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#MeToo and its Ambivalent Repercussions

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About

Gender forum is an online, peer reviewed academic journal dedicated to the discussion of gender issues. As an electronic journal, *gender forum* offers a free-of-charge platform for the discussion of gender-related topics in the fields of literary and cultural production, media and the arts as well as politics, the natural sciences, medicine, the law, religion and philosophy. Inaugurated by Prof. Dr. Beate Neumeier in 2002, the quarterly issues of the journal have focused on a multitude of questions from different theoretical perspectives of feminist criticism, queer theory, and masculinity studies. *gender forum* also includes reviews and occasionally interviews, fictional pieces and poetry with a gender studies angle.

Opinions expressed in articles published in *gender forum* are those of individual authors and not necessarily endorsed by the editors of *gender forum*.

Submissions

Target articles should conform to current MLA Style (8th edition) and should be between 5,000 and 8,000 words in length. Please make sure to number your paragraphs and include a bio-blurb and an abstract of roughly 300 words. Files should be sent as email attachments in Word format. Please send your manuscripts to gender-forum@uni-koeln.de.

We always welcome reviews on recent releases in Gender Studies! Submitted reviews should conform to current MLA Style (8th edition), have numbered paragraphs, and should be between 750 and 1,000 words in length. Please note that the reviewed releases ought to be no older than 24 months. In most cases, we are able to secure a review copy for contributors.

Article Publishing

The journal aims to provide rapid publication of research through a continuous publication model. All submissions are subject to peer review. Articles should not be under review by any other journal when submitted to *Gender forum*.

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Editorial

1 Alyssa Milano's #MeToo twitter appeal (October 15, 2017) to women, to publicly speak out about experiences of sexual harassment and assault, powerfully foregrounded the persistence of patriarchal structures, particularly in the workplace, and its misogynist implications on a global scale. Initially connected to the entertainment industry, the movement spread to disclose harassment and assault in religious and educational institutions, as well as in the financial industry and in politics, exposing the pervasive impact/use of sexualized violence; misuse of positions of power in all social sectors against those in (financial) dependency (in work situations) and against all those who threaten to disturb the heteronormative order, including women, men, and LGBTQ*.

2 In the afterword of her manifesto *Women and Power*, Mary Beard expresses the hope that the fall of 2017 will be recognized as the moment that “kick-started a sexual and social revolution”, but also acknowledges the fear that it might only be “the glorious herald of a change that never happened” (99). The current backlash against what is termed “gender ideology” in politics and media in different parts of the world signals the anxieties about, but also the potential for change causing this reaction. Recognizing the importance of the current moment, *gender forum* invited authors to critically engage with the movement initiated and popularized by #MeToo #TimesUp #MuteRKelly and with the questions it raises about 21st century sexual politics.

3 The articles in this issue address these concerns, focusing on television shows and varsity sport clubs, offering insight into current gendered and sexualized power relations. Both areas, media and sports, are characterized by a specific focus on the body, and figure prominently within the entertainment and education sectors. Serialized formats on television and in the web, predominantly produced in the USA, gain high visibility and have an important impact on public debates as well as on individual viewers. Sports play a particularly important role in higher education in the USA and Canada on an individual as well as a communal and national level. All articles in this issue explore the nexus between individual sexualized violence, rape in particular, and structural violence upon which it is based.

4 Two articles focus on highly popular current tv/web series, exposing sexualised violence in politics and the legal professions (*House of Cards*, *Good Wife*) within a realist frame, and on a wider scope within a dystopian system (*The Handmaid's Tale*). In juxtaposition the articles foreground the links between the worlds/societies depicted. In “Power, Consent, and the Body: #MeToo and *The Handmaid's Tale*” Samantha Solomon and Zarah Moeggenberg discuss the ways in which *The Handmaid's Tale*, one of the most acclaimed

television series of 2017, provides a powerful dystopian articulation of rape culture in the United States. The adaptation of Margaret Atwood's novel focuses on ritualized rape to challenge the normalization of sexual assault and sexism in American politics, law, education, and family life. Foregrounding connections between the #MeToo movement and the series, Solomon and Moeggenberg dissect the rhetoric of ritual and drawing attention to the relation between power, consent, and the body.

5 In her article “Marching Forward in Gowns and Stilettos: The representations of Women in American Political Television Series” Yuwei Ge focuses on representations of powerful women in the popular US American television shows, *House of Cards* (2013-2018) and *The Good Wife* (2009-2016), centering on incidents of rape in both shows. In her discussion of *House of Cards*, a series which has gained additional visibility in the context of the #MeToo debate, the author focuses on Claire Underwood and Megan Hennessey, analysing the women's struggle to be heard in the aftermath of sexualised violence whilst maintaining a position of power. In *The Good Wife*, Ge is concerned with the impact of sex scandals on women in the legal profession focusing on Alicia Florrick and Diane Lockhart, foregrounding the nexus between unequal power distributions and the persistent gendered split between the private and the public spheres.

6 Sexualised violence in the world of sports has recently been addressed by Kirby Dick's acclaimed documentary film *The Hunting Ground* (2015) about sexual assault on college campuses in the United States and Canada, foregrounding a flawed system privileging male athletes. (Ironically the Oscar nominated documentary was distributed by the Weinstein Company). The article by Hayley Finn, Rita Gardiner and Leona Bruijns on “Winning at Any Cost? Gender, Sport and Violence” offers two case studies of sexualised violence in colleges in Canada, revealing an above-average percentage of cases in college sports (see Quinlan). The authors discuss the implications of these findings, their structural foundations and institutional responses.

7 Stephanie Selvick's review of *The War on Sex*, edited by David Halperin and Trevor Hoppe (Duke UP, 2017) complements this issue of *gender forum*. The book takes up questions of sexualised violence from a radically different, yet related angle, looking into the imprisonment of sex offenders, and into the ways in which the construction and incarceration of the “monstrous outsider” have not led to a decrease of crime, but to “the illusion of prison and punishment as protection” (301) of an otherwise ‘safe’ society, effectively preventing the surfacing and public acknowledgement of the pervasiveness of sexualised violence, which the Me Too movement has finally taken issue with.x

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Power, Consent, and The Body: #MeToo and *The Handmaid's Tale*

By Zarah Moeggenberg, Ph.D., Utah State University and
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Abstract:

Feminist rhetorics have long been concerned with interrupting power, questioning norms, and challenging the status quo. First-wave feminists concerned themselves with not only women's suffrage, but also with the ways in which women were portrayed in cinema and other media. We believe critical attention must continue to be paid to the relationship between media and contemporary protest. As Simone de Beauvoir writes, "It would appear...that every female human being is not necessarily a woman; to be so considered she must share in that mysterious and threatened reality known as femininity" (253). Now, more than ever, women's concerns with rape culture, sexual assault, and sexism are making their way into public discourse. While the #MeToo movement has been a critical point of activism both on the ground and online, another axis from which women are questioning the normalization and silencing of sexual violence against women has been through television. One of the most prolific outlets has been the television series adaptation of Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, which showcases the ways in which women struggle within power structures surrounding consent and the body. While Atwood's novel was published in 1985, in the midst of second-wave feminism, and while Atwood was living in West Berlin, surrounded by the Berlin Wall (Field), the 2017 adaptation of the text, for which Atwood is a producer, is a timely response to contemporary feminist concerns.

In this article, we unpack the ways in which *The Handmaid's Tale* provides a dystopic articulation of rape culture in the United States. While we relate some of the dis/connections between Margaret Atwood's novel and its televisual articulation, we foremost discuss the ways in which the adaptation uses ritualized rape to challenge the normalization of sexual assault and sexism in American politics, law, education, and family life. Drawing on the dialectic between the #MeToo movement and the series, we discuss the ways in which contemporary protest and feminist activism has integrated key terms and concepts that draw our attention to power, consent, and the body. Feminist narratologist Susan S. Lanser argues that narratives, text-based and otherwise, must be analyzed within the social context in which, and for whom, they were produced: "[T]he authority of a given voice or text is produced from a conjunction of social and rhetorical properties. Discursive authority... is produced interactively; it must therefore be characterized with respect to specific receiving communities" (6). Drawing from feminist narratology, we dissect the rhetoric of ritual to discuss how *The Handmaid's Tale* has become a critical counterpart to what has otherwise been conceptualized as a social media-driven fourth wave.

