2014). The belief that a son extends the family lineage, or that he provides protection, safety, and security to the family, as well as patriarchal norms and socioeconomic factors—all fuel a decrease in the live birth of female children (OJP, 2006). The desire for sons has led to the “policing” of pregnancies by spouses and families through prenatal monitoring systems (Manjoo, 2014), and results in sex-selective abortions, which are often *forced* on women in violation of their sexual and reproductive rights (p. 4). Despite specific legislation (Section 315 of the Indian Penal Code) to address this problem, an increase in the number of female foeticide (aborting of a female fetus or sex-selective abortion) and infanticide (the deliberate and intentional killing of a female born child) cases have become a significant social phenomenon in many parts of India (Tandon & Sharma, 2006). The female children become targets of attack even before they are born (Tandon & Sharma, 2006).

“Honor crimes” are a type of sexual violence that is usually perpetrated by family members, often with the complicity of community leaders. Reasons include a woman’s refusal to be forced into marriage, who the daughter is dating, retaliation for marrying the man of her choice, being a victim of sexual assault, or refusal to follow prescribed and expected dress codes. Women and girls suffer a wide range of physical and psychological abuse, as well as the denial of basic freedom of movement and expression, while some are killed in the name of honor.

“Sexual harassment” is defined in Section 354-A of the IPC as unwanted verbal or physical advances, and is not limited to a location. It can include physical contact, unwanted advances, demand for sexual favors, or showing pornography (Safecity, 2022). The Indian law dealing with offences of sexual harassment is called the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Bill. It defines rape, stalking, and assault, but does not define the words “eve-teasing” or “molestation” (Balaaji & Malaimagal, 2018). In India, the major cause of sexual harassment in the workplace is society’s patriarchal system where male members are considered superior to females (p. 9983). The role of men and women in the society is seen in terms of domination and subordination, and women are expected to be submissive and kept under the control and supervision of men (p. 9983).

A common phenomenon in India and a type of sexual violence is that of “eve-teasing,” which means the sexual harassment of a woman in public (Balaaji & Malaimagal, 2018). It can be done by an individual or collectively, and it may be directed toward one woman or a group of women. It can be a sexually explicit statement and extend to touching or brushing against a woman, following her, making her feel

uncomfortable, or disparaging her. Whether it is on public transport or in public places, or shopping malls, streets, or workplace, women everywhere in India feel vulnerable to the threat of eve teasing. There are many instances where even young girls are harassed in public places. There is no specific legislation in the country except in the State of Tamil Nadu, which has its own legislation to deal with this offense. Most incidents go unreported due to fear of social humiliation and embarrassment (Balaaji & Malaimagal, 2018).

### Comparative Analysis of Sexual Violence

Country comparisons of CSA and sexual assault statistics are difficult as the legal definition of CSA and sexual assault can vary by country. India does not consider marital rape a crime, whereas the U.S. does. India has unique cultural sexual violence systems that are not typically found in the U.S. including: child marriage, FGM, dowry violence or killings, acid attacks, honor killings, insult to modesty offenses and assault on women with intent to outrage her modesty, female infanticide and forced infanticide, and eve teasing. Although the sexual violence covered in both countries is not an exhaustive list of all sexual offences in both countries they are the most prevalent with the majority not recorded. Sexual violations in any form silence victims. It also sends a message to other victims to not speak up especially if other family members know. The majority of offenses are by a family member, extended family, or someone the family knows. Most of the violations listed above are carried out by a member of the family.

Abortion is available in the U.S. but not as a forced illegal method to discard the child because it is a girl, not a boy. The U.S. does not put such emphasis on the sex of a child to the point of infanticide or female infanticide.

Although the U.S. and India have very different sexual violence cultures, they do experience much of the same familial and societal responses to sexual abuse. In both countries it is still shrouded in secrecy and considered taboo, and family and society silences victims and empowers perpetrators in many ways, including protecting them. Even though the U.S. and India have different types of sexual violence, the women of India have more types of sexual violence to battle with. Despite the difference between a more traditional culture compared to a more individualistic culture, both countries shame victims for speaking out, blame them for the abuse, and ostracize them. By silencing victims who come forward, perpetrators are protected from their abusive acts and are emboldened to continue with impunity. Women in the U.S. have more freedoms than women of India yet, even with all the freedoms and supposed advancement in women's rights, the same issues of secrecy, silencing victims, and empowering perpetrators exists.



## Chapter III

### The Role of the Media

This chapter covers types of media framing and the influences of media on society. It also discusses media coverage of sexual violence in the U.S. and India, and how the media can influence social norms.

The media is perhaps one of the most powerful societal influences (next to family) that can transform a person's mindset. The media offers an outlet for people to learn about the world around themselves. One cannot underestimate the power of the media to shape global knowledge of current events. How we access news has changed dramatically over the last century as there are many different formats: television outlets, social media platforms, radio, movies, books, and magazines, etc. The media fulfills many roles in society from entertaining to education and information as well as exposing institutions and governments. Consequently, technology transformations have affected how the media interacts within a society whether that includes reflecting cultural norms or challenging them.

#### Types of Media Framing

“The media does not tell us what to think, the media tells us what to think about” (Penn, 2022, p. 3). In order to understand how the media is influential in society, it is important to understand a few principles regarding how the media frames its articles. Agenda setting, second-level agenda setting, and framing are all aspects of what goes into

print. Agenda setting tells the reader what issues and topics to think about; second-level agenda setting is about what aspects of a topic to think about (Penn, 2022, p. 3).

Media framing serves to shape our understanding of a topic. There are several theories that explain how the media frames its content. Erving Goffman, Robert W. Entman, and Shanto Iyengar each developed a theory on media framing that is widely used today. Each is discussed briefly below.

In 1974, Goffman explored how people organize their experiences, arguing that people receive, interpret, and engage through frames. How they interpret reality depends on what frames they employ. Penn (2022) states: “Accordingly, given the power of the media in setting the public agenda, then, how media frames certain topics and events influences this process, and directly affects how we ‘know what we know’ about the world around us” (p. 3).

Goffman believed that journalists use frames to help simplify complex explanations that help the public understand. However, he also suggests that journalists do so using their own lens and experience—in essence their own personal frames (Goffman, discussed in Penn, 2022, p. 6). This suggests that the media—although the goal may be to write about a subject unbiased—may carry their own biases or frames (as Goffman referred to them) into their writing. Goffman explained that there are two sets of frames: one in which an individual interprets his/her surroundings, and one in which the media writes about a topic. In other words, Goffman believed frames help people construct their reality, and the media uses frames to imply what matters and how the reader should understand or interpret topics (Goffman, discussed in Penn, 2022, p. 3).

Robert Entman developed a framing model. In 1993 he suggested media frames had two to four components: a problem, a solution, a responsible party, and moral judgment (Entman, discussed in Penn, 2022, p. 6). Entman suggested that wherever the news slants or frames an issue, it becomes more powerful and those that lose the media framing contest become weaker (Entman, 2007, p. 170).

In 1991, Shanto Iyengar classified frames as episodic or thematic. Episodic framing focuses on a stand-alone, one-time event; thematic is a trend that occurs over time but is written in a broad context (Iyengar, discussed in Penn, 2022, pp. 6-7). Iyengar believed that the type of frame used in a story influences how a person attributes responsibility and shapes his/her attitudes and features. An episodic, framed article about a stand-alone event could place a lesser level of responsibility on a person or organization if it is viewed as a random event, rather than being seen as a recurring event that is thematic or part of a trend over time (Iyengar, discussed in Penn, 2022, p. 7).

Media outlets publish different competing frames to report a topic. One story can be told in many different ways. Penn notes, for example: "If we limit our news consumption to only a few (or even just one) news source, then what we 'know' can also be very limited" (2022, p. 5). Everyone has their own way of accessing information about the world. If a person does not like the topic of an article, he/she does not have to read or listen to it. Thus if a person is a perpetrator of sexual abuse, and if an article or news reports talk about the issue of sexual abuse, the perpetrator can stop reading or listening. Media outlets also have competing political views that frame their agendas differently from each other. And once again, if a listener does not like what is being said, he/she can turn off the news or go to another outlet. Often there is no single perspective from a

media outlet that describes a complete picture of an issue. It may require a person to obtain many different perspectives, as there is real risk if one's perspective is limited to a single media source.

The media also has an ethical responsibility to publish truthfulness. Media coverage can also be inappropriate such as using inappropriate terminology or inappropriate or factually incorrect content. The importance and power of using specific terms can influence specific perspectives, such as “accuser” versus “victim,” or “pro-life” versus “pro-choice” (Penn, 2012, p. 4).

### Influences of the Media on Society

This section analyzes whether the media influence on society is reflective or if it challenges social norms, silences victims, or enable perpetrator empowerment. Dorfman, et al., (2018) examined how

news is often reported as a series of individual events, without adequate context, making it difficult to see the full story that can help identify what needs to be prevented as well as what can be done to promote the prevention of violence, . . . and identified how the news media set agendas that define how viewers understand violence. . . . Criminal justice perspectives dominate the news, and prevention is largely absent. There is a need to reframe the news by moving beyond the individual to the landscape, emphasizing public values in order for viewers to understand why violence prevention matters and to recognize a solution, and using communications to support action. (p. 4)

### Reflective versus Challenging

The media can reflect cultural norms or challenge them. In his book *The Macho Paradox*, Jackson Katz (2019) stated that 99% of all rape is done by a man (p. 5). He said:

The sexual exploitation of women and girls is arguably more revealing about *men* than it is about women, . . . . It is rare to find any in-depth discussion about the culture that's producing these violent men and men commit the most serious intimate-partner violence and the overwhelming amount of sexual violence, including the sexual abuse of children (p. 5).

Katz confirms that violence can be deeply rooted in our families and supported by the societies we live in (p. 7).

On the subject of the mass media, Katz believes the media is the most significant institution and the most powerful teacher and transmitter of cultural values (p. 150). He states:

If we are interested in the question not only of how thousands of guys become rapists, but how millions of men develop rape supportive attitudes, it is important to exam the media culture within which people understand and construct their identities. (p. 7)

Although families are an integral part of perpetuating the cycle of abuse, so is the media. Globally, media attention can “lead to spreading misperceptions of sexual violence in society—also known as rape myths—which can perpetuate rape culture, linking sexuality to violence and the subsequent normalization of sexual violence” (Aquaviva, et al., 2020, p. 7).

### Silences Victims

In 2020, Aquaviva, et al. conducted a study regarding victim believability and cases in the media. The authors found that “rape culture and media exposure can create powerful social narratives that affect attitudes and behaviors generally and beliefs about sexual violence” (p. 8). They also found that in addition to family influence, media messages are the second most influential medium in cultivating a person’s ideals (p. 8).

They explained the importance of keeping in mind the power and influence that the media may have in shaping beliefs and opinions (p. 9).

Aquaviva, et al. (2020) found that participants who consumed newspaper media were more likely to engage in victim blaming and the endorsement of rape myths (p. 9). Their research found that “victim-blaming permeates all types of media platforms in society and popular culture and can shape public attitudes regarding rape myths (p. 10).

The Aquaviva study demonstrates that media messages are powerful, and that they can shape people’s perceptions of reality. The media can silence victims in the way they frame their articles, shaming or blaming the victim of sexual violence, attacking the victim’s character by focusing on their actions as opposed to the perpetrator can silence victims.

#### Perpetrator Empowerment

Baum, et al. (2021) published the first ever long-term study of rape culture. The Baum study stated: “We find that where there is more rape culture in the press, there is more rape” (p. 6). The study examined how rape is covered by the news media, which the researchers found reflected local community norms, and found a correlation between media coverage and incidence of sexual assault (Baum, et al., 2021). The researchers also found rape occurs more often in communities where the media perpetuates rape culture, and that “in jurisdictions where rape culture was more prevalent, there were more documented rape cases, but authorities were less vigilant in pursuing them” (p. 13). The Baum study focused on rape and how if local news media have rape culture, it correlates with incidences of more rape in that community and less accountability of the

perpetrators. In areas with more prevalent rape culture in the press, police receive more frequent reports of rape but make fewer arrests in response (p. 270). Rape culture in the press, in turn, is most prevalent during the arrest and prosecution phases of the criminal justice process (p. 270). Lower police vigilance or courtroom mistreatment may deter future victims from reporting, while raising potential perpetrators' senses of impunity. The association between rape culture and crime likely reflects an increased incidence of rape, rather than increased reporting by victims (p. 270). The Baum study demonstrated that the role of culture has been overlooked and is a key element in understanding the causes and consequences of rape. Where rape culture is less pervasive, police may be more likely to believe the victim, to conduct a full investigation, and to make arrests.

### Media Coverage of Sexual Violence

In this section, I analyze how the media covers sexual violence in the U.S. and India. Then I make a comparative analysis and a temporal analysis.

#### Media Coverage of Child Sexual Abuse in the U.S.

A study by Dorfman, et al. (2017) found that the majority of sexual abuse coverage of CSA in the U.S. was framed as episodic and focused on an isolated incident of sexual abuse. Moreover, Dorfman's study found that when an article was written on CSA, the majority wrote from a criminal justice perspective often related to the aftermath of an arrest or trial; articles on school institution abuse followed second. Dorfman, et al. found that the majority of news hooks in stories on CSA were episodic criminal justice stories that could reinforce ideas that someone else will take care of the issue or that only

the courts can fix the issue. The authors also found that episodic criminal justice stories could reinforce the idea that the problem is too big or too complicated to address. Other news hooks were used in controversies such as disputed verdicts. Solutions or prevention measures were found in less than one-third of the news articles addressing CSA that had already happened (Dorfman, et al., 2017).

While CSA appears regularly in news coverage, there is, on average less than one story per week on the topic and media coverage on CSA remains largely out of view, according to Dorfman. Their study revealed that prevention was virtually invisible with the focus of after-treatment solutions, not prevention. Dorfman also found that news coverage was often vague and sexual abuse terms were inconsistent with most of the news stories not specifying the type of sexual abuse. Precise descriptions of sexual abuse may have the benefit of humanizing victims. Unfortunately, most articles include details about the perpetrator not the victim. The result is that the perpetrator is humanized while the victim is not. Thematic stories would help policy makers and the public envision solutions and prevention by seeing the broader issue of CSA. Journalists have an opportunity to talk about the broader issue of sexual abuse regarding ways victims can come forward and seek help without having to report it or if they do report how their parent or caregiver can support them (Dorfman et al., 2017).

