



May 2018

#Me Too: An Analysis on Whose Sexual Assault Stories The New York Times Publishes

Alyssa Evans

Western Washington University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://cedar.wvu.edu/scholwk>

 Part of the [Higher Education Commons](#), and the [Journalism Studies Commons](#)

Evans, Alyssa, "#Me Too: An Analysis on Whose Sexual Assault Stories The New York Times Publishes" (2018). *Scholars Week*. 11.
https://cedar.wvu.edu/scholwk/2018/Day_two/11

This Event is brought to you for free and open access by the Conferences and Events at Western CEDAR. It has been accepted for inclusion in Scholars Week by an authorized administrator of Western CEDAR. For more information, please contact westerncedar@wwu.edu.

#MeToo: A Study on Whose Sexual Assault Stories *The New York Times* Publishes

Alyssa Evans, Journalism

Abstract

This case study **tracks demographic coverage of sexual harassment and assault** in a high-profile news organization. Data gathered **examines *The New York Times*'** framing of victims and inclusivity of reporting over a two-month period in 2017. Findings suggest that **victims most often sourced** in #MeToo-related stories are **Caucasian females** employed in the **entertainment industry** or in **politics**. This study determines that *The New York Times* **coverage excludes representation of minorities**.

Framing analyses are sometimes small, requiring results to be treated with caution (Matthes, 2009). This study is not an exception, as the sample population is only a portion of what could be potentially analyzed.

Methods

Articles selected for study were published in *The New York Times* during the span of **October 1st, 2017 - November 30th, 2017**. This two month period was chosen for analysis because of the significant attention the #MeToo hashtag was gaining on social media. Fifteen articles met the search criteria.

The New York Times was selected for its national readership and its numerous stories published under the #MeToo movement. Articles were accessed through **ProQuest Newsstand** by searching *New York Times* archives for the phrase "**#metoo**." Sources were classified by gender, race, occupation/industry, whether they were quoted or mentioned, and source position (survivor, assaulter, movement supporter, assault sympathizer, or neutral).

Results

- Majority of articles **focused on middle and upper middle class** arenas (ex: higher education)
- Sources **even among gender**: 48.9% female, 47.8% male
- **Caucasian sources featured most often** at 70.3%, followed by African American at 7.1%, Middle Eastern at 3.9%, Latino at 2.8%, and Asian sources at 1.1%. 14.8% of sources were not disclosed.
- **Assault survivors most often sourced** at 31.3%, **followed by assaulters** (23.1%), neutral sources (22.6%), #MeToo supporters (19.3%), and assaulter sympathizers (4.4%)

Conclusion

To make survivors feel comfortable coming forward, *The New York Times* and news organizations of all levels **should follow the Society of Professional Journalists' Code of Ethics** when covering stories about sexual assault. News outlets should also **take note of who is represented** in stories as an effort to **minimize harm**. **Being aware** of whose voices are/are not present in stories on sexual assault can help **ensure accuracy**.

"Media messages can act as teachers of values, ideologies, and beliefs...they can provide images for interpreting the world whether or not the designers are conscious of this intent"

- William A. Gamson, *Media Images and the Social Construction of Reality*, 1992