1 There are now square signs that hang on the doors of bathroom stalls, attempting to define consent. As we walk to our offices, we see brochure-like documents describing what sexual assault

is and how to get help. As we write this from the United States, one of us is in the Pacific Northwest and the other is in the West. A sexual assault has happened on both of our campuses within the last week. Sexual assault is a regular part of our lives. When we went away to college, our mothers gave us pepper spray to attach to our keychains—in case we had to walk alone from one building to the next. They would show us how to tuck keys between our fingers and make a tight fist. When we would leave a party, our friends would say, “Call me when you get there so I know you’re safe.”

2 Post graduate school, Zarah is at a conference and her friends are talking about Lyft¹. One woman in the room says, “I always take a picture of the license plate just before I get in the Lyft. I text it to my husband.” The three other women in the room seem to exclaim “Oh that’s smart!” at the same time. One thousand miles away, at a different conference, Samantha and the two other members of her all-woman panel are talking about whether it is safer to take an Uber or Lyft to their celebratory after-panel dinner, or if they should walk. Sexual assault and the power dynamics wrought by sexism have been a critical way in which we have structured our lives. We pay careful attention to who is walking near us. We check our cars before getting into them at night. We text or call each other to confirm our safety. We stay silent in meetings. We submit to men’s voices in group settings. We say “sorry” whenever we have something to say. But women are beginning to pay attention to the normalized, ritualized temporalities that structure our lives. In her famous 1971 essay “When we Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision,” Adrienne Rich writes:

It’s exhilarating to be alive in a time of awakening consciousness; it can also be confusing, disorienting, and painful. This awakening...has already affected the lives of millions of women, even those who don’t know it yet. It is also affecting the lives of men, even those who deny its claims upon them... [I]n the last few years the women’s movement has drawn inescapable and illuminating connections between our sexual lives and our political institutions. The sleepwalkers are coming awake, and for the first time this awakening has a collective reality; it is no longer such a lonely thing to open one’s eyes. (269)

When we read Rich’s words now, we see how they powerfully speak to the #MeToo movement nearly 50 years later, when thousands of women are waking up for the first time. Now, more than ever, women’s concerns with rape culture, sexual assault, and sexism are making their way into public discourse. We believe critical attention must continue to be paid to the relationship between media and contemporary protest.

¹ Both Lyft and Uber, mentioned later in this paragraph, are on-demand ridesharing services.

3 While the #MeToo movement has been a critical point of activism both on the ground and online, another axis from which women are questioning the normalization and silencing of sexual violence against women has been through television. One of the most prolific outlets has been the television series adaptation of Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), which showcases the ways in which women struggle within power structures surrounding consent and the body. While Atwood's novel was published in 1985, the 2017 adaptation of the text, for which Atwood is a producer, is a timely response to contemporary feminist concerns. In this article, we unpack the ways in which *The Handmaid's Tale* provides a dystopian articulation of rape culture in the United States through ritual. While we relate some of the dis/connections between Margaret Atwood's novel and its televisual articulation, we foremost discuss the ways in which the adaptation uses ritualized rape to challenge the normalization of sexual assault and sexism in American politics, law, education, and family life. Additionally, we argue that sexism is an ideology that has become routinely ritualized in our lives. We unpack how ritual is co-opted by contemporary feminist activists to interrupt power. Drawing on the dialectic between the #MeToo movement and the series, we discuss the ways in which contemporary protest and feminist activism have integrated key terms and concepts that draw our attention to power, consent, and the body.

***The Handmaid's Tale* in Context**

4 Hulu's television adaptation of *The Handmaid's Tale* has become a critical counterpart to what has been conceptualized as a social media-driven fourth wave feminism. In a March 2017 essay in *The New York Times*, Margaret Atwood draws a parallel between the political context in which she wrote the novel and the one in which the novel was adapted into a television show. Atwood began writing the novel in 1984 while "living in West Berlin, which was still encircled by the Berlin Wall" (Atwood, "Age of Trump"). Though she grew up during World War II and learned that that "[E]stablished orders could vanish overnight... [and that] 'It can't happen here' could not be depended on: Anything could happen anywhere, given the circumstances," Atwood admits that "in 1984, the main premise [of the novel] seemed—even to me—fairly outrageous" (Atwood, "Age of Trump"). Atwood had a cameo in the adaptation's first episode entitled "Offred,"—the main character's Gileadean name. While the main character is given the name "June" in the television adaptation, she is known only by her given name "Offred" in the novel—Offred being a combination of the words "of Fred," or belonging to Fred. While speaking about

her cameo, in which she plays an “Aunt”—in Atwood’s dystopian story world, a woman responsible for re-educating the Handmaids to adopt their new identities—she reports that she “found this scene horribly upsetting” (Atwood, “Age of Trump”). In the scene, Atwood’s character is complicit in the “slut-shaming” (Atwood, “Age of Trump”) of a Handmaid named Janine, who is forced into “testifying” (Atwood, *Handmaid’s Tale* 71) to her peers about being gang-raped when she was a teenager, and who is forced into believing that the rape was her fault, and that she deserved it (72). In the novel, this scene is written as a ritualistic brainwashing meant not only for the person who is “testifying,” but also for the other handmaids, who are forced to continually yell out that the victim is at fault for her own rape, and that she deserved it. After repeatedly calling Janine a “Crybaby,” Offred reflects:

We meant it, which is the bad part. I used to think well of my myself. I didn’t then. That was last week. This week Janine doesn’t wait for us to jeer at her. It was my fault, she says. It was my own fault. I led them on. I deserved the pain. (72).

After filming this scene for the adaptation, Atwood writes that even though she “was ‘just pretending,’ she found the scene was “way too much... way too much history” and reminded her that women themselves gang up on each other to assume power, especially in “the age of social media, which enables group swarmings” (Atwood, “Age of Trump”).

5 The adaptation allows us the opportunity to interrogate anew the ways in which *The Handmaid’s Tale* speaks to concerns involving women’s rights. While the novel was written in the midst of second-wave feminism, the television adaptation is being received by audiences who see it as responding within a different framework of understanding, and a new context for feminist concerns. It is important to consider how the context in which a narrative is received—text-based, visual, or multimodal—dictates the ways in which audiences synthesize the narrative into their everyday experiences. Feminist narratologist Susan S. Lanser argues that narratives must be analyzed within the social context in which, and for whom, they were produced: “[T]he authority of a given voice or text is produced from a conjunction of social and rhetorical properties. Discursive authority... is produced interactively; it must therefore be characterized with respect to specific receiving communities” (6). That *The Handmaid’s Tale* is a narrative that has productively engaged with the feminist movement across decades is something to be considered. In 1985, when the novel was released to the public, there was a similar political climate and progressive downturn as the one we are living through today—the 80s were a decade that Atwood refers to as “a pushback

decade for women's rights" that postdated several decades of pushback and push forward (Menta). On being asked what decade we are in now, Atwood marked the 2010s as too early to call as an overall decade of pushback or push forward, but notes that the current climate is "more like the '30s than anything I've lived through [with]... a kind of battle royale between extreme right-wing and left-wing push backers... more extreme now than any time that I can remember" (Menta). The television adaptation, therefore, emerges from a specific discursive context in which women's rights have again reached a crossroads, and for a "specific receiving community" that will likely have a polarizing opinion on what those rights are. Unlike the book, perhaps, the television show is not one that will reach the target audience that would most benefit from it—Atwood notes that she thinks "it's quite unlikely" that Trump and his supporters would watch the series (Menta). However, the imagery of the dystopian story world, including the handmaid costume, has been co-opted by viewers as a form of protest in the real world.

Ritual in *The Handmaid's Tale*

6 In *Ritual: A Very Short Introduction*, Barry Stephenson describes ritual as "one of the constituent elements in the mix of what it means to be human" (17). When we think about ritual, when we think about nailing it down, we might think of the events that structure our lives like liturgies at church, retirement parties, birthdays, awards ceremonies, or weddings. We experience the world through these moments. Ritual is a way of knowing the world. Stephenson draws our attention to how our definitions of ritual "are shaped not only within ritual itself but also through texts and other media" (18). Media also plays a critical role in recognizing ritual as present, or as actually shaping our lives. Ritual does not necessarily operate on positivity. As Stephenson writes, "Ritual is formative of who we are, and we variously experience the rites and ceremonies that cross our paths as uplifting or boring, exploitative or empowering, creative or moribund. To think about ritual is to explore its place, power, and potential in our lives and our society" (17). In other words, ritual is wrapped up in power structures, and when we take part in ritual we perpetuate these structures of power. A ritual is a repeated act that ascribes to rules, traditions, and objects. Ritual creates entire worlds.