#### Media Coverage of Sexual Assault in the U.S.

In a study on media coverage of rape and rape culture, Baum, et al., (2018) discuss how a culture of rape might shape the preferences and choices of perpetrators and victims. The authors' study explored biased news coverage that blames victims,



empathizes with perpetrators, implies consent, and questions victims' credibility. That, in turn, deters victims from coming forward, which can increase the number of rape incidents.

Baum, et al. (2018) define *rape culture* as

a set of values and beliefs that provide an environment conducive to rape, where rape is often not acknowledged as a crime and its victims are frequently blamed for their own violation. Social scientists hold that news coverage shapes, rather than reflects, social norms but unless potential victims and perpetrators read all their local newspapers, it is unclear how they could affect their behavior (p. 264, 266).

In comparison, political communication scholars (including Entman (2007), mentioned earlier) believe that the media reflects rather than challenges social norms. They also believe that reporters' biases mirror the norms of the communities in which they live and work, and that audiences resist or avoid frames that conflict with their preexisting norms or values (Baum, et al., 2018).

Four main categories seem to be a recurring theme in articles written on rape: victim-blaming language, empathy for the perpetrators, implied victim consent, and questioning a victim's credibility (Baum, et al., 2018). If one of the four categories was found in a news article, that article is likely focused mostly on the individual(s) at the center of the case and less on the severity or criminal nature of an incident (Baum, et al., 2018). Articles that imply consent were found to include wording such as "sexual relationship" as opposed to abuse. Articles questioning a victim's credibility focused on the victim's account of the rape.

Rape culture in the media is most likely to appear in the press when a criminal case reaches the point in its life cycle that is most consequential for a victim's pursuit of justice, such as when the level of public attention is high, or when law enforcement is in

the process of investigating and arresting perpetrators, and especially when perpetrators are on trial (Baum, et al., 2018). The Baum study revealed that some social norms can enable—or at least fail to deter—sexual violence, and that a rape culture in the press may indicate the presence of supporting local norms (Baum, et al., 2018).

### Media Coverage of Child Sexual Abuse in India

In India, Section 21 of the Juvenile Justice Act 2000 restricts the media from identifying a child by disclosing the name, address, school, or any other particulars, and publishing photographs (Mishra, 2021). Section 228 of the IPC provides for punishment if the identity of the child is disclosed through publication.

The media acts as a window on society in cases of sexual abuse with children. Stories of sex crimes often grab considerable public attention, which can cause the journalist to sensationalize his story compared to other stories. In India, a journalist finds the hook and develops a story. But despite the fact there are guidelines available to journalists reporting on children, they tend to deviate from those guidelines as well as from ethical considerations (Mishra, 2021, p. 86). For instance, Bhagwat (2017) found that when reporters narrate a story on CSA, they still use background details of the survivor, including locality, place of incident including close landmarks, occupational and social details of the family, name of the accused, and the police station where the case was registered—identifying everything but the actual name of the victim (Bhagwat, quoted in Mishra, 2021, p. 86).

It is worth noting that only a small proportion of all child abuse and neglect cases receive media attention. But the stories reported are often sensational and may involve

tragic outcomes, such as injuries or even death (Jacques, et al., 2012, p. 5). Most reporters are oriented to find an unusual story, get the reader's attention, and secure space on the page. This applies even when reporters write on case of CSA. Many studies reveal that only unusual and rare stories are covered whereas the most frequent crimes are reported less often by the media (e.g., Jacques, et al., 2012; Potter & Kappeler, 1998; Reiner, 2002).

The choice of words and appropriate terminology is crucial in media reporting of CSA. The media practice of sensationalized presentation of stories occurs due to news pressures to be the first to release a story. That also fits in the frame of the simplified presentation of the story. This invisible but effective pressure pushes journalists to use the terms that are deemed fit to grab public attention, but negatively impact the mental and social conditions of the victims (Mishra, 2021). Journalists are often more focused on explaining the incident. Their headlines come from naming the victim and the incident, explaining the situation as the incident led them to ignore most of the valuable and positive facts, such as legal action, the trauma of the victim, and details related to the accused. In a broader social and cultural context, children have been a neglected part of media coverage. Media that is accustomed to giving priority to adult issues covers children in limited perspectives. "New media portrays children in limited roles as objects of emotional appeal, victims or performers" (Mishra, 2021).

#### Media Coverage of Sexual Assault in India

In 2012 a college student named Jyoti Singh was gang-raped on a public bus in front of her boyfriend and died several days later. Jyoti's story received global coverage

and led to protests in India over sexual violence against women. After the Singh story was publicized in India, rape coverage went up substantially in most media publications. Following public outrage, it has been reported that language used in media coverage has become more gender-sensitive (Singh, et al., 2022, pp. 6-7).

Unfortunately, it seems that the stories about brutal cases and numerous injuries get more visibility than other types of rape cases. In the study by Singh, et al., quantitative data showed that journalists covering sexual assault cases have become more gender-sensitive in tone, stereotypes, and the use of key words. However, many articles still reflect language bias regarding stereotypes and breach of privacy. The victim's narrative can still include victim blaming. Patriarchal and upper-caste biases were still prevalent, and patriarchal mindsets are still major obstacles in gender justice (Singh, et al., 2022, e.g., pp. 2, 4, 15).

#### Comparative Analysis: Media Coverage of Sexual Violence

Media coverage of CSA in the U.S. was mostly episodic, focused on an isolated incident of sexual abuse, with the majority within a criminal justice lens. CSA remains largely out of view and prevention was found to be virtually invisible, with the focus on after-treatment solutions, not prevention. News coverage was often vague and sexual-abuse terms were inconsistent, with most news stories not specifying the type of sexual abuse.

In India, CSA coverage is often sensationalized and does not necessarily reflect the reality of the sexual abuse that occurs. Indian reporters generally do not follow journalistic guidelines, instead disclosing the background of the victim, the area they live

in, or the school they attend. A small portion of sexual abuse and child neglect receives media attention while mostly unusual and rare stories are covered.

In the U.S., victim-blaming language, empathy for perpetrators, implied victim consent, and questioning a victim's credibility were recurring themes in media coverage. U.S. media coverage of sexual assault was mostly written with a criminal justice lens. In India, there were breaches of identity, victim-blaming, and patriarchal biases.

### Media Can Influence Social Norms

Awareness programs have been around for decades, yet the underlying root cause of a sexual violence culture has barely shifted. In India, the media is viewed as an important stakeholder, which significantly influences how people understand and approach a case. Thorough media coverage can construct the true identity of both victim and perpetrator. Media can challenge stereotypes, put in place correct prototypes, and challenge inaccuracies and fallacies in the justice process, thereby changing the discourse on sexual abuse of children and positively impacting the attitudes of people handling the cases, including medical and police personnel. Egen, et al. (2020) report the following:

Media have been shown to act as a socializing agent for a range of health and social behaviors. Media portrayals might influence, reinforce, or modify how the public responds to incidents of sexual violence and their support for prevention efforts and media might construct a lens through which the public can understand who is affected by sexual violence, what forms it takes, why it happens, and who is responsible for addressing it (p. 1757). . . .

Traditional media might be missing an opportunity to integrate prevention messages within current or breaking news. Prevention messaging generally were reported infrequently. Although outcomes might not be known at the time of reporting, traditional media might be missing an opportunity to integrate prevention messages within current or breaking news. (p. 1759) . . . .

The media is an institution that can influence social norms, the media might contribute to efforts to prevent sexual violence through accurate descriptions of prevalence and impact of sexual violence, establishment of sexual violence as a public health issue, and, when possible, inclusion of messages and resources for prevention. In this way, awareness of the problem and prevention messaging might reach broader audiences. (p. 1760)

The media plays a serious and far-reaching role in how the public understands an issue and presents its cultural values. Every country has its own culture of sexual violence, and how the media represents stories about sexual violence is indicative of what that society already believes.

The media can play an important role in helping to change the narrative of sexual violence in our homes and society by changing their narrative and understanding of the issue. Existing scholars of topics on CSA and sexual violence tell the importance of the role of culture in sustaining attitudes and beliefs about sexual violence. The media can have a powerful impact on society and may be one of the best resources to penetrate the deep-seeded culture of sexual abuse.

An example of the media's positive influence on changing social norms regarding CSA was exposure of long-time abuse of young boys by Catholic priests. Such a headline-grabbing story puts child sexual abuse on the public agenda. Examples occurred in 2002 and 2003 after the story broke, and ongoing coverage forced the Church to respond. Among other concessions, U.S. Catholic bishops adopted a revised policy on CSA in 2002. Media exposure resulted in legal pressure to compensate victims: as of 2009, the Catholic Church had paid more than \$2.6 billion in abuse-related costs. Prominent events, like revelations of abuse within the Catholic Church, often propel the issue directly into the spotlight. Other examples are abuse reported among members of

the Boy Scouts of America, Harry Weinstein, Jeffrey Epstein, U.S. Olympics doctor Larry Nassar, Fox News, and Bill Cosby.

But how do journalists cover CSA in the absence of a prominent case? Do they cover it routinely? Do sensational stories focusing on “stranger danger” misconceptions (i.e., victims of CSA do not know their abuser) dominate news coverage? Or does the news reflect prevailing patterns of CSA? Is preventing CSA discussed?

Many factors influence the news selection process, from details of the incident itself, to anything else that competes for coverage that day. The study by Dorfman, et al. (2017) found that clear patterns emerged during three years of news coverage about child sexual abuse. First, CSA remains largely out of view. While CSA appears regularly in news coverage, on average there is less than one story a week on the topic, even fewer that cover the issue in depth. Prevention remains virtually invisible. Solutions were discussed in fewer than 30% of the coverage. Most of those stories were about interventions focused on treatment after the fact. Few discussed prevention.

## Chapter IV

### Research Methods

This chapter begins with the case selection procedure for this study. Then it provides an overview of incident reports and feature articles, followed by a content analysis of incident reports and feature articles.

Media framing reflects a society's cultural norms and values. The content analysis herein analyzes media framing to see how it reinforces or challenges sexual violence cultural norms. Then it makes recommendations based on how the media has reported on sexual violence throughout the 40-year period within this study. The study involves looking at certain indicators of media content over an extended period of time in an effort to observe how those variables may change over time. The 40-year span offers insights as to how the media's messaging regarding sexual violence has changed over the years and how the content of articles has evolved.

### Hypothesis

I hypothesize that a cross-cultural content analysis between the U.S and India will reveal that media influences have not been effective at challenging social norms that perpetuate sexual violence and silence victims—even when global awareness and widespread education are prevalent in both countries. To support or refute this hypothesis, I performed a qualitative and quantitative content analysis of a random sample of articles in *The New York Times* (NYT) and *The Times of India* (TOI) across



four decades: 1980-1989, 1990-1999, 2000-2009, and 2010-2019. The data was entered into a spreadsheet using a text categorization of 26 variables that were collected in the study. A pivot table highlighted and assessed the differences between the two countries and across the four decades.

I analyzed messaging from the media that either challenged or reinforced social norms that perpetuate a sexual violence culture. If sexual violence is a global issue and is growing, then finding the right messaging and challenging the right audiences can help prevent sexual abuse and facilitate survivors obtaining the help they need.

This descriptive, exploratory study includes four foci: (1) a cross-cultural assessment between the U.S. and India, comparing reported sexual abuse found in each country; (2) a temporal assessment spanning four decades that examined changes in the articles in order to determine how they evolved over the 40-year period; (3) episodic content analysis of incident reports, and a 4) thematic content analysis of other related articles. Additionally, this study assessed the media framing of articles on sexual abuse, analyzed the type of article written, and their influence as either episodic content or thematic content.

#### Case Selection Procedure

I chose the NYT as the source for U.S. data to be analyzed since it is the longest-running newspaper in the United States. It is also the second-largest newspaper focused on the opinions of the American people, and offers a good representation of the American people and culture.

The TOI was chosen for its reputation as the most trusted newspaper in India; it is the oldest and largest selling English language daily newspaper. The TOI is also provides a good representation of the Indian people and culture.

Nexis Uni and the ProQuest databases were accessed for the four relevant time periods. The keyword search narrowed the sample to include children up to age 17, and adults 18 years and older.

Initially, a keyword search was conducted using the terms *sex crimes*, *sexual assault*, *sexual violence*, *rape*, *childhood sexual abuse*, and *sexual abuse* to identify which keyword phrase appeared in all four decades in both countries. Due to the disparity between the number of articles found in each decade in each country, *sex crimes*, *sexual assault*, *sexual violence*, and *childhood sexual abuse* were eliminated. There was an appropriate number of articles for the terms *rape* and *sexual abuse*. Since to the target sample restriction required both children and adults, the term *rape* was eliminated. In the end, *sexual abuse* was the only term that fit the criteria of the sample, included both children and adults, and was found in all four decades in both countries.

Then I performed a keyword search using the Nexis Uni database, looking for NYT articles for the U.S. based on the term *sexual abuse*. I found more than 10,000 articles that could be accessed from January 1, 1980, through December 31, 2019.

The ProQuest and Nexis Uni database were both used for TOI articles for India. A keyword search for the term *sexual abuse* found 1,084 articles that could be accessed from January 1, 1980, through December 31, 2009. The ProQuest database did not include articles past 2010, while the Nexis Uni database included articles starting in

2010. A total of 4,200 articles were accessible between January 1, 2010, and December 31, 2019. For further discussion of the case selection procedure, see Appendix 1.

After identifying the total base of available articles, 50 newspaper articles were randomly chosen from each decade by dividing the number of newspaper articles found within each decade and dividing it by 50. An attempt was made to have an equal amount of newspaper articles for each decade to analyze a total of 400 articles, but two types of articles emerged: incident reports and feature articles (see below for details). In addition to the two types of articles, 55 articles were eliminated from the study for lack of relevance. A total of 79 articles met the criteria for the study of incident reports, and 279 articles met the criteria for feature articles (see Appendix 1: Case Selection Procedure).

### Incident Reports and Feature Articles

Two types of articles were assessed: feature articles and incident reports. I separated the feature articles from the incident report article because they were measured differently. Exclusion criteria for feature articles were created: either the articles did not name a victim or a perpetrator, or the majority of the 26 variables could not be identified. Some feature articles included stories of abuse but only in broad terms, or a victim or perpetrator could not be identified.

Feature articles were important for researching the most prevalent topics journalists wrote about, as well as whether the articles challenged or reinforced societal views on sexual violence. It was worth identifying the topics in order to recommend messaging that would be more effective at helping to deter sexual violence. Awareness of

the topics also gave insight into how certain social systems affect whether survivors come forward or if the messaging helped to minimize the abuse.