7 The first season of *The Handmaid's Tale* introduces the audience to the ways in which ritual structures the lives of the women in the dystopian story world of Gilead. While the handmaids' days are stylized through repeated acts, the one ritual that exemplifies their role as

fertile women who will repopulate Gilead is the Ceremony—a monthly ritual in which the fertile handmaids submit to ritualized rape with the intention of pregnancy. When the Ceremony is first introduced in *The Handmaid's Tale*, it is performed as a ritual that no one but the Commander, the upper-class male head of the household, seems comfortable with. There are rhetorical choices made in this first performance of the Ceremony that deliver discomfort for the characters and the audience. This is critical as the Ceremony simply becomes a ritual without protest in subsequent episodes of the first season. There are juxtaposing elements to help us understand the Ceremony simultaneously as a religious fertility ritual 'and' a rape. When June kneels on a pillow in the middle of the room, she narrates: "I want to know what I did to deserve this" ("Offred"). Thereafter, the household's Martha remarks "Those eggs you got today were nice and fresh"—a comment about shopping that is also meant to connote fertility and draw attention to the upcoming Ceremony, which occurs every month while the handmaid is ovulating. This is soon juxtaposed with a remark from Rita, the household's "Martha" (a name given to a class of women who serve as domestic help in Gilead) about how she wishes Commander Waterford and his wife, Serena Joy, (as they are known in the adaptation) would hurry up because she has things to do. For Rita, this is a regular part of her month—a ritual she must be present for that gets in the way of her completing other tasks, while for June, and the other handmaids, the ritualized rapes are a constant reminder that their identities have been both reduced to their bodies, but also made possible by their bodies. In Gilead, the position of handmaid is reserved only for fertile women, and it is one preferable to some of the other roles that lower-class or older infertile women play in society.

8 After Serena Joy, the Commander's wife, enters the room, there is a knock on the bedroom door from the Commander. June narrates: "The knock is prescribed because tonight this room is her domain...It's a little thing but in this house little things mean everything" ("Offred"). As June explains how the ritual works and why particular things happen as it progresses, the Commander begins to read from his book of scriptures: "And when Rachel saw that she bared Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister; and said unto Jacob, give me children or else I die" ("Offred"). In some editions of the novel, this passage from Genesis serves as one of three epigraphs that appear before chapter one, along with a quote from Jonathan Swift's satire essay "A Modest Proposal," and a Sufi proverb that simply reads "In the desert there is no sign that that says, Thou shalt not eat stones" (Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale* 1). Together, the epigraphs present the problem of infertility that the novel deals with, satirize the way in which Gilead resolves that issue, and then

frames our understanding of that resolution: Gilead has done something that should not be done, but which nothing actually prevented. The phase from Genesis takes on new meaning later in the novel. During one of her mandated trips to the doctor to monitor her fertility, Offred ominously notes, in response to the doctor asking if she wants a baby, “‘Yes,’ I say. It’s true, and I don’t ask why because I know. *Give me children, or else I die*. There’s more than one meaning to it” (61). In Gilead, infertility is a death sentence for all but the social elite.

9 The scriptural narration continues in this scene, but is layered over by scenes of the Ceremony. The words “[a]nd she gave him her handmaid and Jacob went unto her” are spoken overtop of imagery of the ritualized rape. During the Ceremony, June lays on her back on the Commander’s bed while Serena Joy sits behind her and holds June’s arms back as the Commander rapes June. The juxtaposition of this imagery and the narrative voice of scripture helps to enact not just power, but knowing. As Foucault writes, power does not prevent knowledge; rather, power produces knowledge (59). And so, it is not that the leaders of Gilead are keeping the handmaids and other women from knowing their past selves, but that they are enacting power upon them so that they create new knowledge of themselves. Power over the body produces one’s knowledge of the body (Foucault 59). There are many moments during the Ceremony where there is submission and acceptance of the ritual, especially where June stares blankly at the ceiling while the Commander rapes her. Serena Joy is so upset she turns her entire body away from June when the Ceremony is completed and tells June to leave. June remarks that she should continue to lay on the bed for better chances of getting pregnant. This dialectic between fertility and rape help to deliver a powerful message about rape-as-ritual, or rape as something culturally accepted.

10 Rape is a ritual because it is a normalized practice within American culture—so normalized that women in our communities stay silent, blame themselves, and/or do not know who they can go to. Rape is ritualized in that it is a violent assault, an act of power, and so common to women that they may not know how to name their experiences as rape. In the *Oxford English Dictionary*, ritual is defined as “of or relating to the performance of rites,” “of a substance or object, etc.,” habitual, and customary (“Ritual”). Ritual objectifies the material with which it engages and performs socially accepted practices. In foregrounding rape as ritual, *The Handmaid’s Tale* demonstrates the objectification of women, the ways in which women become objects or vessels by which those in power may gain more power. In the Ceremony, the handmaid becomes the object and vessel by which the Commander can ensure the future of Gilead. June’s past, her identity as

June (rather than Offred), and her familial and kinship ties are irrelevant when she becomes an object by ritual. Indeed, the Ceremony is a *performance of rites* and an exercise of power. It is fitting that June calls the knock on the door *prescribed*, as a ritual is also defined as a “prescribed form or order” (“Ritual”). While extremely difficult to watch, from the very first episode of the first season, viewers are forced to accept the rituals of the Ceremony, and its potential results—pregnancy and birth—as integral to their roles as women, fertile or not, in the same way as June, the other handmaids, and the wives of Gilead.

11 The Ceremony is not the only ritualized practice within the TV adaptation of *The Handmaid's Tale*. Ritual structures the lives of everyone who lives in Gilead, even down to the verbal exchanges when the people meet each other. For example, the ritualized greeting when handmaids meet each other for daily tasks is often “Blessed be the fruit,” to which the one responds “May the Lord open” (Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale* 19). This exchange, which is used often in both the novel and the adaptation, encourages fertility and is a constant reminder that the handmaids’ role is to produce children. Other ritual-based greetings and farewells that are often used include “Praise be” (19), “Under His Eye” (45), both which remind people in Gilead that they are always being watched. Over time, however, these phrases become pejorative in usage, especially the phrase “Praise be,” which is traditionally understood as praising God. The phrase becomes the major way in which handmaids express their dissent to power and alliance to one another. Verbal exchanges are important means by which ritual is carried out. As June expresses, “Gilead is within you like the spirit of the Lord. Or, the Commander’s cock. Or cancer” (“Unwomen”). Ideology, when ritualized into our lives, becomes a part of our very bodies. Atwood integrated these phrases to demonstrate the ways in which they can reinforce ideology, but they also serve as signals to the audience that our ritualized exchanges with each other may have meaning beyond what the words alone would seem to suggest.

12 Marriage is also a critical underpinning to both seasons of *The Handmaid's Tale* because it helps demonstrate how power over women is constituted through ritual. The ritual of marriage is enacted in the second season when Commander Waterford assigns Nick, the Waterford household’s lower-class male security guard, a wife; she is a fourteen-year-old girl named Eden (a clearly biblical name), whom he is forced to marry (“Seeds”). The Commander’s choice to assign Nick a wife so suddenly is significant because Nick and June are in a romantic relationship, and the commander has begun to suspect as much, though he can neither prove it nor punish them for

it. In fact, this relationship develops after Serena orchestrates a secret meeting between Nick and June in an effort to get June pregnant, which the Commander has been unable to do (“Faithful”). This effort is ultimately successful, though the pregnancy is the result of sex performed lovingly and consensually after this initial arranged meeting. If discovered, the consequence for all involved would be death—even for Serena, whose actions are driven by failure of the system put in place by Gilead to solve the infertility crisis. Many powerful men are given wives at the same time as Nick in an organized marriage ceremony put on by Gilead’s powerful male leader. Each man is matched with a young woman who is covered by a veil that hides her face, which both conceals their youth from the audience, and communicates to the men, who are being assigned a wife solely for the purpose of reproduction, that their wife’s appearance is unimportant. As the veils are lifted, Nick and the audience alike are shocked to see that the brides-to-be are children who are happily and longingly looking at the faces of the men who reveal them. They are the first fully-indoctrinated generation of Gilead, unfazed by the societal norms of “the time before” (Atwood, *The Handmaid’s Tale* 9). Throughout this scene, it is easy to miss the flash of differently-colored dresses in the crowd as the women of Gilead observe the marriages taking place. In the stands, the mistresses of Gilead are in the front bottom row and dressed in blue. Above them are the handmaids in red, and at the top are rows of Marthas, dressed in a very light—perhaps intentionally light—shade of green. Together, their dresses look a great deal like a bastardized representation of the American flag, which communicates the oppression of women with the United States. Once home, Nick reads scripture similar to that which the Commander reads before the Ceremony in front of Eden and the rest of the household to symbolize that, once the marriage is consummated, Eden is part of the Waterford family unit, and is equally responsible for the production of a child (“Seeds”). It is assumed that at the end of the night, Nick consummates the marriage through what he knows to be statutory rape. Though he is repulsed by it, his life is at risk if he does not do so, and the show’s signaling of this internal conflict demonstrates how Gilead grooms the next generation by having men (even nonconsenting men) taking power over a generation of women too young to consent.

13 This marriage scene is juxtaposed with scenes from the colonies, a place where infertile women or “Unwomen” (Atwood, *The Handmaid’s Tale* 7), the elderly, or fertile women deemed to be criminals, are sent to be punished and often worked to death. In the scenes at the colonies, the character of Emily, who is known only as “Ofglen” in the novel, is introduced in the television

adaptation as a married lesbian who is forcibly separated from her wife and her son (“Unwomen”), and is later sent to the colonies. In this episode, Emily is seen taking note of her own declining health and resigning herself to hopelessness. When she is enlisted to help aid in the marriage of two other women at the colonies—Fiona and Kit—before Kit dies, she at first finds the marriage pointless, but eventually sees it as a source of hope, and the scene culminates in the Jewish marriage of the two women, and Kit’s death the next morning. While the marriage between Eden and Nick is the Commander’s way of enacting power on Nick and June’s relationship, the marriage between Fiona and Kit is about love and fulfilling a commitment before one of them dies. Ultimately the two marriages create dissonance to represent how many in the United States perceive what marriage is and what a woman’s role is in that marriage. The Christian marriage between Nick and Eden demonstrates submission, while the marriage between the two colony women represents resistance. By getting married before Kit’s death, both she and Fiona resist Gilead’s ownership of them. Emily is also a source of resistance in the episode titled “Unwomen” earlier in season two when a Commander’s wife arrives at the colonies, and she poisons her with what the wife thinks are antibiotics. As the mistress dies, Emily remarks, “Every month you held a woman down while your husband raped her” (“Unwomen”). This scene represents a shift where, in the words of Adrienne Rich, ritual is interrupted. Rich writes that “this drive to self-knowledge, for women, is more than a search for identity: it is part of our refusal of the self-destructiveness of male-dominated society” (270). Emily’s act is one of the first deliberate attempts by a handmaid to push back against ritual—here, quite explicitly.

Ritual and Challenging American Rape Culture through #MeToo

14 The first season of *The Handmaid’s Tale* immerses the audience into the new regime and Gilead culture. Along with major characters like June and Moira, June’s best friend, who is both a lesbian and a woman of color, we understand how rituals structure and drive the lives of Gilead’s inhabitants. However, in season one it is clear that the Ceremony is no longer recognized by handmaids as a ritual. The Ceremony is identified and referred to as rape. The second season coincides with a rise in the #MeToo movement in the United States and abroad. Season one of *The Handmaid’s Tale* uses ritualized rape to challenge the normalization of sexual assault and sexism in American politics, law, education, and family life. It is also important to recognize that season

two engages in a dialectic exchange with fourth-wave feminism as the #MeToo movement that continues these efforts.

15 The #MeToo movement rose prominently in January of 2017. However, it is important to acknowledge that Tarana Burke was the first woman to coin the phrase in 2006; Burke started a nonprofit called Just Be Inc., which helps sexual assault and harassment victims (Garcia). When the phrase that drove her organization was tweeted by Alyssa Milano in the hashtag #MeToo, a new surge in fourth-wave feminism began. A mere 10 days after actress Ashley Judd accused Harvey Weinstein of sexual misconduct, Milano tweeted, “If you’ve been sexually harassed or assaulted, write ‘me too’ as a reply to this tweet.” October 2017 was also the month athlete McKayla Maroney accused Dr. Lawrence Nassar of sexual assault. It was when Kevin Spacey was also accused of assault. November 2017 saw several more accusations and confirmations of sexual assault and harassment, including Louis C. K.’s admission to sexual misconduct. December 2017 included the resignation of U.S. Senator Al Franken and *Time* magazine named the “Silence Breakers,” the faces of the #MeToo movement, as “Person of the Year.” January 2018 was marked by the Times Up anti-harassment coalition formation, Oprah Winfrey’s Golden Globes Awards speech, and the second Women’s March. The spring of 2018 was characterized by countless moments of sexual assault accusations and stories by prominent actors, actresses, political figures, academics, and students. Indeed, plenty of these spotlight moments appeared in major media, but countless others appeared in social media as a simple tweet that read #MeToo, as Instagram and Facebook post narratives, and as powerful and intimate stories we told to our friends. Amidst this movement in April 2018, the second season of *The Handmaid’s Tale*, which picks up where Atwood’s novel left off and is, therefore, a completely new addition to the story, was released on Hulu.

16 If ever there was a response to a feminist movement in media, it is *The Handmaid’s Tale*’s second season. Titled “June,” the opening episode of season two depicts June and the other handmaids at a facility where they are positioned for hanging. The viewer sees each handmaid with her hands bound and her face muzzled. In muzzling the women, the handmaids lose their ability to speak to each other, protest, or bite the men who herd them through a hallway. Ultimately, the women are not hanged with the nooses placed around their necks; however, they spend considerable time with Aunt Lydia who uses a cattle prod on them. In this same episode, Aunt Lydia coaxes and ultimately forces June to both eat and walk, demonstrating that Gilead’s

handmaid ideology has even infiltrated the basic functions of life. In June's flashbacks, which are dispersed throughout the episode, one witnesses both her loss of agency in gaining access to reproductive healthcare (i.e. birth control) and the judgment from the hospital and elementary school for two things: working and sending her daughter to school with a low-grade fever. Positioning the handmaids as livestock throughout the episode, and juxtaposing agricultural imagery with June's flashbacks on being perceived as a bad mother, serves to generate dissonance surrounding women's rights. The audience for *The Handmaid's Tale*, immersed in #MeToo discourse is ultimately positioned pre-movement, back in a world where we pay little attention to the intricacies of sexism and misogyny. Amidst news on Bill Cosby, Tom Brokaw, and months of the #MuteRKelly campaign, when season two's inaugural episode ends with June's escape from a hospital in an attempt to escape Gilead, it is undoubtable that *The Handmaid's Tale* is nodding to the successful deployment of "No More"—a phrase developed as part of the movement to end sexual assault and domestic violence—as a rhetorical strategy of #MeToo. June's escape from the Commander and his wife symbolizes the constant battle of women to remove ourselves from sexism and its resulting violence.

17 June's escape from Commander Waterford and Mrs. Waterford is, in many ways, a failure since she is found within a couple of episodes. However, her break away from ritual and hegemony is pleasing to viewers who have experienced sexual assault, harassment, and misconduct. This is because it recognizes the rituals critical to the culture of Gilead as assault and as violent means of asserting hegemony. It is striking when Commander Waterford remarks that June was kidnapped when she arrives home ("Other Women"). Positioning June's escape as a fictional kidnapping, placing the blame on kidnappers instead of June, dismisses her act as an act of resistance and also asserts power over her. In many ways, it articulates the denial some men have articulated during the #MeToo movement. In denying that June had anything to do with her own escape Commander Waterford denies that she ever had a voice. When "Other Women" ends with June standing in front of the front gate of the Waterford household waiting for her shopping partner—a ritualized act she took part in every day of the week before her escape—she repeatedly utters the phrase "We've been sent good weather" and nothing else. Such performativity simultaneously mocks ritual and enacts June's submission.