Incident reports are newspaper articles in which journalists wrote about specific instances or episodes of sexual violence. In most articles, a victim was easily identified as well as a perpetrator. The incident reports were analyzed by creating four categories with 26 variables regarding media messaging over four decades. The four categories each had additional subcategories: victim demographics (4 subcategories), media framing (9 subcategories), victim characteristics (6 subcategories), and perpetrator characteristics (7 subcategories).

Incident reports and feature articles were also differentiated by how the article was framed. Incident reports were classified as episodic and focused on a victim and a perpetrator, mostly from a criminal justice lens that precluded addressing the topic in broader terms. Feature articles were classified as thematic if they focused on the topic of sexual violence in broader terms such as scandals, issues, or awareness. Feature articles excluded reporting on one victim and perpetrator and their specific incident.

The incident reports and the feature articles were categorized in preparation for assessing and measuring their content. From the incident reports, the findings from the subcategories were charted. Once categorized in the variable framework listed below (see Table 1), an assessment of the findings was conducted. Feature articles were similarly categorized by the topic of the article (see Table 2). After all the articles were categorized an assessment of the incident report parameters and the feature article contents was conducted.

Table 1. Incident Report Variable Framework.

Victim Demographics	Media Framing	Victim Characteristics	Perpetrator Characteristics
Decade	News Frame	Number of Victims	Perpetrator Category
Country	Article Topic	Victim Blaming	Number of Perpetrators
Victim Age	Type of Abuse	Other Party Knew About Abuse	Perpetrator Rationale
Victim Sex	Appropriate Terminology	Victim Believed	Reported Support for Perpetrator
	Characteristics of Abuse	Victim Not Believed	Reported Perpetrator Background
	Consensual Language	Victim Negative Consequences	Perpetrator's Legal Consequences
	Share Where to Get Help for Victims		Perpetrator Other Consequences
	Disclose Victim's Name or Location		
	Pornography Victim		

Source: thesis author

Each incident report was reviewed and encoded for each of the variables listed above. This content analysis was conducted to determine how the articles were framed by the journalists. For a more detailed version with operational definitions and rationale, see Appendix 2.

Feature articles report more broadly on issues or themes related to sexual abuse and do not identify a specific episode of sexual violence, victim or perpetrator. Feature articles included topics on 'sexual abuse' in more broader terms, such as topics about abuse scandals, issues, or awareness. Feature articles were assessed by creating two

categories to analyze with additional subcategories: News Frame (1 subcategory) and Article Topic (12 categories).

The incident reports and the feature articles were categorized in preparation of assessing and measuring their content, as noted above. From the incident reports, the findings from the variable subcategories were categorized to assess the findings. The feature articles were categorized by the topic and presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Feature Article Variable Framework

<b>News Frame</b>	<b>Article Topic</b>
Thematic	Awareness, Education, Statistics
	Boy Scout Institution
	Childcare/Foster care/Orphanage Institution
	Criminal Justice
	Entertainment
	Government Institution
	Human Rights
	Political
	Religious Institution
	School Institution
	Sexual Harassment
	Trafficking/Pornography

Source: thesis author

Each feature article was reviewed and encoded for each of the variables listed above. The feature articles were analyzed to (1) compare the messaging of each decade on the topic of sexual abuse and (2) review if the messaging challenged or reinforced

societal views on sexual violence. A review was done to see if certain subjects were more prevalent in certain decades. For a more detailed version with operational definitions and rationale, see Appendix 3.

After all the incident report and feature articles was categorized, an assessment of the findings was done. Aside from the iterative refinement process that was used in the encoding no formal reliability tests were conducted. However, the coding refinement process, conducted over a period of five months, was effective in yielding convergent codes.

## Chapter V

### Results

In this chapter, an overview of incident report and feature article findings is presented. Not all findings are included in the results section, but all data used in this thesis are available from the author at [wendymjohnson7@gmail.com](mailto:wendymjohnson7@gmail.com).

This qualitative and quantitative analysis explored the media's influence on cultural norms that perpetuate sexual violence and silence victims in the U.S. and India. The random sample of articles in the NYT and TOI were separated into two categories: incident reports and feature articles. A total of 79 articles met the criteria for incident reports, and 279 articles met the criteria for feature articles. I collected data from the two sample groups, and the data was entered into a spreadsheet using a text categorization of 26 variables for incident reports and 2 variables for feature articles. Once the information was charted, a content analysis was conducted to determine the media's influence on cultural norms that perpetuate sexual violence and silence victims.

#### Incident Reports Overview

Incident reports are newspaper articles journalists wrote about specific instances of sexual violence. In most of the articles a victim was easily identified as well as a perpetrator. The incident reports data or findings were entered into a spreadsheet using a text categorization of 26 variables that were organized by creating four main categories



with additional subcategories. The four main categories include (1) victim demographics, (2) media framing, (3) victim characteristics, and (4) perpetrator characteristics. An assessment of the reports in each of the four categories was conducted using four foci of the study: the cross-cultural assessment, the temporal assessment, the episodic content analysis, and the thematic content analysis. For this thesis only the most significant findings are discussed from each category.

### Demographic Findings

In the demographic category there were four subcategories: country, decade, victim's age, and victim's gender. However, only the findings for the victim's age and victim's gender are included here (see Figure 1 and Figure 2).

Each figure below shows the geographic and temporal distribution for each subcategory. A total of 79 incident report articles—49 from the U.S. and 30 from India—are presented across the four decades.

## Victim's Age

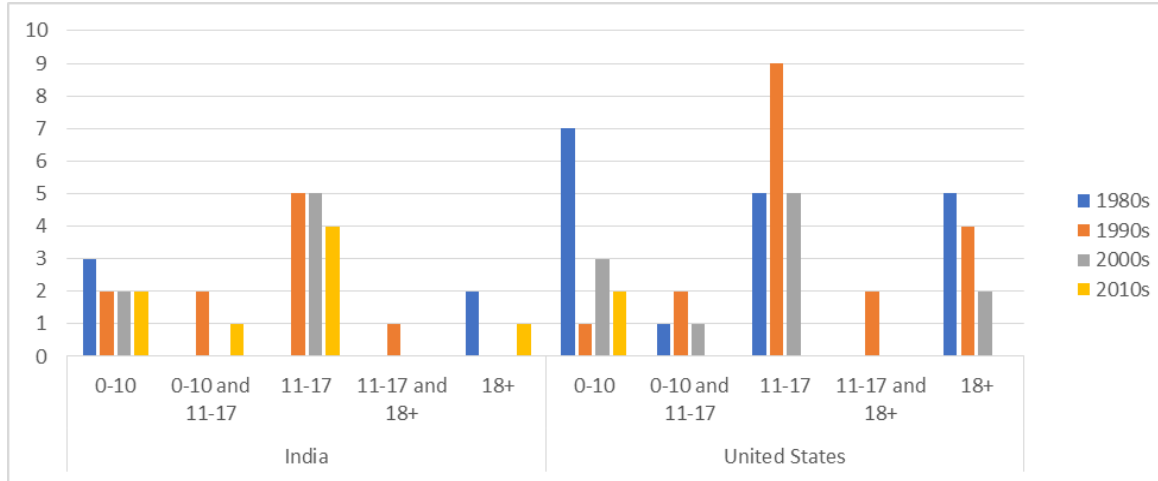


Figure 1. Reported Victim's Age by Country and Decade

Source: thesis author

In the U.S., temporal changes were evident from the 1980s to the 2010s. The U.S. originally reported on three age groups in the 1980s (0-10, 11-17, and 18+); by the 2010 dataset, articles were focused on younger victims in the age group of 0-10. Temporal changes also occurred in India, originally reporting on the age group 0-10 and 18+ in the 1980s, and by the 2010 dataset reported more on the younger age groups of 0-10 and 11-17.

A cross cultural analysis revealed that 0-10 was the average victim age group represented in the incident report articles for both countries. A media framing analysis on the topic of the victim's age group found that most ages reported in the incident report articles were the actual age of the victim, such as five or eight years old instead of using broad terms such as youth or teenager. The most vulnerable sexual abuse age group in the U.S. is 7-13 years old (NCVC, 2022) whereas the most vulnerable sexual abuse age group in India is 16-18 years old (Tyasi & Karande, 2021). The U.S. media consistently

published articles on the most vulnerable age group. Although India focused all four decades on the age group 0-10, by 2010 it did begin to cover the country's most vulnerable age group.

### Victim's Gender

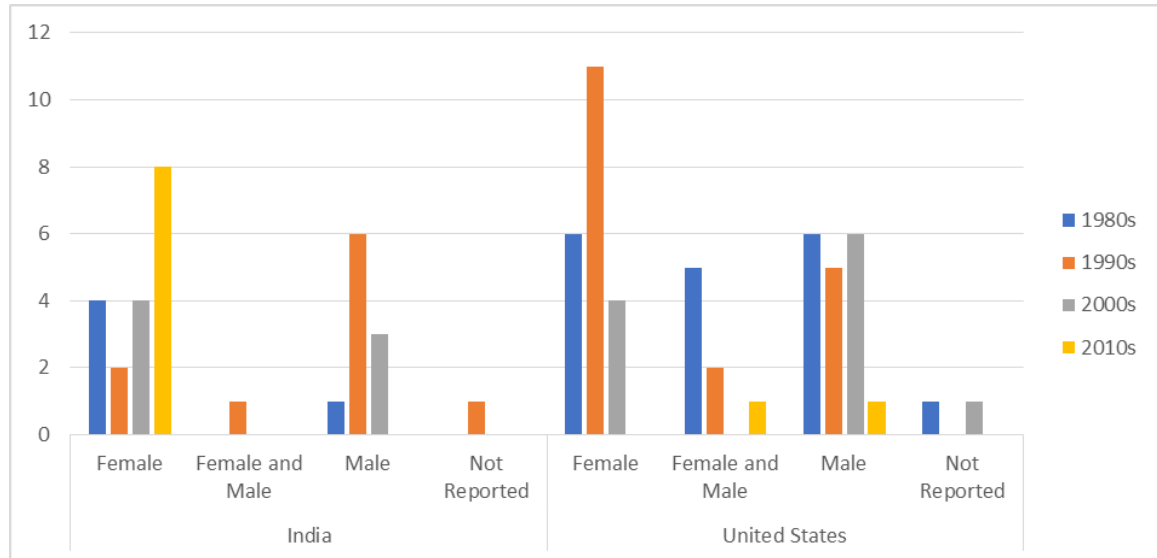


Figure 2. Reported Victim's Gender by Country and Decade

Source: thesis author

In the U.S., temporal changes occurred in the 1990s as the U.S. reported higher numbers of female victims at 61% and 27% males. A shift occurred in the third dataset of the 2000s with a decrease in female victim articles at 36% and an increase in male victims at 55%.

In India temporal changes occurred in the 1980s, which reported higher numbers of female victims at 80% , and 20% males. A shift occurred in the second dataset of the 1990s, with a decrease in female victims at 25% and an increase in male victims to 75%.

Another shift occurred in the 2010s data set where 100% of the articles written were about female victims.

A cross-cultural analysis revealed that female victims were reported as experiencing more sexual abuse in both countries, although the U.S. data show the gap was close between girl and boy coverage of sexual abuse. In India the media reported on female victims in all four decades, whereas in the U.S. male victims were reported in all four decades.

A media framing analysis on the topic of victim gender was clearly reported as female or male victims. In the later part of 2010-2019, in the U.S., no female victims were reported in this decade in this sample despite news outlets reporting on sexual abuse scandals throughout the country. Eighty-two percent of all victims under 18 are female (Snyder, 2000). One in five women and 1 in 13 men report being sexually abused as a child aged 0-17 years (WHO, 2020). The findings in this study are consistent with previous research that females are reported to experience sexual violence more than boys.

### Media Framing Findings

For the media framing category, there were nine subcategories: episodic articles, article topic, type of abuse, appropriate terminology, characteristics of abuse, consensual language, share resources, disclose victims name or location, and pornography victim.

Data for each subcategory are presented in the following figures.

## Reported Episodic Articles

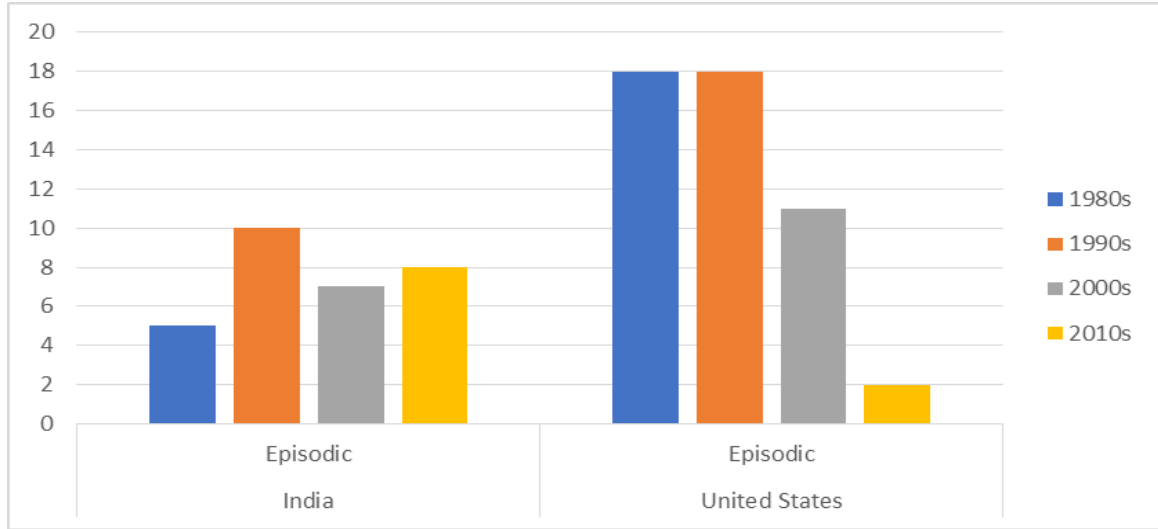


Figure 3. Reported Episodic Articles of Sexual Abuse by Country and Decade.

Source: thesis author

The geographic and temporal distributions for episodic articles are presented in Figure 3. In the U.S. temporal changes occurred when there was an 89% drop from episodic framing in the 1980s and 1990s to thematic framing in 2010s. Temporal changes were minimal in India as episodic framing remained fairly consistent throughout all four decades.

A cross-cultural analysis revealed that during the first two datasets of the 1980s–1990s, the U.S. media framed their articles as episodic 64% more than India. India’s articles were more thematic during the first two datasets.