18 In the TV adaptation of *The Handmaid's Tale*, Mrs. Waterford, or Serena as she's more commonly known, plays an important role in being complicit to rape culture. She, like many of

the wives of Gilead, takes part in the Ceremony by holding down the handmaid's arms as her husband performs the ritualized rape. Serena is often cruel to June, but a stark shift of character occurs in the second season as her character is given more dimension, thus representing a slow but critical interruption of ritual. As many characters' backgrounds are explored throughout the show, Serena's is striking for how it demonstrates complicity and the giving up of one's rights. In a flashback to her life before Gilead, she is seen giving a speech to college students at a university about her beliefs that women should submit to their husbands and the audience's resulting disgust is apparent. Drawing on anti-Trump rhetoric in the real world, after Serena enters the lecture hall, a man of color can be seen holding a "Resist" poster ("First Blood"). Other audience members shout at her to leave and even call her a "Nazi," again reminding the audience of recent real-world events involving the clashes of such views. The scene demonstrates that she is a prolific activist; while conservative, she is an active participant in activist rhetoric in service of women, and this is a rhetoric that clearly held enough power to eventually become one of the guiding principles of Gilead. Serena's beliefs that women should submit to their husbands and take on the role of reproducing and raising children in lieu of pursuing a career make her complicit to the rape culture depicted in Gilead. What makes Serena's role in Gilead even more complicated is that in these flashbacks to her life before, Serena is seen using her beliefs as a basis for helping her husband develop the structure of Gilead that would ultimately be put into law. However, as mentioned, these laws—based on her own belief in women's responsibility to reproduce—ultimately do not produce the desired effect of solving the crisis of infertility, and instead, simply take away all of the agency that Serena and other women enjoyed before the creation of Gilead in addition to the infertility. Over time, through the flashbacks written into the TV adaptation, we witness both Serena's own feminist rhetoric and her submission to the norms and rituals of Gilead. Much of this is because women are ousted from having a voice in how Gilead will proceed as a nation. There are two contrasting storylines that drive the character of Mrs. Waterford: 1) the past where she submits and becomes more complacent to the power being enacted upon women; and 2) the present where she demonstrates trepid moves to protect and advocate for the rights of women.

19 As she has lost much of her agency, Serena exudes more resistance as the second season progresses. For example, when Commander Waterford was injured in a bombing orchestrated as an act of resistance by a group of handmaids, she takes it upon herself to draft new security orders and warrants and she asks June to help her ("After"). Women are not supposed to read or write in

Gilead, so in asking June to participate in drafting documents, this gesture honors that there is more depth to each woman beyond her reproductive capabilities. Later, when Jeanine finds out her baby, who was taken from her and given to her Commander and his wife, is sick, June feels comfortable asking Serena for her help in devising a way for Jeanine see the baby. Serena does so by forging Commander Waterford's signature on papers that allow the baby to see a specialist who is an expert on the baby's condition—a woman currently serving as a Martha because being a doctor, or indeed having any job at all, is forbidden for women in Gilead ("Women's Work"). Serena's gestures in this particular episode demonstrate acts of resistance that she did not exude as a character in season one, which aligned closely with the novel, and was adapted before the #MeToo movement became more prominent in American politics.

20 Serena's awareness of women's rights manifests in her gaze toward Canadians as she makes a visit to Canada with Commander Waterford. When they are driven to their visit with Canadian officials, she watches the women at work in business attire, a couple kissing, and people crying; Canada has not adopted the same societal structure as Gilead, and therefore is unchanged from "the time before" (Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale* 9) Gilead. The culminating act of resistance Serena takes part in is when asks the council for the right to teach their children how to read the Bible ("The Word"). Even though she is silenced once again, and even loses a finger for her request and for reading from the Bible, her actions engage some of the important participation within #MeToo discourse. Because of their circumstances, not all women who have experienced sexual assault have directly participated. It is a deeply personal choice to take part in #MeToo-driven social media, activism, and protest. However, some of the most overlooked participation in contemporary feminism has been in the ways people share, like, retweet, and retell the stories they have come across. Because Serena could not speak out and remains submissive to ritualized rape and hegemony, she is ultimately seen raising the voice of another by letting June take her daughter, born earlier in season two and taken away by the Waterfords, away with her when she escapes in the season two finale. This confirms Serena's newfound resistance to rape culture and its contemporary manifestations ("The Word"). This also positions June as subject, rather than object, which echoes one of the most important ways in which the #MeToo movement has challenged ritualized rape. In #MeToo, sexual assault is foregrounded as a true experience and the person who has experienced it tells their story and takes back power.

Contemporary Protest of Ritualized Rape

21 As *The Handmaid's Tale* television series has responded to the #MeToo movement, so too has the #MeToo movement responded to what occurs in season two. One striking moment in the second season of *The Handmaid's Tale* is at the end of the sixth episode. Several prominent men sit at the newly-built Rachel and Leah Center, where new handmaids are reconditioned, and Commander Waterford is delivering a speech. Handmaids stand both above the men and outside on the ground floor behind glass windows. Commander Waterford remarks:

My brothers, this facility represents a shared vision to restore a moral world in which we can serve God . . . Here, we can continue to show our commitment to Him and his Word and to honor our promise to the people of Gilead that we will replenish this earth with healthy children of faith.” (“First Blood”)

As Commander Waterford tries to finish his remarks, a handmaid named Ofglen (Emily's handmaid replacement) walks into the room from the outside. Ofglen gestures to the handmaids on the first floor and shows them the trigger in her hand for a bomb. As the handmaids run, she pivots and turns toward Commander Waterford. Running toward him, Ofglen triggers the bomb. Pre-bomb, the visual rhetoric of the gaze from the handmaids that are above the commanders is striking; they look down upon the commanders as Commander Waterford remarks that handmaids support their mission. This scene is echoed months later when Dr. Christine Blasey Ford testified before a committee after accusing Supreme Court Justice nominee Brett Kavanaugh of sexual assault. Dressed as handmaids, 15 women lined a balcony in the Hart Senate Office Building and engaged in a silent protest (Haslett). They gazed down upon onlookers and the door to the room where Ford and Kavanaugh give their testimonies, much like in *The Handmaid's Tale* at the opening of the Rachel and Leah Center.

22 Another critical dialectic between the #MeToo movement and *The Handmaid's Tale* occurs with regard to activist protest. In contemporary on-the-ground and digital protest, women and allies speak out against rape by sharing their personal stories and attaching their own names to them. This adds important depth and nuance to the #MeToo hashtag. Similarly, in the middle of the second season, while out shopping, June tells Emily her real name (“After”). June then turns to another handmaid and repeats the same act. This spreads throughout the grocery store and we hear the names of women—Dolores, Alma, Sarah. It is a small moment, but an act of resistance that mimics Milano's request that women who had experienced sexual assault and harassment tweet #MeToo. This performance acknowledges the solidarity and coalition-building in fourth-wave

feminism outside of the text. More visible protests occur when the Waterfords visit Canada in “Smart Power.” In one protest scene, we see Luke, June’s husband who escaped to Canada after her capture in Gilead, and Moira, who escapes to Canada later as well, holding signs with June’s face, and the words “My name is Moira,” respectively, in order to get the Waterfords’ attention. The act of naming or embodying serves to interrupt sex-as-ritual or ritualized rape-culture just as activists do when they say #MeToo. The use of names and faces in signs in *The Handmaid’s Tale* serves to give a platform to the #MeToo movement in these ways. In combining the body with a name, a hashtag, or other visual rhetoric, the person assaulted becomes more than a “sexual assault victim,” but an ally to those who surround her and who are immersed in the same rape culture.

23 Perhaps one of the most visceral moments within the series that is an act of activism comes in the episode titled “The Last Ceremony.” This is the only moment in the second season where the Ceremony is performed, which is a striking difference from the first season, where the Ceremony is featured in many episodes. During the scene, Emily, who has been returned from the colonies to become a handmaid again, can be seen enduring the ritualized rape of her new Commander. In voiceover, we hear June saying:

You treat it like a job. An unpleasant job. To be gotten through as fast as possible. Kissing is forbidden. This makes it bearable. One detaches oneself. One describes an act of copulation, fertilization perhaps. No more to you than a bee is to a flower. You steal yourself. You pretend not to be present. Not in the flesh. You leave your body. (“The Last Ceremony”)

In most film and television, when a sexual assault occurs, it is flashed before the audience in a quick and violent way; we may see pain on the woman’s face afterward, but ultimately we never know it in the way she does. This moment in *The Handmaid’s Tale* is activist because pain and detachment are viscerally showcased to name the act as rape. In one of the scenes that soon follows, the wives prepare the birth ritual for Serena, which attempts to make the birth of a child conceived during rape beautiful, and is meant to make the wife of the household feel as if she conceived the baby instead of the handmaid. When the baby does not come quickly enough for her liking, Serena suggests a “natural way” to induce labor that involves Commander Waterford raping June. This scene further complicates our understanding of rape-as-ritual because we are forced to confront the ways in which this rape, though exactly the same as the Ceremony, happens outside of the ritualized Ceremony, and therefore, is depicted as much more of a violation. This is further complicated by the fact that Serena aids the rape, and is understood as symbolically raping June

because it was not only her idea, but she is also seen to be forcibly holding June down while it happens—an act that is clearly distinguishable from the ritualistic and non-functional holding of hands during the Ceremony. In this moment, Serena’s acts are reminiscent of many men and women who remain in disbelief of the women in the #MeToo movement who have come forward. At the same time, this may be the moment where Serena realizes that what they have been doing all along to June, and that what they have been calling “the Ceremony” is, in fact, rape. Arguably, Serena’s resulting knowledge, and apparent regret, of how her actions subvert the cognitive dissonance that has allowed her, until now, to see the Ceremony as a consensual act, is what leads her to the act of resistance discussed above in the season finale.