All 79 incident report articles were written in an episodic format. The U.S. had 49 articles and India had 30. A media framing analysis found that these episodic framed articles were mostly written about in some form of criminal justice reports. Research by Dorfman, et al. (2018) found that most sexual abuse coverage is framed as episodic,

focusing on an isolated incident of sexual abuse. The findings in my research are consistent with Dorfman’s research, in that most sexual abuse articles are written in an episodic format.

### Type of Abuse

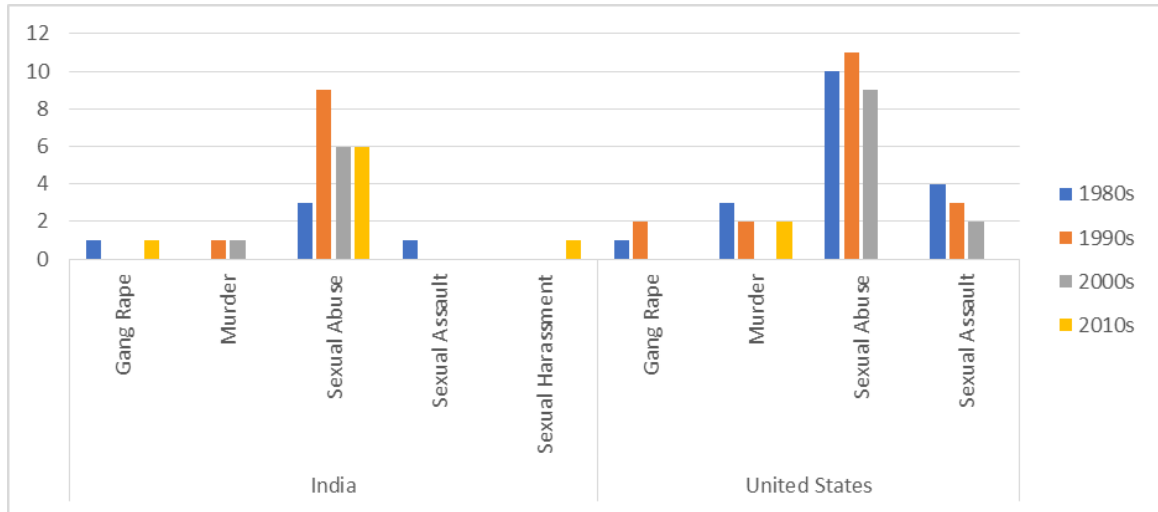


Figure 4. Reported Type of Abuse by Country and Decade.

Source: thesis author

The temporal analysis shown in Figure 4 reveals that although there are various types of sexual violence categorized in this dataset, India reported on sexual abuse in all four decades whereas the U.S. reported sexual abuse in three decades but excluded 2010. Although sexual abuse was not found in the 2010 dataset for the U.S., it was the most prevalent type of sexual violence reported on in both countries throughout all four datasets.

The findings in this study are consistent with previous research for the most prevalent type of abuse. Sexual harassment was only mentioned in India in the 2010s

dataset and did not show up in the U.S. in any decade. The 1990 dataset was the only year both countries reported on sexual assault/murder of an adult.

A cross-cultural analysis revealed that victims of the sexual abuse/murder type in all four decades in both countries were found to be all males who were 17 and under. The exception was a 1980 article about a female in the 11-17 age group.

A media framing analysis revealed that when murder was involved with sexual abuse, males were found to be the victims most reported on in all but one article. Male victims are underreported compared to females, which may be interpreted as the media being willing to report on the most extreme type of sexual violence ending in murder to include males. When sexual violence of any kind is reported without murder, females are reported on most. Sex trafficking was also an abuse type in this study but was only found mentioned in articles that were written in a thematic format found in the feature articles.

### Appropriate Terminology

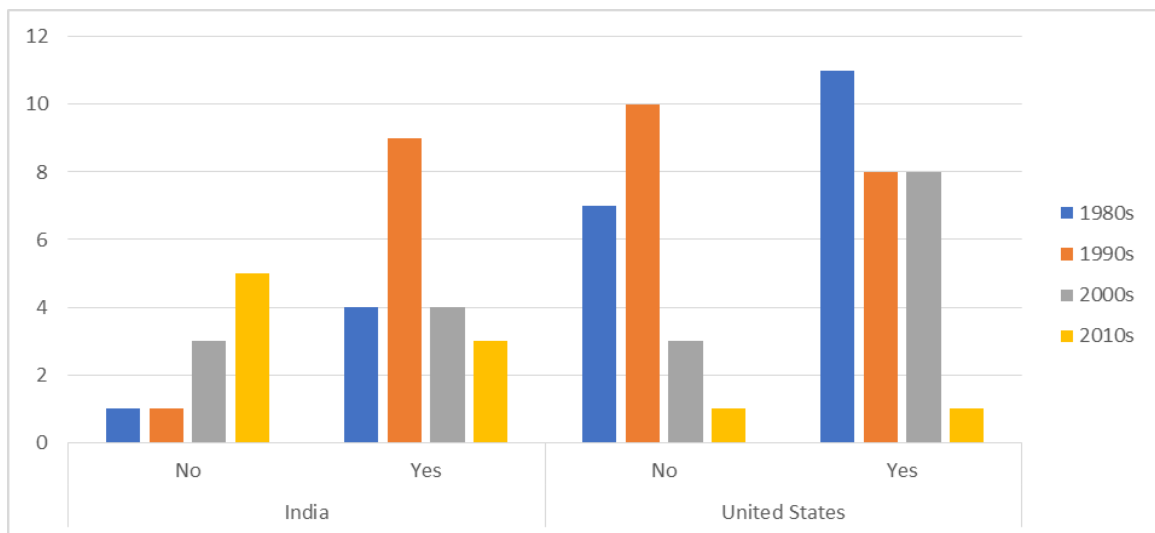


Figure 5. Reported Appropriate Terminology by Country and Decade.

Note: Appropriate terminology was assessed against the category of abuse type.

Source: thesis author

Figure 5 presents the extent to which the reported terminology was appropriate. A temporal analysis showed a decrease occurred in the U.S. within the 1990s dataset: a reduction from 56% of articles written with terminology discrepancies, to 27% in the 2000s dataset. In contrast, an increase in terminology discrepancies occurred in India from the 1980s at 20%, to the 2019 dataset at 63%.

A cross cultural analysis found that in the U.S. 42% of the episodic articles written had terminology discrepancies whereas India had 33%.

A media framing analysis of appropriate terminology was assessed for both countries by comparing it to the abuse-type category. The purpose was to see if the journalist was consistent in labeling the abuse type and how he/she described it throughout the article. For example, if a child was sexually abused and the word *molested* was used interchangeably to describe the abuse, it would be considered appropriate. If a child was sexually abused and the journalist used the words *raped* or *sexually assaulted* to describe the abuse, it would be considered not appropriate as those terms are used when describing abuse of adults.



## Characteristics of Abuse

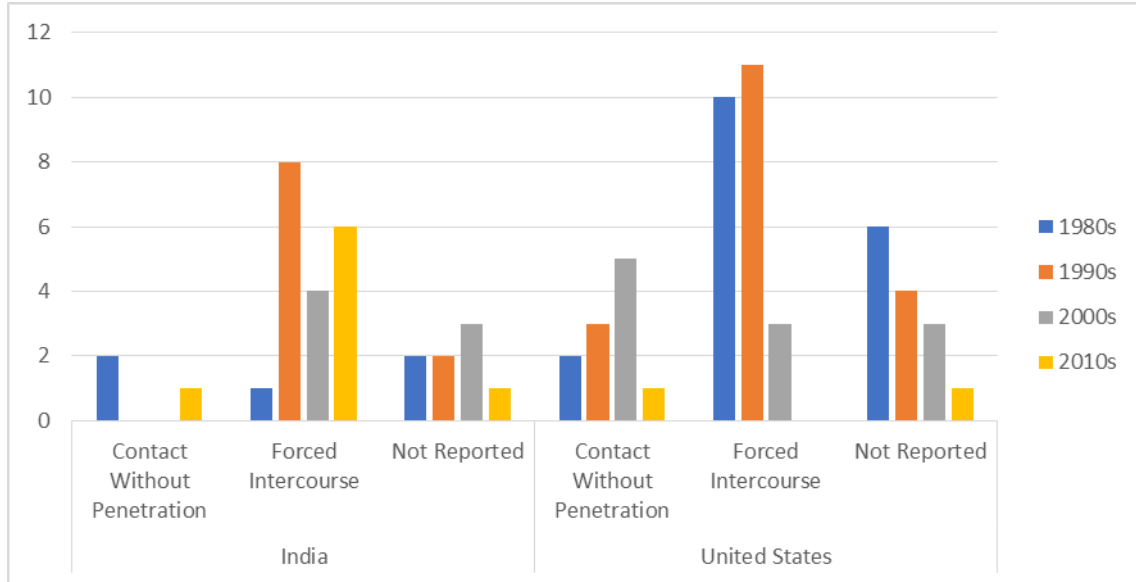


Figure 6. Reported Characteristics of Abuse by Country and Decade.

Source: thesis author

Characteristics of Abuse had three categories: 1) non-contact, i.e., exhibitionism, indecent exposure; 2) contact without penetration, i.e., forced non-genital touching, forced kissing, forced genital touching; and 3) forced intercourse, i.e., anal, oral, vaginal.

A temporal analysis across all four decades in the U.S. found 17% of all 79 articles considered in this analysis did not include characteristics of the reported abuse; in India, 10% did not report the characteristics in their articles. This means that in almost 30% of all the articles included in this study, the reader would not understand exactly what happened to the victim.

A cross-cultural analysis revealed that both countries did not write about non-contact sexual abuse such as exhibitionism and indecent exposure. Although these forms of sexual abuse do exist, they are under-reported. Many people in society define sexual

abuse only as sexual intercourse, and minimize other forms of sexual abuse. Fifty-four percent of the articles included in this study were stories of forced intercourse among children under age 17. Contact without penetration was written about in all four decades in the U.S., but was only mentioned in the 1980s and 2010s datasets in India.

A media framing analysis on the characteristics of abuse found that the language used to describe the abuse was often broad or inconsistent. For example, in one of the articles in this study, a young girl was kidnapped and sexually abused, but it was described as “alleged sexual abuse or alleged molestation.” The girl was sexually abused but the word “alleged” made it sound as if it may not have happened, possibly pitting her word against those of her perpetrator. The word “alleged” is more appropriately used to describe an “alleged perpetrator.”

### Consensual Language

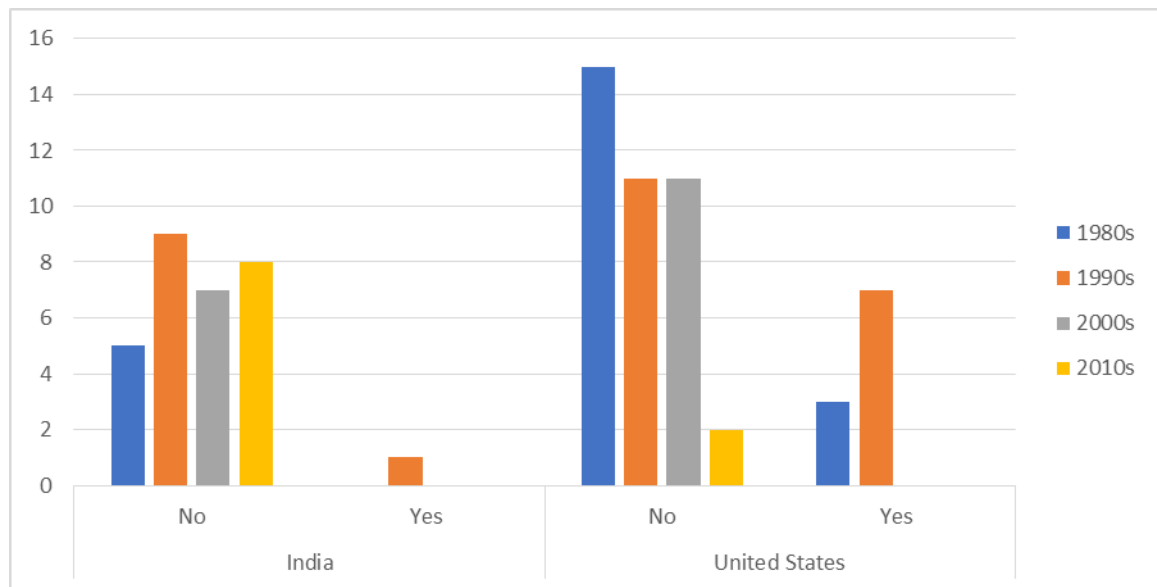


Figure 7. Reported Use of Consensual Language.

Source: thesis author

In a temporal analysis of children in India, reporters did not use consensual language in all four decades of their articles for sexual abuse except once in the 1990s. For children in the U.S. consensual language was found in the 1980s at 17% with an increase in 1990s to 39%. It was not reported in the 2000s-2010s datasets for both countries.

A cross-cultural analysis showed 86% of articles in this study did not use consensual language whereas 14% did. In the 10 articles from the U.S. and one article from India, when consensual language was used, it was sexual abuse of a children. The study revealed only 12 adult women were reported in articles in the U.S., and 3 adult women from India. With 15 adult women combined from both countries, consensual language was not found in those articles.

A media framing analysis showed that although most consensual language is found within adult sexual assault or rape, in my study no articles written about adult victims used consensual language. Alarming, the 14% of articles in the study that did use consensual language were about children.

### Victim Characteristics

Victim characteristics categories for this study include six categories: number of victims, victim blaming, people who knew, victim believed, victim not believed, victim negative consequences/repercussions. Here I show data for three categories: number of victims, victim blaming, and people who knew in this section.

## Number of Victims

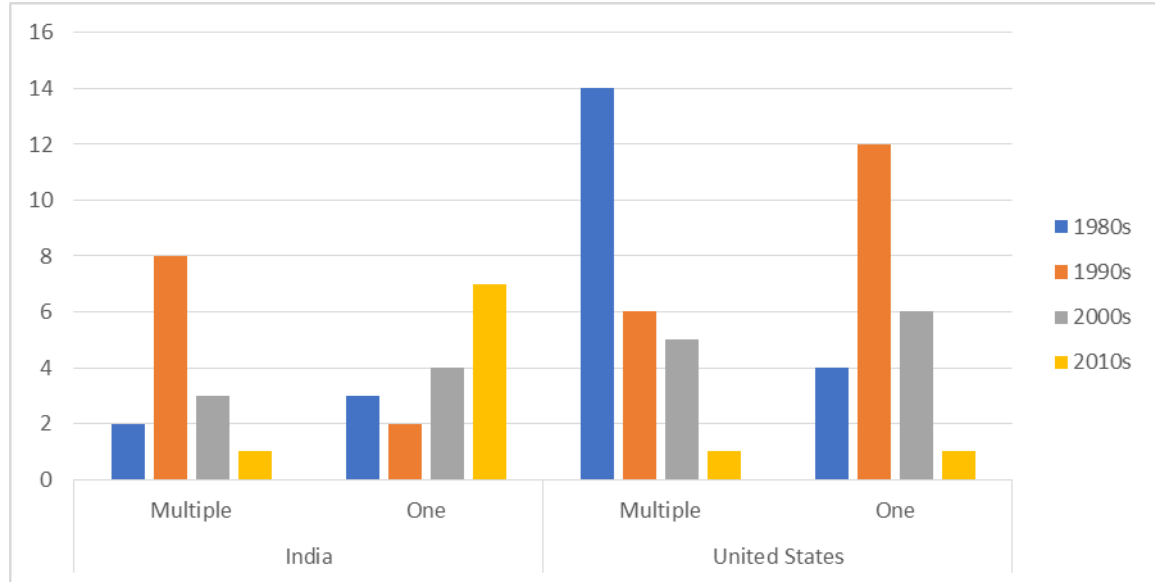


Figure 8. Reported Number of Victims.

Source: thesis author

A temporal analysis of the number of victims found that 51% of the articles in this study had multiple victims. In the U.S. 53% of the articles written over four decades had multiple victims, whereas India had 47%. In the U.S., 47% of articles had one victim; in India 53% of articles had one victim. The trend of reporting multiple victims increased in the 1980s at 53%, and decreased significantly in the 2010s dataset to 4%. In India, the trend increased in the 1990s to 57% and decreased to 7% in the 2010s dataset.

A cross-cultural analysis found that in the U.S. 31% of articles that reported multiple victims also reported multiple perpetrators. In India, 50% of articles that reported multiple victims had multiple perpetrators.

In the U.S. 71% of multiple-victim sexual abuse was experienced by victims 17 years and younger. In India, 86% of multiple-victim sexual assault were 17 years and younger.

A media framing analysis revealed that multiple victims were written about in 51% of the articles included in this study. Multiple victims are currently still prevalent, and the trend of fewer articles about multiple victims could explain why society generally believes that sexual abuse mostly affects one victim.

### Victim Blaming

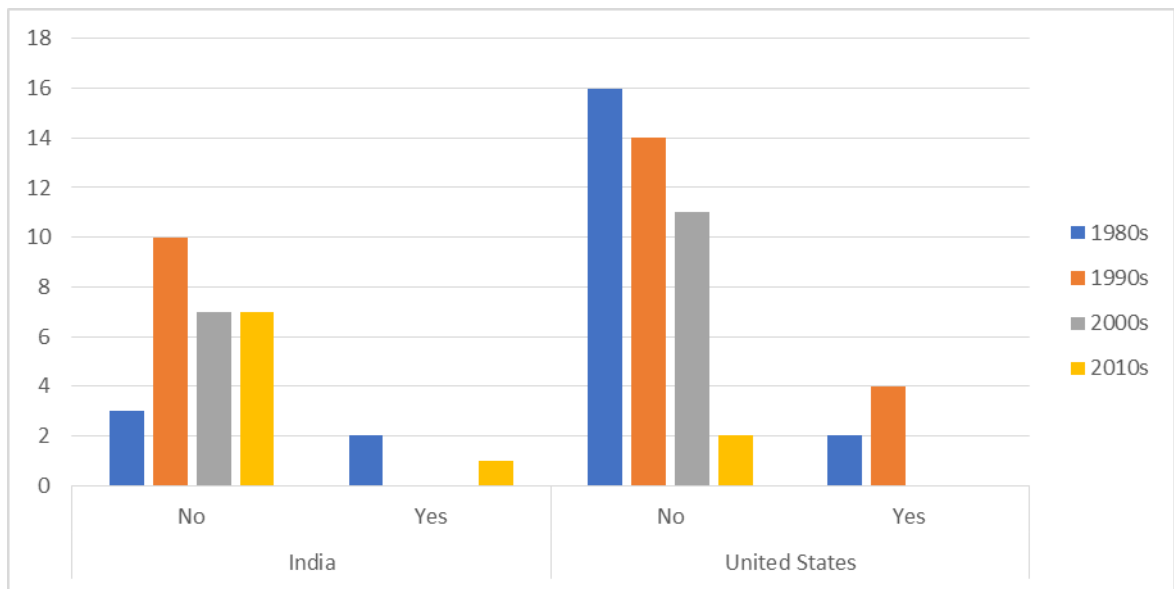


Figure 9. Reported Victim Blaming

Source: thesis author

Figure 9 presents incidents of victim blaming. A temporal analysis found that 9% of all incident report articles in this study used victim blaming terminology. In the U.S. 12% of articles used victim blaming terminology; India had 10%. In the U.S. 55% percent of articles that used victim blaming terminology were about victims 17 years and younger. In India, 11% of articles that used victim blaming terminology were also about victims 17 years and younger. In the U.S., victim blaming terminology was used in the

1980s and 1990s datasets but decreased to zero for the 2000 and 2010 datasets. India only used victim blaming terminology in the 1980s twice, and once in the 2010 dataset.

A cross-cultural analysis of victim blaming reported in articles in this study found that children were rarely blamed for their abuse in both countries. The findings in this study are not representative of findings in previous research. Disclosure of sexual abuse occurs by children, and a vast majority of them are not believed or are blamed for spreading untruths about the perpetrator.

A media framing analysis of this study might explain why children were not being blamed in the media due to the episodic framing of the articles with a criminal justice lens. These articles reported a victim or multiple victims and a perpetrator, and the victim(s) story told through the lens of the phase they were at in the court system. While the media may not publicly blame children for their own abuse, children often are not believed or they are blamed for coming forward outside the criminal court system, and their stories are not told.

## Awareness of Abuse

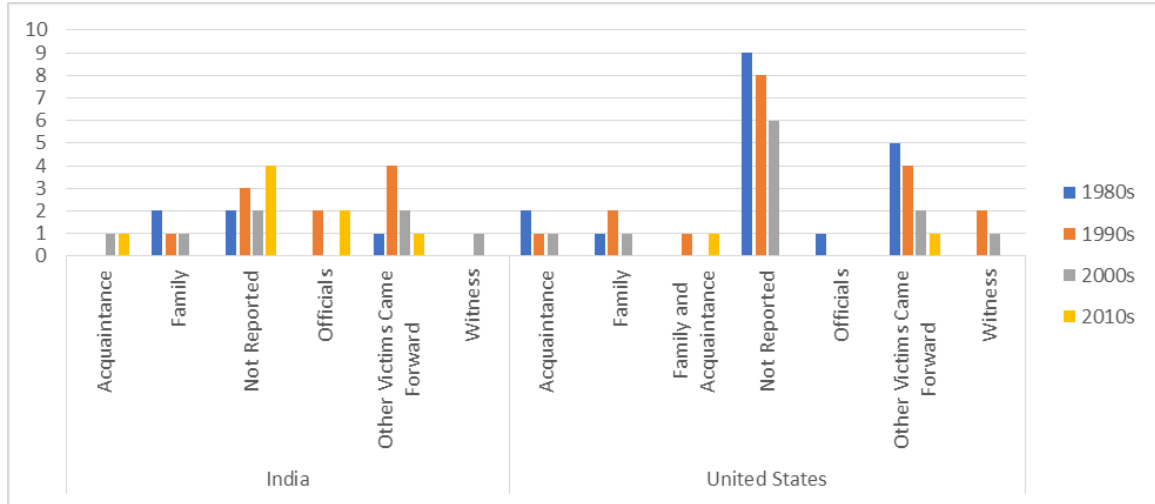


Figure 10. Reported Awareness of the Abuse.

\* The top four categories were input in findings.

Source: thesis author

A temporal analysis found in the U.S. the media did not report if anyone else knew about the abuse in 53% of articles in the 1980s data set and remained fairly consistent throughout the 1990s and 2000s dataset until the 2010s dataset where 0% was reported. India revealed 40% were not reported in the 1980s with an increase in reporting who knew about the abuse to 50% in the 2010s dataset.

A cross-cultural analysis found that both the U.S. and India reported people who were aware of the abuse included categories in which other victims came forward and family within all four decades. The U.S. reported about acquaintances who were aware of the abuse, but India did not. India reported that officials knew, but the U.S. did not. In the U.S. other victims, family, and acquaintance were categories of people who knew about

the abuse. In India other victims and family were the categories people who knew about the abuse.

A media framing analysis revealed that for both the U.S. and India, family was rarely reported as knowing about the abuse, yet they are one of the first people besides peers to whom a victim would disclose abuse.

### Perpetrator Characteristics

Perpetrator characteristics categories for this study include seven categories: Perpetrators category, number of perpetrators, perpetrator rationale/or motivations, reported support for perpetrator, reported perpetrator background, perpetrator legal consequences, perpetrator other consequences. Three are included in this section: perpetrator category, number of perpetrators, and perpetrator legal consequences.

### Perpetrator Category

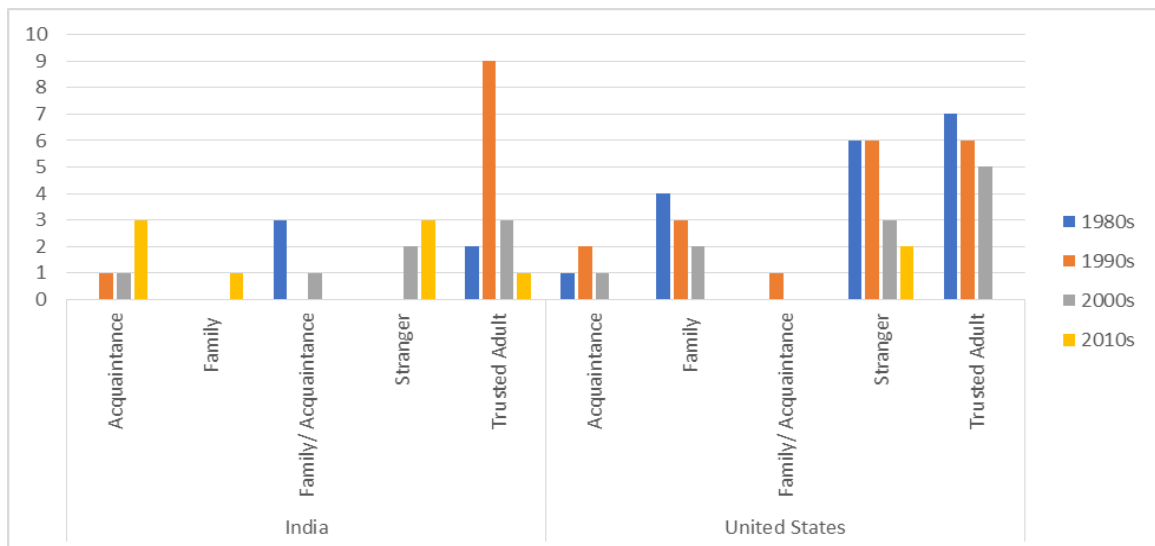


Figure 11. Reported Perpetrator Category.

Source: thesis author



A temporal analysis found that in the U.S., the category of Stranger appeared in all four decades; in India the category of Trusted Adult was found in all four decades. In the U.S., the Stranger category was written about in 35% of articles and in India stranger was written about in 17% of articles. In the U.S., the Trusted Adult category was the most used category for articles during the first three datasets (1980, 1990, 2000) but declined to zero in the 2010s dataset. In India, the Trusted Adult category peaked in the 1990s datasets and declined to 3% by the 2010s.

A cross-cultural analysis of the U.S. and India found that the Trusted Adult category was the largest group of perpetrators in incident report articles. The Stranger category was second for both countries. In the U.S., the Family category came in third whereas in India, the Acquaintance category came in third.

A media framing analysis finding that Trusted Adults were the largest group of perpetrators is consistent with previous research. Ninety-three percent of victims know their perpetrators, according to RAINN (2022). However, my findings regarding the U.S. and India— that Strangers were reported at a much high percentage—is not consistent with previous research. This is important, as the Stranger category is the smallest type of perpetrator, with only 7% being strangers to their victims (RAINN, 2022). Furthermore, coverage of child abuse is often linked to a prominent case, and then intermingled with media that sensationalizes stories focused on the “stranger danger” misconception.

## Number of Perpetrators

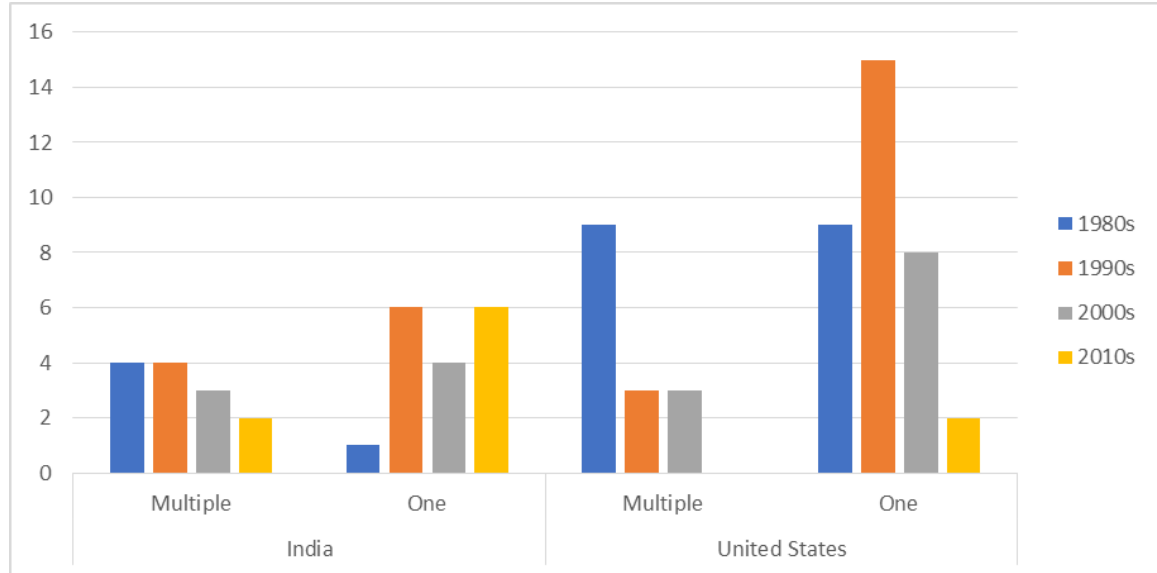


Figure 12. Reported Number of Perpetrators.