24 The representation of ritualized rape in the television adaptation of *The Handmaid’s Tale* challenges the viewing public and the larger #MeToo movement to think about how rape has become so a part of our culture that it is taken as a given; as ritual, and therefore, as part of what it means to be a woman in the United States. By immersing in Atwood’s dystopian universe, by either reading the novel or watching the television adaptation, the audience is not offered the opportunity to escape their everyday realities, as one might expect a novel or television show to do. Rather, both versions of *The Handmaid’s Tale* were created to offer a discomfiting, if exaggerated, representation of the conditions that audiences deal with in the real world. If the novel’s dystopian representation of women’s rights issues in the midst of second-wave feminism seemed “fairly outrageous” (Atwood, “Age of Trump”) at the time it was released, then it is important to consider how the television adaptation is being received now as the #MeToo movement unfolds concurrently, and the show engages directly with those issues. Now, at another crucial time for women’s rights and as another wave of feminism unfolds, fictional narratives like Hulu’s *The Handmaid’s Tale* have the potential to evocatively represent the real-world conditions that women live with everyday, and for that reason, it is important to consider the ways in which they serve as a reflection of the issues that most urgently need to be addressed in our society.

Incitement to Further Study

25 Scholarship suggests that up to 20% of women in college are raped by the time they finish their degrees (Krebs et al. 643). Contemporary discourse is so critical that many women do not report sexual assault, and therefore, these numbers could be much higher. This occurs is either because women know their perpetrator and feel pressure not to report them or because they do not

know how or where to report their assault safely without risking judgment, condemnation, or her private information being released (Streng and Kamimura 65). This is why assault survivors and their activist allies will continue to protest against moments where women are disbelieved, where reproduction rights are threatened, and where power is being enacted upon women in various institutions—including marriage, the workplace, and media.

26 Recent protests, including the aforementioned protest at the Kavanaugh hearings, have used the visual rhetoric of the handmaid. For example, there have been handmaid protests in Ireland and Argentina for abortion legislation. Atwood explains that the red cloak worn by the handmaids “has been adopted by women in many countries as a symbol of protest about various issues having to do with the requisitioning of women’s bodies by the state” (Beaumont and Holpuch). She believes that the symbolic handmaid costume is effective because “Nobody can accuse [protestors] of dressing immodestly, and [they] can’t be kicked out for causing a disruption because [they’re] not saying anything,” (Beaumont and Holpuch) and, at the same time, “anybody looking at it understands it” (Walsh). When it was discovered that Vice President Mike Pence would be in New York on July 31st, 2018, dozens of women dressed as handmaids with tiny shoes in their hands to call attention to the separation of migrant children from their parents. This work demonstrates the ways in which feminist visual rhetoric is not just concerned for sexual assault victims, but extends its critical political engagement to matters of immigration and citizenship as well.

27 There have also been more localized protests involving imagery and symbolism inspired by *The Handmaid’s Tale*, such as a small protest occurred in Staten Island, New York at a farmers market following the Kavanaugh hearings (Kashiwagi). A small-town protest also occurred in Belgrade, Montana in early November 2018 where a single woman was dressed as a handmaid in a crowd of less than one hundred to protest a Trump rally (Lynes). There was also Roundrock, Texas in October of 2018 where members of the Reproductive Justice Alliance and The Texas Handmaids gathered in handmaid garb to protest the funding of the Pregnancy Help Center of Williamson County (Miller). The Texas Handmaids reportedly have a mission that drives their work: “[T]o use the dramatic red robes and white bonnets from *The Handmaid’s Tale* to call out politicians and businesses that keep women from accessing reproductive justice” (Miller). While regional culture certainly affects the ways in which handmaid rhetoric is used, we must pay considerable attention to how the #MeToo movement and *The Handmaid’s Tale* will continue to

engage in intersectional politics. In response to being asked about how the US informs the novel, Atwood responded, “I probably wasn’t worried enough. Yeah [sic], I think if you look at state by state, some of the laws their putting in right now, you know I probably wasn’t quite worried enough” (Beaumont and Holpuch).

28 On November 28th, 2018 Margaret Atwood announced that she has been writing a sequel to the *The Handmaid’s Tale*, which will be released in September of 2019 and titled *The Testaments*. In her press release announcing the sequel, Atwood wrote: “Dear Readers: Everything you’ve ever asked me about Gilead and its inner workings is the inspiration for this book. Well, almost everything! The other inspiration is the world we’ve been living in” (“Atwood Writing Sequel”). Atwood’s decision to release a sequel to the novel after over thirty years is further proof that the novel, and its television adaptation, engage with issues that are more urgently relevant now than ever before. Much as the TV adaptation has allowed us to do, the ways in which *The Testaments* takes inspiration from contemporary discussions on these issues will offer further opportunity to examine how Atwood uses Gilead as a dystopian mirror to reflect concerns surrounding women’s rights in our own world. The connections we find between the TV adaptation and #MeToo are by no means exhaustive. Further research must pay attention to how silence plays a critical role in contemporary feminist rhetoric. In many handmaid protests, the handmaids remain silent while interrupting the normativity of a political space or moment. Likewise, unpacking the ways in which ritualized acts go unnoticed and unnamed in our culture can aid in interrupting dominant ideologies that enact power upon women. The movement and the series share the explicit act of speaking out, but in what ways is silence also a critical rhetorical strategy? Can silence encourage or *be* a pejorative act that interrupts hegemony? We are motivated to explore this further and conclude by stating that women are beginning to wake up to the ways in which their bodies are objectified and dismissed. Women are also becoming aware of how their bodies have their own story and play an integral role in their survival.

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Winning at Any Cost? Gender, Sport and Violence

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Abstract:

Sexual violence on college campuses is not a new issue, however, the current media spotlight has brought greater public attention to this problem. Yet, despite this attention, there continues to be incidences of sexual violence across university campuses, and in university athletics in particular. In more than 100 cases of sexual violence on Canadian university campuses over a ten-year span, 23% involved university athletes as alleged perpetrators (Quinlan et al.). Given that competitive athletes compose between 1-3% of the university student population in Canada, they are over-represented in reported cases of sexual violence (Quinlan et al.), which suggests that sexual violence in university sport is particularly problematic. In this paper, this issue is addressed by asking how ruling relations inform institutional responses to sexual violence. First, to explore this question a literature review of sexual violence in sport is provided. Second, a description of how the ruling relations of organizations as a conceptual framework is outlined. Third, a consideration of the institutional responses to two cases of sexual violence in university athletics reported in the Canadian media are described. Following a discussion concerning these cases, suggestions are offered that address sexual violence in Canadian university sport, which may be translatable to other contexts.

Addressing Sexual Violence in Canadian University Sport

1 Sexual assault in sport is an issue that continues to make headlines. In recent years, there has been increased media attention on sexual assaults committed by amateur and professional athletes, along with some college and Olympic coaches. In 2017, former USA Gymnastics doctor Larry Nassar was convicted of molesting more than 100 female athletes during the three decades he worked with USA Gymnastics (Eggert and Householder). One year earlier, in 2016, former National Football League (NFL) star and broadcaster Darren Sharper was sentenced to 20 years in prison after pleading guilty to various charges of drugging and raping nine women in four states (Knoll). England's Football Association launched an internal investigation into allegations after more than 20 players came forward alleging abuse in their youth (Capelouto). Thus, it is evident that sexual violence is an issue felt in all levels of sport, from amateur to professional leagues around the world (Quinlan et al. 140).

2 In Canada, sexual violence on college campuses is not a new issue, however, the current media spotlight has brought greater public attention to this problem. Yet, despite this attention, there continues to be incidences of sexual violence across Canadian university campuses, and in university athletics in particular. In more than 100 cases of sexual violence on Canadian university campuses over a ten-year span, 23% involved university athletes as alleged perpetrators (Quinlan et al. 141). Given that competitive athletes compose between 1-3% of the university student

population in Canada, they are over-represented in reported cases of sexual violence (Quinlan et al. 141), which suggests that sexual violence in university sport is particularly problematic. In this paper, this problem will be addressed by asking how ruling relations inform institutional responses to sexual violence.

3 To explore this problem, we begin by reviewing the literature that addresses the topic of sexual violence in varsity sport. Second, the ruling relations of organizations as a conceptual framework is outlined. The argument is made that ruling relations are informing the responses to sexual violence in Canadian university sport. Ruling relations is a concept developed by sociologist Dorothy Smith, to name the socially organized exercises of power that shape people's actions and their lives. These ruling relations act to "privilege particular experiences, and marginalize others" (Smith 76). Third, the institutional responses to two cases of sexual violence in university athletics reported in the Canadian media are explored. We use case study research, because it allows us to engage with incidents of sexual violence in Canadian university sport and to critically assess how gender influences institutional response. Following a discussion concerning these cases, suggestions to address sexual violence in Canadian university sport are offered.

Literature Review

4 Sexual violence is extremely prevalent in most societies, and this is certainly true of Canada, and particularly post-secondary institutions in Canada. 35% of first year undergraduate females report experiencing one attempted or completed rape (Senn et al. 4). Sexual violence includes "any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise direct, against a person's sexuality using coercion" (WHO 149). While all genders can experience and perpetrate sexual violence, males are disproportionately offenders of sexual violence, and females are disproportionately survivors/victims (Brennan and Taylor-Butts).

5 There is extensive evidence linking sports and athletics to violence. A recent review of eleven studies on sports participation and violence found that there is a higher rate of alcohol use and violence in athlete populations compared to non-athlete populations (Sønderlund et al.). This review demonstrated that there are several factors that may mediate the link between sports and violence, including hypermasculinity and violent social identity. Another study done in the UK found similar results showing significant relationships between masculinity, alcohol consumption, and interpersonal violence and aggression for athletes (O'Brien et al.). Further evidence from the

United States links athletic participation and drinking at parties with holding stereotypical definitions of rape and being less likely to recognize as assault as rape or to recognize sexual assault as likely (Boyle and Walker). Thus, masculinity and alcohol consumption are common factors that appear in much of the literature about violence and sports.

6 Other scholars examine the relationship between sexual aggression and the participation in athletics or fraternities. Murnen and Kohlman did a meta-analysis of 29 studies and showed that there is a link between male athletics participation and rape myth acceptance, hypermasculinity, and self-reported sexual aggression. In their meta-analysis, they discussed how hypermasculinity may be fostered by participation in athletics, and that sexual aggression may result as spillover from a model of success in male sports teams that “is associated with control, domination, competitiveness, physical strength, and aggressiveness” (Murnen and Kohlman 146). Furthermore, they note that athletes often have special status at universities, which may lead to feelings of entitlement.

7 Although there is evidence in the literature to demonstrate a link between male athletic participation and sexual violence, most discussions concentrate on the impact of sports on attitudes and behaviours of individual male athletes, rather than institutional factors. In the prevention literature, for example, there is an abundance of empirical articles exploring the impact of sexual violence prevention programs with athletes, including bystander intervention (Exner-Cortens and Cummings; McMahon; Moynihan and Banyard) and empathy induction (Foubert and Berry). However, there is a dearth of research on institutional prevention of sexual violence and responses to sexual violence in varsity athletics (Crosset; Quinlan et al.).

8 One study on the role of institutional factors on on-campus reported rape prevalence examined campus-related factors across 524 campuses in the United States. It showed that the type of athletics program and the institution’s alcohol policy were related to reported sexual assaults (Stotzer and MacCartney). Universities with athletics programs in higher divisions report more incidences of sexual violence than universities with athletics programs in lower divisions. Another study evaluates the implications of the guidance document for *Title IX* for athletics administrators (Osborne et al). Barbara Osborne et al. note that administrators have been inconsistent and ineffective in addressing sexual violence, and that the failure of coaches and administrators to discipline athletes has been found to increase the likelihood that athletes will commit sexual violence. The guidelines speak to the obligation to respond to sexual violence, eliminate harassment, prevent recurrence, and address the effects of sexual violence. They specifically state

that “it is unacceptable to try to hide acts of sexual harassment, sexual assault or sexual violence committed by student-athletes by handling things within the athletics department” (Osbourne et al. 16). Although these guidelines are a positive step forward in addressing and shifting institutional responses, there are limited sources pertaining to the Canadian context (Quinlan et al.; Haiven). This may be because there is not a similar national or provincial initiative such as *Title IX* and that it is difficult for researchers to gain access to the processes and structures within organizations that produce the current responses to sexual violence in sports on campuses. To illustrate this gap and to encourage future research and conversations, in the following section, we discuss two Canadian case studies which demonstrate university institutional responses to sexual violence.

The Ruling Relations of Sport

9 To explore the cases in this article, specific attention to what occurs at the micro-level of organizational life must occur. This means considering how organizational privilege shows itself in different ways. For example, some bodies move with ease within some environments, while others do not. Such ease of movement is aided by familiarity with cultural norms and gendered assumptions. Thus, our spatial surroundings are never neutral; they are full of past gestures, assumptions, and ways of doing things.

10 In many organizations, ruling relations privilege some bodies over others. Ruling relations is a concept developed by sociologist Dorothy Smith, to name the socially organized exercises of power that shape people’s actions and their lives. In her work, Smith considers the overarching structures which generate power and influence action within them. Smith argues that we are “ruled by forms or organization vested in and mediated by texts and documents, and constituted externally to particular individuals and their personal and familial relations” (Smith 81). Ruling relations are the overarching structures (work, schools, governments) that organize our lives (Smith; DeVault and McCoy). Thus, the ruling relations of an organization have the power to inform experience.

11 For Smith, the ruling relations are always mediated by texts and processes through which the “actual is translated into the institutional” (Smith 47). These ruling relations privilege particular subjectivities and experiences, while erasing others (Smith). Thus, by applying the concept of ruling relations, everyday norms, assumptions, logics, and social interactions that structure people’s everyday lives can be assessed (Smith). Research that acknowledges these ruling relations can seek to uncover what bodies are privileged within organizations, to better support those who are challenged.

12 In our textual analysis, we are concerned with how ruling relations are enforced through the actions of the organizations. By conducting a case study on the media portrayals of two instances of sexual violence within Canadian universities, we critically assess which ruling relations are at play and how these perpetuate silence around instances of sexual violence. We see that the ability for victims/survivors to speak to these instances is severely limited by the manner in which institutions respond to cases of sexual violence. There appears to be a cone of silence that surrounds these cases, which results in minimal support for those who experience violence and obscures accountability at both the individual and institutional level when sexual violence occurs.

Exploring Cases

13 The primary aim of this research is to see how institutions respond to allegations of sexual violence in their sport organizations. More specifically, uncovering how these responses are informed by ruling relations highlights the actions taken to address sexual violence in sport. We chose case study research as a strategy for the methodological exploration of this issue. Due to case study's exploratory and explanatory nature, an exploration into the how and why questions around the issue of sexual violence in Canadian university sport can be explored (Harrison, Birks, Mills and Mills).

14 In order to uncover how ruling relations inform responses to sexual violence, two cases of sexual violence that involved university athletes are examined. Both cases chosen are specific to the Canadian university context and involve an athlete as the perpetrator of sexual violence. Despite the incidents occurring at different universities (University of Saskatchewan and McGill University), each will be evaluated based on the institutional response following an incident of sexual violence on their campuses. This analysis is limited to two case studies in order to preserve the depth of analysis while allowing us to make some observations about similarities in institutional responses. It is understood that instances of sexual violence are individual, situational, and thus complex. However, a multi-case analysis gives attention to the ways in which these instances of sexual violence in Canadian university sport are similar with one another (Stake).

15 The Canadian university sport context was chosen because of a gap in the current literature concerning sexual violence in sport. A limited amount of research focuses on this context (Quinlan et al.). Furthermore, to keep the focus on institutional responses, the discussion about the actions and responses from other members of the community, athletes, students, and other participants, except for where it is necessary to elucidate the institutional response, is limited.

16 In the following sections of this paper, examples from institutions of higher education in Canada are outlined, in order to evaluate their responses to sexual violence in sport. First, each case will be described. Second, case study analysis will be employed to better understand the decisions and actions associated with each institutional response. Finally, this paper will conclude with a discussion on how the ruling relations of sport inform institutional responses of sexual violence in Canadian university sport.

Saskatchewan Men's Volleyball

17 Matthew Meyer played a season with the University of Saskatchewan Huskies men's volleyball team while out on bail, after he was charged with sexually assaulting a woman and videotaping it (Yard). Allegations that Meyer sexually assaulted a woman at a party surfaced in January 2016, when he was a member of Medicine Hat College's Rattlers volleyball team in Alberta. Meyer left the team and the college voluntarily a short time after allegations were released (Yard).