Source: thesis author

Figure 12 presents the number of perpetrators reported in the incident articles. A cross-cultural analysis showed more articles on sexual abuse by multiple perpetrators were written in the U.S. compared to India. However, India reported articles on multiple perpetrators throughout all four decades whereas the U.S. did not report any articles in the 2010s dataset. A single perpetrator was reported most of the time in both countries.

In India multiple perpetrators can mean gang rape, ritualistic abuse, a parent selling a victim for drugs or cash, a boyfriend who wanted to do the same, orphanages, sex trafficked, and robbery. In the U.S. multiple perpetrators can mean daycare abuse, gang rape, mental health facilities, and church leaders.

A media framing analysis showed that the single-perpetrator category was written about almost twice as much as the multiple perpetrator category. This is consistent with

previous research. But journalists writing about multiple perpetrators are crucial to exposing the fact that it happens more than the public may know.

A temporal analysis found that 35% of all incident report articles reported multiple perpetrators across all four decades for the U.S. and India. Sixty-five percent reported one perpetrator. Multiple perpetrators were reported as 13% in the 1980s dataset for India, then declined to 7% in the 2010s dataset. The U.S. reported 9% in the 1980s dataset, and it declined to 0% in the 2010s dataset.

A cross-cultural analysis showed more multiple perpetrator articles were written in the U.S. compared to India. However, India reported on multiple perpetrators throughout all four decades whereas the U.S. did not report any articles in the 2010s dataset. One perpetrator was reported the most in both countries. In India multiple perpetrators could mean gang rape, ritualistic abuse, parent selling for drugs or cash, boyfriend wanted to do the same, orphanage, sex trafficked, and robbery. In the U.S. multiple perpetrators could mean daycare abuse, gang rape, mental health facilities, church leaders.

A media framing analysis showed that the one-perpetrator category was written about almost twice as much as the multiple-perpetrator category. This is consistent with previous research. But journalists writing about multiple perpetrators are crucial to exposing the fact that it happens more than the public may know.

## Perpetrator Legal Consequences

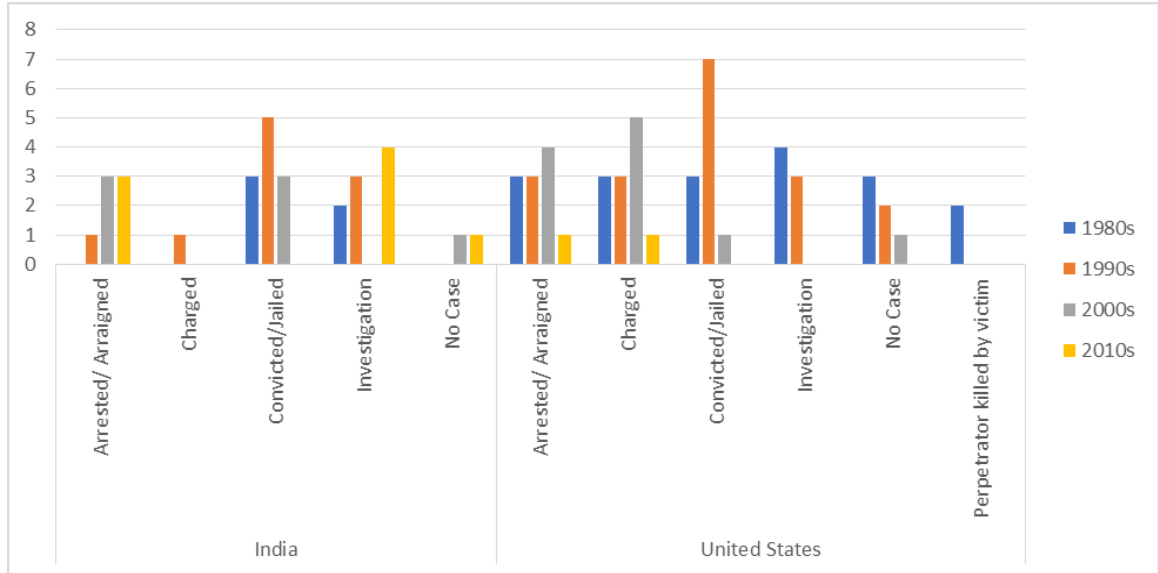


Figure 13. Reported Perpetrator Legal Consequences.

Source: thesis author

The U.S. media reported articles on the perpetrator being arrested/arraigned 66% more than India, which reported 39%. The U.S. reported perpetrators being charged at 92% compared to India at 8%. Both the U.S. and India reported the same amounts in the convicted/jailed category, and both countries did not report on that category in the 2010s dataset.

The U.S. reported on victims killing their perpetrators whereas India did not report in that category. Both countries reported on the perpetrators being arrested/arraigned, charged/jailed, and investigated.

A media framing analysis revealed the incident reports were episodic and had a criminal justice lens regarding articles in this study.

## Feature Articles Overview

Framing news stories in contrasting ways has different effects on how readers understand the cause and solution to a social problem (Benjamin, 2007). Episodic framing of a news story is about a specific person or incident, with no attachment to a larger social connection. Thematic framing is more focused on a broader social context of the issue being written about (Dorfman, 2018). Iyengar examined the distinction between episodic and thematic framing and determined that thematic framing can communicate effectively about social issues, how people view a problem, and what solutions are involved (Benjamin, 2007).

### Thematic Articles

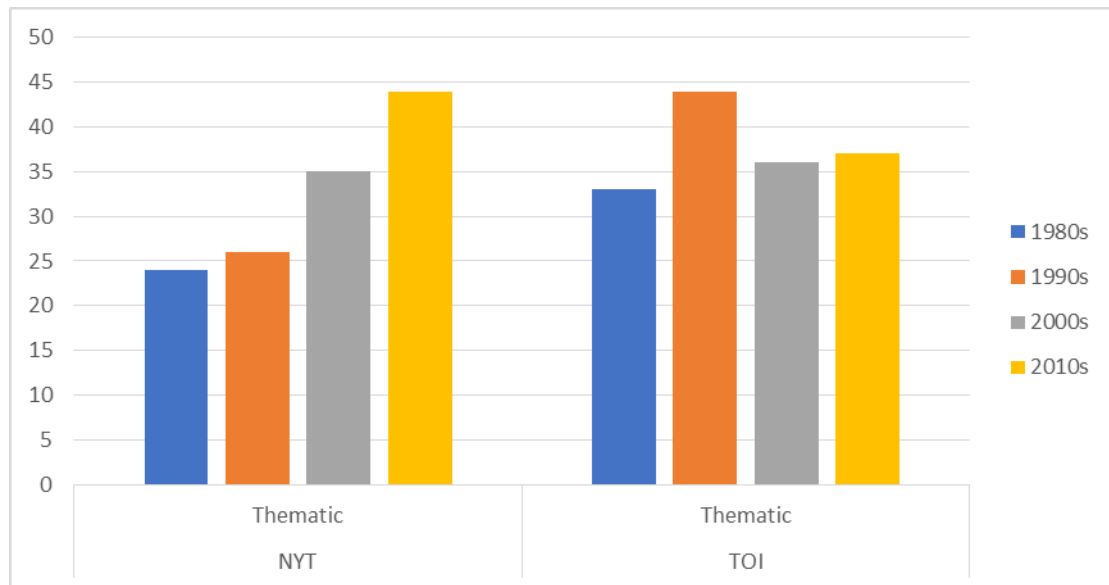


Figure 14. Reported Thematic Articles.

Source: thesis author

A temporal analysis found that India was more consistent than the U.S. throughout the four decades about writing thematic articles. It was not until the 1990s and the 2010s that the U.S. began shifting to more thematic articles.

A cross-cultural analysis of thematic articles in both India and the U.S. found that India had written more thematic framed articles in three datasets from the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s. In the 2010s, the U.S. wrote 3% more.

A media framed analysis found that although the argument that thematic framing is more effective at reporting on sexual abuse since it covers the topics in a broader context and can help shift a culture's perspective, my findings in this study do not support that claim. Despite India's articles being written in a more thematic format compared to the U.S. in this study, India's culture of sexual violence has barely shifted.

In this study, considerations of thematic framing versus episodic framing could have more to do with culture. In a study on CSA and the media in India, Mishra (2021) explained that being specific about sexual violence in articles violated Indian social norms and was not appropriate in India. That would explain why in this study most articles on sexual violence in India were thematic. If the majority of reporters understand that their articles must be thematic due to their society finding details to be shocking and insensitive, then thematic framed articles in India do not challenge cultural norms, as they are claimed to do, but rather reinforce those norms. In comparison, the U.S. has for decades told details and specifics of sexual violence occurrences in episodic framed articles and while they are not the most effective reporting about sexual violence, it illustrates the point that U.S. culture may be more accustomed to articles that are more specific.

## Feature Article Topics

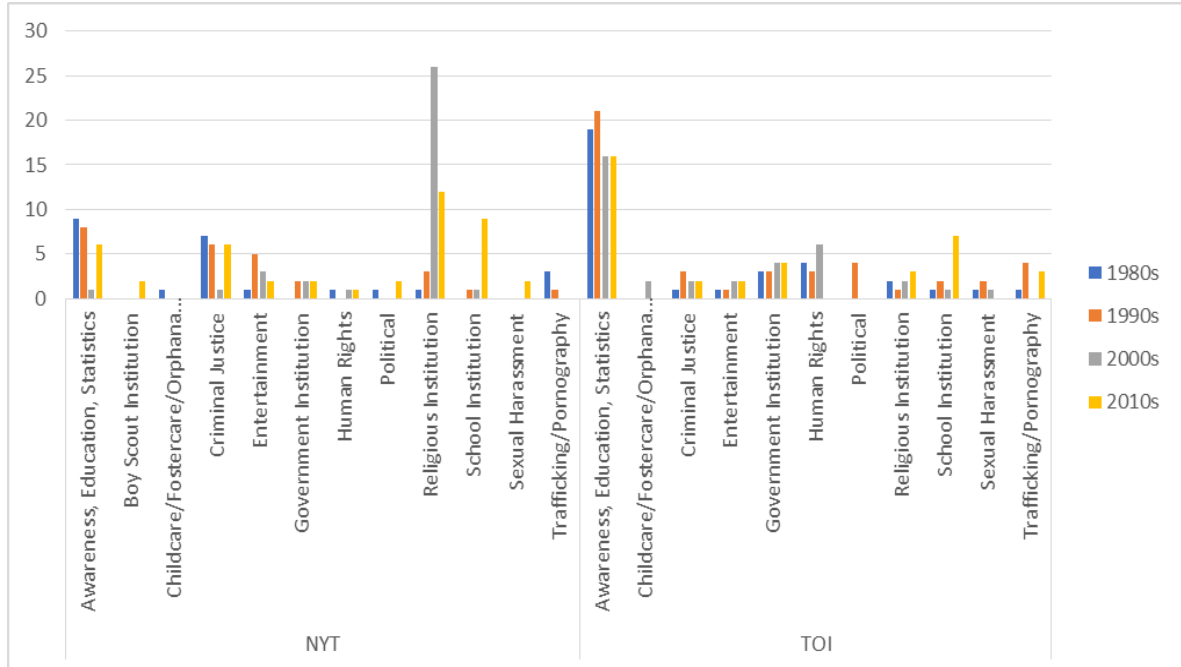


Figure 15. Reported Feature Article Topics.

Source: thesis author

There were 12 article topic categories in the feature articles. The top four categories are discussed for each dataset that was found in all four decades among 279 feature articles.

A temporal analysis found that the U.S. focus of featured articles for the first two datasets (1980s and 1990s) were articles on awareness/education/statistics. Then the focus shifted to abuse in religious institution for the datasets of the 2000s and 2010s. The most types of articles written for India in all four decades were articles on awareness/education/statistics.

A cross-cultural analysis revealed abuse in religious institutions was the most written-about feature article topic in the U.S., while abuse in religious institutions did not make the top four categories in India. Awareness/education/statistics was the most

written-about feature article topic in India. Criminal justice was the third most written about article topic in both countries. Fourth highest for the U.S. was entertainment; for India it was abuse in school institutions.

Media framing for all 279 articles were categorized as thematic. They varied among 12 article topic categories. Media framing examples consisted of telling a story about a victim and how a law needed to be passed or a policy changed, or sharing institutional abuses of patients by employees who either got away with sexual abuse or brought awareness to abuses that were occurring.



## Chapter VI

### Discussion

In this chapter, an overview of incident report findings is presented followed by an overview of feature article findings. It ends with a comparative analysis of incident report articles and feature article findings. Not all findings are included in the results section, but all data used in this thesis are available from the author at [wendymjohnson7@gmail.com](mailto:wendymjohnson7@gmail.com).

A discussion of the demographic findings category for Victim's Age found that age is significant when reporting on sexual abuse. Children under 17 are the age group most vulnerable to sexual abuse when in fact they should be the most protected. Most children throughout the world have parents or caregivers whose job is to protect them. Yet the majority of perpetrators are known to the victims (RAINN, 2022).

The media have an opportunity to investigate why children are the most susceptible and expose the circumstances that make them vulnerable. If children under 17 are the most significant age group to be sexually abused, then the media has an opportunity to focus its articles on the cycle of abuse, how unhealed victims can perpetuate the cycle of abuse, and how adult victims can protect their children. Articles could also be written if a child is abused; what to do, where to go, and who to call.

Overall, a victim's age is associated with silencing victims and can be the biggest barrier to reporting sexual abuse. At a minor age, children are susceptible to exploitation, abuse, violence, and neglect. Children are powerless, defenseless, voiceless, and unable

to protect themselves against abuse, and it is just these vulnerabilities that make them the targets of sexual perpetrators.

In another demographic findings category, Gender Inequality was found to exist in both the U.S. and India. Females are more susceptible to gender-based sexual violence than males in both countries. In the U.S. “one women in five has experienced completed or attempted rape during their lifetime” (NSVRC, 2022). In India, societal and community factors include patriarchal societal norms that perpetuate sexual violence toward females (Choudhry, et al., 2018). Attitudes and practices that perpetuate gender inequality include childhood experiences, peer cultures pressuring violence, and social norms that legitimize sexual violence (Jewkes, et al., 2015). Overall, articles in both the U.S. and India covered more female sexual abuse, and both countries have had a slow evolution to confront gender inequality (Jewkes, et al., 2015).

A discussion on the media framing category found that all 79 incident report articles were framed as episodic and were mostly presented in a criminal justice lens. This is inconsistent with previous research findings where most victims never disclose their abuse, report to authorities, or pursue actions through the court. Episodic framing is considered the least-effective format for reporting on sexual abuse as the articles are framed around isolated incidents of sexual violence. Furthermore, if sexual violence is seen

only as a series of crimes for which criminal justice is the most appropriate response, prevention will not be visible. . . . The criminal justice lens limits the portrayal of sexual violence because it tells stories exclusively from the perspective of the police, courts, and jails, and unfortunately, these types of articles limit reporting a broader context of sexual abuse. (Dorfman, et al, 2018, p. 14)

An additional media framing category found that understanding the type of abuse is important when assessing what type of offences are occurring and matching the appropriate articles needed for the victim. Sexual abuse is not an isolated abuse. It can be connected to physical, emotional, and/or psychological abuse as well as other forms of abuse. A child who is abused is more likely to abuse others as an adult compared to children who were not abused, meaning violence can be passed down from one generation to the next. It is critical to break this cycle of violence, and in so doing “create positive multi-generational impacts” (WHO, 2022).

The media can play a critical role by being educated on the most prevalent types of sexual violence and other forms associated with it. Understanding abuse types can help focus media efforts on publishing articles that provide resources for help and prevention of the cycle of abuse.

The type of abuse reported was encoded with the appropriate sexual abuse terminology category to assess the extent to which the media described the abuse types congruently throughout the article. Wrongful terminology can mislead the public and is often used to sensationalize a story. For instance, in one of the incident reports articles it was written that a six-year-old was raped and sexually assaulted. Another example stated a four-year-old was raped. In both countries those terms would not ‘legally’ describe the abuse of a child. Appropriate terminology regarding sexual abuse gives validation and meaning to victims and goes beyond basic terms synonymous with each other. Journalists who write on such topics of sexual violence should be aware of what is considered appropriate terminology when reporting on a child victim versus an adult victim.

Another media framing category revealed that characteristics of abuse describes what happened to the victim and helps distinguish it from different types of sexual violence. It is important to note that when ambiguous language is used in the media to describe sexual abuse or sexual assault, it can lead people to believe that sexual violence only occurs when penetration happens. Many people do not know there are different forms of sexual violence.

As stated earlier in this study, all countries have different types of sexual violence and different ways in which their respective societies expect the topic to be discussed. But the media still has an opportunity to challenge social norms in the way they write about the subject. For instance, in the U.S., a study by Mejia, et al., (2012) stated that the news needs to be specific about the sexual abuse being reported, as the public needs to understand the depth and nature of the issues. “Precise descriptions of sexual abuse may have the benefit of humanizing victims” (Mejia & Dorfman., 2012, p. 475).

In contrast, in a study in India on child sexual abuse and the media, Mishra (2021) explained that reporters should not be specific. As an example, when a reporter wrote that a perpetrator “pulled her in the bedroom and removed her underwear,” it was shocking and violated social norms and the ethics of reporting as well as the insensitivity of the journalist. Mishra (2021) explained that sharing the details of the sexual abuse are not appropriate in India.

Finding the right language to describe incidents of child sexual abuse or sexual assault may be challenging, but reporters should consider other ways to bring a human face to victims, including precise descriptions of the abuse, while maintaining the privacy of the victim and their dignity. Journalists have a unique voice and can gauge social

norms in the society they work in and in the process become advocate journalists against sexual violence.

A final media framing category covered in this section found that 14% of the articles in this study that used consensual language were about children. Put into context, child victim blaming and giving the impression that the child consented to being sexually abused, is another example of how media framing can perpetuate the cycle of sexual violence. Writing an article about sexual violence—whether the victim is a child or adult—it is critical that the journalist not use consensual language.

Using consensual language tells the reader there may have been some accountability within the victim of the sexual abuse. Examples of consensual language in articles that were part of this study included terminology such as an adult having “sexual relations” with a child, or a father “had sex” with his daughter, or a daughter (victim) “sired” a son for her father (perpetrator). One article described sexual abuse as a “consensual activity” between staff members and child patients. Another article stated that a Catholic priest was “sexually involved” with young male victims under 17. Consensual language is inappropriate to the victim and the abuse by their perpetrator. The examples above demonstrate carelessness relative to a topic that affects millions of victims worldwide. Consensual language is inexcusable in any article written about victims of sexual violence.

A victim’s characteristics category on the number of victims found that multiple number of victims is prevalent in sexual abuse cases. Approximately 70% of child sex abusers have victimized between 1 and 9 victims, whereas 20% of child sex abusers have victimized 10 to 40 victims (Darkness to Light, 2015). The number of victims is

important, as it shows society that a single perpetrator can sexually abuse more than one child. If a journalist reports on a story covering a form of sexual violence, they can investigate further to see if the perpetrator had any other victims who came forward or wanted to come forward. Where a perpetrator is found, there will usually be more than one victim.

Another victim's characteristics category in this study found that in both the U.S. and India, children were rarely blamed for their abuse both in countries as well as adults. The findings in this study are not representative of previous research as children and adults are silenced for coming forward and blamed for untruths against the perpetrator. In a study examining the perceptions of blame and credibility toward CSA victims, Davies and Rogers (2009) found that a six-year-old child was more credible than a 14-year-old teenager or a 22-year-old adult. Davies and Rogers also identified that adult rape victims who do not fight back or who are viewed as acting carelessly prior to being assaulted are often blamed. In their study Davies and Rogers suggest that as a child approaches adulthood, people attribute some responsibility for the sexual assault such a child may suffer (p. 80).

Furthermore, Davies and Rogers (2009) also found that blame can be attributed to the victim-perpetrator relationship:

If a woman is raped by a stranger, she becomes more credible. In their finding they suggest that CSA perpetrated by a father was seen as a more severe crime than CSA perpetrated by a family friend. Yet despite this, a father who sexually abuses his own child was seen as less culpable than a stranger who sexually abuses someone else's child. . . . Furthermore, a victim sexually abused by her own father was deemed less honest than one sexually abused by a stranger. (p. 80)

Another victim characteristic category is those who were aware of the abuse. It was assessed if journalists were investigating whether other people besides the victim and perpetrator knew about the abuse. Often the victim of sexual violence was abused more than once if the abuse was done by a family member or trusted adult, and others may know about the abuse but did not stop it. Journalists have an opportunity to write articles about these topics when others are aware of the abuse.

A perpetrator characteristics category was to analyze the most reported type of perpetrator and if the articles written were representative of the most prevalent type of perpetrator. In the U.S. and India, trusted adults were found to be the largest group of perpetrator written about in articles, which was consistent with previous studies that show victims knew their perpetrators. But strangers came in a close second as the most reported type of perpetrator, which is not consistent with previous research. The media needs to be educated on the statistics of perpetrator type. Articles that show a framework that is not the norm, such as perpetration by strangers, leads the public to think that abuse by strangers is normal.

Writing on the topic of a perpetrator can open many conversations as to what creates a perpetrator. A study on perpetrators by Glasser, et al. (2001) concluded:

59 percent of victims in their study were also perpetrators. 51 percent of reported incest victims became perpetrators and 61 percent of reported pedophile victims became perpetrators as well as 75 percent of those who reported that they were victims of both incest and pedophilia had become perpetrators. (p. 488). . . .

A history of sexual abuse was associated with higher levels of overall sexual deviancy, increased psychological disturbance, and increased likelihood of coming from more dysfunctional families. (p. 489)

The media can investigate the most prevalent types of perpetrators and publish articles that inform the public that most perpetrators are known to the victim, that over 50% of victims can become perpetrators themselves, and if there are multiple types of sexual violence experienced by a victim, up to 75% could become perpetrators.

Another perpetrator characteristic category found that the number of perpetrators is an important category in that it can open a dialogue in which perpetrators communicate with each other. Perpetrators find someone else who shares their deviant ideals, showing how this type of “buddying up” affects the culture of sexual violence. It opens a dialogue in which online chats and communities of perpetrators can bolster each other’s deviant behaviors. Martin and Hummer (1989) wrote:

Keeping in mind that most multiple-perpetrator sexual assaults involve male offenders and female victims, multiple-perpetrator sexual assault may be more likely to occur in environments that encourage male bonding and group initiation through anti-female rituals, objectification of women, sexual violence, and norms of secrecy and cohesion (Harkins and Dixon, 2010). A culture or subculture that encourages sexual inequalities and violence may influence sexual perceptions and behaviors. Fraternities, gangs, and military groups have been analyzed in the context of promoting a culture of hypermasculinity, male dominance, and male bonding (Bourgois, 1996; Franklin, 2013; Harkins and Dixon, 2010; Lilly, 2007). This culture, coupled with other group components, including group loyalty and protection, may contribute to a greater likelihood of multiple-perpetrator sexual assault. (p. 49).

Journalists can write about multiple-perpetrator sexual violence. The topic is critical to breaking the cycle that normalizes violence against women. Men who abuse have a culture of their own that encourages sexual violence, and they protect each other. Journalists have an opportunity to expose this side of sexual violence. Both India and the U.S. have different types of perpetrators, and if the media understands who they are, they



can expose those types of perpetrators and where multiple types of perpetrators are in order to help the public protect their children.

The perpetrator characteristic category of perpetrator legal consequences showed that during that last four decades the media wrote stories about victims and the legal system in both the U.S. and India. Since the majority of articles in this study are told through a criminal justice lens, most child or adult survivors do not report the sexual violence they experienced, and the findings in this study do not depict the reality of those abused and their responses. Factoring in unreported rapes, only about 6% of rapists ever serve a day in jail (CMSAC, 2022).

Assessing the feature articles category of reported thematic framed articles, I found that India had written more thematic framed articles than the U.S.—yet their reporting of sexual violence had not declined. Thematic framed articles have been reported as the most effective way to address sexual violence in media articles. However, the issue with thematic framing in this study regarding India could have more to do with culture. In previous studies on India and how the media should address sexual violence in articles, found that being specific (as in episodic articles) violated social norms. Although the U.S. did begin to write more articles in a thematic format by the 2010s dataset, the culture of sexual violence in both countries has barely shifted despite any form of framed article.

The feature articles category on article topics found that sexual violence is a multi-faceted issue, and there are so many topics a journalist can cover. For the U.S., awareness and religious institution abuse were the most prevalent in all four decades, whereas India focused on awareness and government institutional abuses. Awareness

articles are normally found in thematic framed articles and are important for addressing broader topics of sexual violence. But if the topic is too broad or replicates year after year without challenging social norms, then the articles only reinforce social norms or highlight the media's inability to move forward or investigate new topics on the issue of sexual violence.

Many suggest that journalists should talk more about prevention solutions in the home, at schools, and in institutions such as sports, schools, religious, foster care, and government. This could help uncover factors that contribute to system failures in which victims do not come forward and in fact remain silent. It could also help society begin to be more aware of institutional abuses and help change perceptions of how to better understand this issue. Journalists can focus on articles about not-for-profit work or businesses that help prevent abuse or provide resources to survivors. Journalists can interview survivors who share their stories or detail how they are giving back to help stop sexual abuse. Journalists can also write more on topics such as family violence and how a person who experiences violence in childhood is more prone to becoming a victim as an adult, or they have a higher risk factor of becoming future perpetrators themselves.

#### Comparison of Episodic and Thematic Framed Articles

Both the U.S. and India used episodic and thematic framed articles. Understanding the differences between episodic or thematic writing and how they frame stories and affect how people respond or view the problem. Dorfman, et al. (2018) believe it is important to analyze

whether people will see the need for individual-level and/or broader social or institutional solutions to that problem. Episodic articles focus on the individual, a single event, an individual's behavior, and how to fix the person experiencing the problem, how to get better information and thematic articles focus on the issue, trends over time, and include the surrounding environment, public institutions and how to fix the conditions that led to the problem and ask for better policies.

Looking at media framing on through the lens of episodic or thematic framing may be limited. Cultural norms and what is acceptable in how articles are framed within a culture should be included in the conversation. As stated earlier, research on India's media found that social norms prefer thematic framing and a broad view of the issue. This could explain why India had more thematic articles than episodic. Providing too many details as to what happened to an individual is considered disrespectful.

Thematic framing could also be limited if the policies being discussed in an article are not taken seriously, such as in marital rape. For decades women in India have sought to have laws passed that criminalize marital rape. But such laws have not yet been put in place, so marital rape is still not against the law in India. Thematic framed articles in India do not seem to have shifted their sexual violence culture to the level victims and supporters of victims would like. The argument that thematic framed articles are the best approach for sexual violence issues may be questionable when it combines with the culture where the articles are written. By comparison, in the U.S. sexual harassment is a growing epidemic, yet this study found that only four articles were covered in four decades of articles on sexual harassment.

Dorfman, et al. (2018) found that most sexual abuse coverage is framed as episodic, focusing on an isolated incident of sexual abuse. Episodic articles go into greater detail about the abuse, and can be quite explicit regarding how the abuse

occurred. In contrast, earlier research claimed that thematic framing is the most effective way to write about sexual violence as it identifies shortcomings at the community or systems level that have contributed to the problem (Dorfman, 2018).

Episodic and thematic framed articles can be intertwined. With episodic articles focused on one event and thematic articles focusing on a broader scope of the issue, writing articles that include both types of framing could be more effective at challenging social norms. Articles on sexual violence that include the story of the victim, add appropriate details about the sexual violence, and insert the story into a broader societal context while also covering where a victim can reach out for help or learn about prevention, could help challenge social norms and be a blueprint for how journalists frame their articles.

#### Limitations of the Research

To generate a sample of keywords that were used in both countries over the 40-year span of the study, the term “sexual abuse” did add limitations to the study and framed the analysis of this study differently. The majority age group of this study was children under 17 years old. It was difficult to get an even number of age-related articles, meaning half children and half adults. Assessing how the media reported on the topic of CSA and adults throughout 40 years was significant.

Once the keyword was established, finding 50 vetted articles per decade was a limitation as India barely had 50 articles for the decade of the 1980s. The process of gathering sufficient articles to then remove irrelevant articles and end with 50 articles per decade was abandoned. Not all decades had 50 articles that met the criteria because how I

gathered the articles in the dataset of the 1980s had to be carried out in the other decades. In the end, 50 articles were gathered per decade and then vetted to meet the criteria of the study.

Another limitation was categorizing articles into only episodic- or thematic-framed articles. A possible third category of articles framed as both episodic and thematic framed articles, was not used, but it did exist in the study. However, for purposes of this study, the articles were categorized into the two categories.

A final limitation was the categorization of incident report articles with 26 variables and the categorization for thematic framed articles with only 2 variables. Categorizing both types of articles in the same way was not possible.

## Chapter VII

### Conclusion

The findings in this study are congruent with the hypothesis in which a cross-cultural analysis between the U.S. and India revealed that media influences have not been effective at helping to change cultural norms that perpetuate sexual violence and silence victims. Further, this study found that media's influence on cultural norms that perpetuate sexual violence in the U.S. and India include gender inequality, an inability by the media to correctly label the type of sexual violence that matches legal terminology, or to use appropriate terminology throughout the article, and describe characteristics of the abuse.

Although the media rarely used consensual language in the articles that are part of this study—articles that included a victim and a perpetrator, even children under 17—the media still misleads the public in some instances; regardless of a victim's age, they can be blamed for the abuse. Although trusted adults were the most prevalent type of perpetrator, in both the U.S. and India a stranger was reported as the second most prevalent type of perpetrator. Focusing on one of the lesser types of perpetrators allows the most prevalent types to get away without exposure. Multiple number of perpetrators were also found to be in 35% of incident report articles. It is also a topic missed by many in the media—that there is a perpetrator culture with support networks that conspire to prey on potential victims.

The media's influences on cultural norms that silence victims in the U.S. and India include the victim's age. The media needs to address the issue of why children are

so vulnerable to sexual abuse when they should be the most protected age group. The majority of children have parents or caregivers. To sexually abuse a child takes strategic effort and time. What are the parents and caregiver's role in their abuse?

Another category that this study found silences victims is that they are blamed. My findings showed only 9% of the incident report articles used victim blaming terminology, which may have been due to the high number of children articles in this study. But the findings are not representative of the fact that most victims who come forward are shamed, blamed, and ostracized, as my literature review found. Those who are aware of the abuse are the most critical actors in silencing victims. In this study, the family was rarely reported as knowing about the abuse, although family members are among the first people besides peers a victim will disclose to. The response is crucial in determining whether a victim gets the help they need or is silenced. The majority of victims are silenced.

This study found significant ways in which the media has evolved over 40 years. For example, although the U.S. reported on its most prevalent age group in all four decades, India did in three decades. Both countries reported more on female victims of sexual abuse. However, if the sexual abuse was coupled with the murder of the victim, then both countries reported more male victims. Sexual abuse was the most prevalent type of abuse reported by both countries and appropriate terminology discrepancies were found to decrease in the U.S. from the 1990s, 2000s, and 2010s datasets; it was found to increase in India in all four decades from the 1980s to the 2020s. Characteristics of abuse were not used in 17% of U.S. articles and in 10% of India articles. Consensual language

and victim-blaming terminology was rarely used in either country because the articles were written about children.

In both countries, the families and other victims were most aware that abuse was occurring, and most found the perpetrator categories included trusted adult and strangers. Both countries reported on multiple perpetrators during the 1980s and 1990s but that declined during the 2010s dataset. Both countries reported on one perpetrator throughout all four decades. Perpetrator legal consequences found that stories in the U.S. on perpetrators being charged was 92% compared to 8% in India.

Thematic framed articles were written more in India than the U.S., although the U.S. did begin writing more articles in a thematic framework by the 2010s dataset. Lastly, the most written-about topics in the U.S. for thematic framed articles was awareness for the first two decades, but then it shifted to religious institutions abuse. India wrote more on awareness articles during all four decades.

Whether articles are written in episodic, thematic, or a combination of both frameworks, they should come from a place of being educated on the topic of such a serious and catastrophic reality found in all societies. An educated media within any society can be a positive catalyst to moving the issue of sexual violence forward and faster than any other means, and is representative of its great responsibility and ability to change the culture of sexual violence.

The majority of victims in this study were children. The media's coverage of children generally did not blame or use consensual language in most of the articles written, but it was found in some articles. Although the most vulnerable age groups in the U.S. and India were different, journalists who are educated about those age groups will



understand that messaging to caregivers is their target audience. Articles written on how caregivers can protect children, teach them self-protection and prevention efforts, and where to get help if sexual abuse does occur would help influence and push cultural norms that exist today.

Finding the right language to describe incidents of child sexual abuse may be challenging but reporters should consider other ways to bring a human face to victims of child sexual abuse or adults of sexual assault, including precise descriptions of the abuse, while still maintaining a victim's dignity.

Sexual violence is found in all cultures, but each culture has its own culture of sexual violence. The U.S. and India's culture of sexual violence are very different from one another. India had more types of sexual violence and a more patriarchal society. The U.S. also has a patriarchal society, but women have more freedoms. Nevertheless, despite more freedoms in the U.S. and differences in sexual violence cultures, both countries' victims of sexual violence are still shamed, blamed, and ostracized for disclosing. Both countries suffer from the media's failure to challenge misguided notions of sexual violence and their respective norms that perpetuate sexual violence cultural norms.

The Findings section of this study provided statistics that describe the extent of this failure as well as a longitudinal analysis of changes over time. This research is significant in that it lays the groundwork for future research that can draw upon this study's operational measures to conduct tests of statistical significance, both across time and across cultures.

## Recommendations for Future Research

Based on this thesis research, additional studies focused on the child or on adult sexual violence are recommended. Being more specific about the type of abuse (child sexual abuse/molestation or rape/sexual assault) would have produced a different set of articles with more specific content. In the process of elimination, I recommend focusing on one type of article as opposed to two types: incident reports and feature articles. This research is significant in that it lays the groundwork for future research that can draw upon this study's operational measures to conduct tests of statistical significance, both across time and across cultures.

## Appendix 1

### Case Selection Procedure

For U.S. Cases: Nexis Uni was used for *New York Times* articles for the United States between January 1, 1980 and December 31, 2019.

For India Cases: ProQuest was used for *Times of India* articles for India between January 1, 1980 to January 1, 2010.

Nexis Uni was used for *Times of India* articles for India between January 1, 2010 and December 31, 2019.

In both databases I searched using the phrase *sexual abuse*. I took the total number of articles per decade and divided it by 50.

<b>United States: <i>New York Times</i> (Nexis Uni)</b>		
10,000+ articles were originally pulled between January 1, 1980 and December 31, 2019, from the <i>New York Times</i> through Lexis Uni.		
<b>Decades</b>	<b>Number of Total Articles with sexual abuse filter</b>	<b>50 Articles per Decade</b>
1980-1989	842	Every 16 <sup>th</sup> article
1990-1999	1,710	Every 34 <sup>th</sup> article
2000-2009	2,818	Every 56 <sup>th</sup> article
2010-2019	5,469	Every 109 <sup>th</sup> article
<b>India: <i>Times of India</i> and <i>New York Times</i> (ProQuest, 1980s–2009 and Nexis Uni , 2010–2019)</b>		
1,084 articles were originally pulled between January 1, 1980 and 2009 from <i>Times of India</i> through ProQuest.		
4,200 articles were originally pulled between January 1, 2010 and December 31, 2019, through Nexis Uni.		
1980-1989	55	I downloaded all
1990-1999	290	Every 5 <sup>th</sup> article
2000-2009	665	Every 13 <sup>th</sup> article
2010-2019 Nexis Uni	4,274	Every 85 <sup>th</sup> article

## Appendix 2

### Explanatory Variables

NO.	VARIABLE	VARIABLE SUBCATEGORIES	RATIONALE	OPERATIONAL DEFINITION
<b>VICTIM DEMOGRAPHICS</b>				
1.	Country	[U.S. and India]	To compare the U.S. and India country's information	Countries used in the study.
2.	Decade	[1980-1989, 1990-1999, 2000-2009, 2010-2019]	To collect data in 4 ten-year periods used in this study.	Acknowledging which time period, the data was collected.
3.	Victim Age	[0-10, 0-10 + 17, 11-17, 11-17 and 18+, 18+]	Determine which age group is most abused.	Age Group of victims as minors or adults or a combination of both.
4.	Victim Sex	[Female, Male]	Assessing the distinction between male victims, female victims, or a combination of both, and which gender is mostly reported on	Victim Sex as reported.
<b>MEDIA FRAMING</b>				
5.	Article Framing	[Episodic, Thematic]	To be able to assess which if framing type is most effective way to report on sexual violence.	Episodic – Specific Incident of abuse Thematic – Broad topic violence
6.	Article Topic	[Awareness/Education/ Statistics, Boy Scout Institution, Childcare/Foster care/Orphanage Institution, Criminal Justice, Entertainment, Government Institution, Human Rights, Political, Religious Institution, School Institution, Sexual Harassment, Trafficking/ Pornography]	Measuring what topic is most written about in the 'incident' reports compared to 'feature' articles to determine if the articles are representative of what narrative needs to be written about by journalists.	Topic of article.
7.	Type of Abuse	[Sexual Abuse, Sexual Assault, Gang Rape, Murder resulting from Sexual Abuse, Sexual Assault, and gang rape, and sexual harassment]	Identifying multiple types of abuse and which is the most prevalent types of abuse written about. Analyzing if reporters are writing about the least types of sexual abuse and sensationalizing them.	Type of abuse written about in article.
8.	Appropriate Terminology	[Yes, No]	Assessing if a reporter is aware of the appropriate terminology or not. If a person is not well versed in sexual abuse terminology, then they will often repeat what they read.	Congruent terminology used in article regarding type of abuse and age of victim.

NO.	VARIABLE	VARIABLE SUBCATEGORIES	RATIONALE	OPERATIONAL DEFINITION
9.	Characteristics of Abuse Type	[Contact without penetration, forced intercourse, not reported]	Assessing what is the most prevalent characteristic of sexual abuse reported about	Characteristics of abuse type
10.	Consensual Language	[Yes, No]	Assessing if journalist uses language that suggests the victim consented to the abuse, such as, to say an adult perpetrator had 'sexual relations' with a minor is inappropriate and sounds like the victim is consenting. I am checking to see how often a reporter uses that type of terminology. By using consensual language, a reporter can give the impression that there are some forms of sexual abuse that are consensual.	Consenting language used to describe victim's role in the abuse.
11.	Where or how to get help	[Yes, No]	Assessing if journalist adds in article where and how victims of sexual violence can get help.	Resources mentioned in article for victims.
12.	Disclose victim's name or location	[Name, Location]	Assessing if journalist mentioned name of victim and/or where they live or give enough description of where it happened to expose the victim.	Release of victim personal information.
13.	Pornography Victim	[Yes, No, Not Reported]	Assessing if pornography is mentioned as part of abuse type.	Victim reported to have been forced with pornography
<b>VICTIM CHARACTERISTICS</b>				
14.	Number of victims	[One, Multiple]	Measuring how many victims were perpetrated. The number of victims is important to show society that one perpetrator can sexually abuse more than one child.	Number of victims written about in article.
15.	Victim Blaming	[Yes, No]	Assessing if reporters are suggesting some type of blame from the victim. This is found more in adult reported sexual assaults than children.	Victim blaming terminology used in article.
16.	People Who Knew	[Acquaintance, Family, Family – Acquaintance, Officials, Other victims came forward, Not Reported, Witness]	The reported reason that people who knew did or did not act on their knowledge	People who reportedly acknowledged knowing, or were informed about the incident
17.	Victim Believed	[Family, Family and Officials, Officials, Officials – Acquaintance, No]	Assessing if journalist reported victim was believed and who believed the victim.	Reported if victim was believed.
18.	Victim not Believed	[Family, Officials, Officials – Acquaintance, Not Reported]	Assessing if it was reported that victim was not believed and who did not believe them.	Reported victim was not believed.

NO.	VARIABLE	VARIABLE SUBCATEGORIES	RATIONALE	OPERATIONAL DEFINITION
19.	Victim negative consequences for coming forward	[Family, Legal, Not Reported, Physical, Social]	Reported that victim was shamed, blamed, and ostracized. If the findings show that the victims are rarely having negative consequences during the 40 years period, then there is a disconnect from what is really happening and what is being reported in papers.	Reported victim negative consequences for coming forward.
<b>PERPETRATOR CHARACTERISTICS</b>				
20.	Perpetrator Category	[Acquaintance, Family, Family – Acquaintance, Stranger, Trusted Adult]	Identifying multiple types of perpetrators and which is the most prevalent type of perpetrator written about.	Type of perpetrator written about in article.
21.	Number of Perpetrators	[One, Multiple]	Identifying how many perpetrators were involved in the abuse.  This is an important category in that it can open a dialogue that perpetrators communicate with one another finding that someone else shares in their deviant ideals and it shows how this type of ‘buddying up’ affects the culture of sexual abuse.	Number of perpetrators written about in article.
22.	Perpetrator Rationale	[Abuse of Power – Family, Abuse of Power – Non-Family, Addiction, Denial, Money, Past Maltreatment, Serial Perpetrator]	Assessing reasons perpetrators use to excuse their actions and if the journalist reports on it.	Reasoning for abuse reported by journalist.
23.	Reported Support for Perpetrator	[Character Support, Cover-up, Family, Minimized Harm, Not Reported]	Assessing if the journalist reported other people who were not witnesses of the abuse expressed support for the perpetrator.	Journalist reports who supported the perpetrator. Measuring if the journalist reported other people who were not witnesses of the abuse expressed support for the perpetrator as reported in the Abuse Incident Report Chart.
24.	Reported Perpetrator Background	[Crime History, Education, Famous, Not Reported, Occupation, Past Maltreatment]	Assessing if journalist informed readers of the perpetrators historical and current context, especially regarding previous maltreatment or crime history.	Reported perpetrator background.
25.	Perpetrator’s Legal Consequences	[Arrested/Arraigned, Charged, Convicted/Jailed, Investigation, No Case, Perpetrator Killed by Victim]	Analyzing if journalist reports on legal implications for perpetrator and if sentencing is appropriate to the abuse.	Legal implications written in article.
26.	Perpetrator Other Consequences	[Family, Killed, Not Reported, Occupation, Social/Community]	Assessing what other types of consequence perpetrator had	Other life implications written in article..

### Appendix 3

#### Feature Article Chart

No.	Category	Variables	Operational Definition
1.	News Frame	Thematic	Thematic – focuses on a “bigger picture” topic
2.	Article Topic	Awareness/Education/ Statistics, Boy Scout Institution, Childcare/Foster care/Orphanage Institution, Criminal Justice, Entertainment, Government Institution, Human Rights, Political, Religious Institution, School Institution, Sexual Harassment, Trafficking/ Pornography	Compares the message of each decade on the topic of sexual abuse and reviews whether the message supports a sexual violence culture. Review to determine if certain subjects were more prevalent in certain decades. Review types of articles are being written, and whether these articles represent what narrative needs to be written by journalists.

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