18 According to court files accessed by the authors, the victim/survivor and a friend attended a house party where Meyer lived. The victim/survivor drank alcohol and neared the point of blacking out, at which time a friend laid her down on the living room couch to sleep (Radford). She woke the next morning with Meyer on top of her, touching her and penetrating her without her consent. She then recognized the sound of pictures being taken on a cell phone, and pretended to be asleep out of fear. Once out of the house, the woman contacted police and went to a local hospital, police responded and Meyer was identified (Radford). After he was taken into custody, Meyer gave a statement to police admitting what happened. Investigators later found 147 images on Meyer's phone of the victim/survivor being assaulted (Radford). He was then charged and released on bail, and soon after left Alberta for the University of Saskatchewan (Yard).

19 The volleyball team's coach Brian Gavlas acknowledged that he knew about these charges when he recruited the volleyball player. Apparently, Gavlas had known Meyer since he was a 16-year-old high school student and indicated that he had coached him previously. When asked about why he would let Meyer play on the team while he was released on bail, Gavlas stated that "it became a choice that it would be best for him to be supported and that nowhere along the lines did he take anything that had happened in the past into account" (Radford 1). Once the season was over, the player pleaded guilty and was sentenced to two years in prison and three years' probation. An internal investigation by Saskatchewan Huskie Athletics also commenced upon the ending of

the season, and Gaylas was fired after he admitted he knew about the sexual assault charge (Diebert).

20 When the university was questioned about the incident, a spokeswoman for University of Saskatchewan athletics stated that “there is currently no policy in place and to our knowledge criminal record checking is not practiced across university sports” (Deibert). At the time of the statement, the code of conduct did not specifically mention sexual assault. However, it did include a passage about student-athletes conducting themselves in a manner in which their behaviour will not be considered a form of harassment, including comments and/or conduct, or which creates an uncomfortable environment for anyone involved in Huskie Athletics, at the University of Saskatchewan or in the general public (Deibert).

21 The victim/survivor provided an impact statement to the *National Post*, where she states that she is still traumatized by the incident. She indicates that she has become severely depressed following what had happened to her, and at one point attempted suicide. She has since become afraid to leave her house, because she cannot bear to see individuals who know what has happened to her (*National Post*; Radford).

McGill University Redman Football Team

22 Three McGill University Redmen football players were charged with sexual assault with a weapon and forcible confinement in April 2012 (*National Post*). Ian Sheriff, Brenden Carrière and Guillaume Tremblay allegedly attacked a Concordia University student in September 2011 (*National Post*). The victim/survivor recounted the events of the night during the trial, stating that she was raped after meeting two of the players at a local bar (Bachelder). She had gone to their apartment and was given an opened beer can, which she believes may have been drugged (Fazioli). She testified that she remembered being on a bed with the three men and telling them to stop. The next morning, she had her clothes thrown at her and was asked to leave because the players had to go to practice (Bachelder).

23 Following these events the athletes were charged. However, they were allowed to continue their studies at McGill University. Furthermore, the three students continued to play on the Redman football team, despite the allegations. They were not removed from the team by the coach or the university, but instead quit the team themselves once the charges went public (*CBC News*). Furthermore, one of the young men also was also hired to work as a sport-leadership counsellor at McGill's Sports Camp, after being accused of sexual assault (*CBC News*).

24 The charges of sexual assault and forcible confinement were dropped during trial. The move was in response to an email sent to the prosecutors from a witness. The testimony was a four-line email, in which the witness claimed that the survivor had agreed to have sex with the men, making it consensual (Bachelder). However, the witness was not able to be contacted to speak during trial and was never cross-examined on her testimony (*National Post*). Instead, the prosecution decided that the survivor did not have enough evidence for the case, and withdrew charges (Fazioli).

25 The victim/survivor says she is still “struggling to come to grips with an alleged assault that has, unfortunately, defined and transformed her life” (*National Post*). She has applied to law school and hopes to use her experience to help other sexual assault victims get their justice. She stated that she realizes her fight is with the system, not with the alleged perpetrators. She recognizes that it goes beyond her story and ultimately started “a big discussion about how terribly victims are treated in the system” (*National Post*).

Discussion

26 The cases, as presented in the media reports, suggest inadequate institutional responses in responding to instances of sexual violence. Although we realize such reporting brings with it bias, nevertheless it seems to us that we can see a pattern emerging that reaffirms the idea that when it comes to sport, ruling relations privilege some bodies over others. Furthermore, the athletic departments in each of these cases sought to uphold their institutional brand over and above an ethical response to sexual violence reports. For example, in the Saskatchewan case the spokeswoman for University of Saskatchewan athletics stated that “there is currently no policy in place” (Deibert). Thus, the responsibility is redirected away from the institution. Therefore, what happens is that a university may be less likely to admit to wrongdoing by its athletes because that can look badly on the university as a whole (Crosset). Although it would be wrong to generalize from these two cases, research suggests that these cases are not anomalies. It seems that what can be seen as an institutional desire for self-protection can adversely affect those who experience sexual violence to feel that their voices have been heard (Quinlan et al.; Gardiner et al.).

27 One common factor in these two cases is that the coaches both hired players who they knew had committed sexual offences at other institutions. Thus, the institution knowingly puts other students at risk of being harmed. US and Canadian research shows, for example, that although athletes may be forced off the team, they may be allowed to finish their term at the university

(Crosset; Quinlan et al). Thus, an athlete can still have all the privileges of being a student. Some coaches allow this so that the athlete can finish up the term, and then in some cases, coaches allow these athletes to go elsewhere, not always telling others of the offences. This is because some coaches feel that everyone deserves a second chance and by not telling of the offense, the athlete can start afresh. However, Crosset argues that “most sexual assaults are committed by a person who has already committed an assault” (75). Thus, not alerting officials to this problem exacerbates it. If there is an “atmosphere where violence is condoned by coaches, then it is more likely that violence will occur” (Crosset 76). These actions maintain a culture of silence in sport, which “serves to advantage the offender over the victim/survivor” (Quinlan et al. 141).

28 It was also apparent in these cases that the victim’s best interests were not prioritized. Both coaches overlooked the charges in order to have the player(s) on their team. What is evident here is that there are institutional practices that support male privilege, normalize interpersonal violence, and ultimately fail to hold athletes or the administration accountable for their behavior (Crosset 76). This perpetuates a silence around instances of sexual violence. For example, in the McGill case, in order for the victim/survivor to be heard, she needed to provide an impact statement to the *National Post*—that is, provide a statement about a traumatic experience to the public because the institution itself did so little to support her and tried to silence her.

29 What also emerges from these cases is a contradictory dynamic that reveals tensions between ethical decision making and institutional practices. This contradictory dynamic reveals the extent to which the privileging of athletes and athletic abilities inform university responses to these incidents. More specifically, hegemonic masculinity acts as a ruling relation that impacts university responses to these incidents. Hegemonic masculinity is “the configuration of gender practice which guarantees the dominant position of men” (Connell and Messerschmidt 77). Sport constructs, maintains, and reproduces dominant ideologies around hegemonic masculinity (Anderson). These ideologies are so prominent in sport, that they are rarely questioned because they become common sense and natural (Messner). What matters to many of those involved in sport is winning; sometimes, at any cost. In an environment where competition is king (Ball), the chance of addressing issues that negatively affect the team, such as sexual violence complaints, may be less than robust. When this ruling relation comes to light and influences decisions, star athletes’ violent behaviour(s) may end up being overlooked or even condoned.

Conclusion

30 These highly publicized media cases reveal how ruling relations maintain an institutional culture that privileges the physical acumen of male athletes over the safety and bodily autonomy of female students. In the University of Saskatchewan case and the McGill case, the coach's decision privileged the athlete(s) and not the victim/survivor. The athlete(s) was allowed to return to play, which makes it harder for the rest of the team, the victim/survivor, and community members to see that their behavior was inappropriate. Furthermore, this creates barriers for victims/survivors to report varsity athlete perpetrators of sexual violence because there appears to be no repercussions. If university sport continues to not recognize how ruling relations privilege athletic performance and the impact this has on sexual violence responses, victims/survivors of sexual violence will continue to be silenced in this organization. As we have shown through our two case studies, there is a contradictory dynamic that reveals tensions between ethical decision making and institutional practices. Hegemonic masculinity acts as a ruling relation that impacts university responses to incidents of sexual violence by male athletes, and the need to win overshadows the need for ethical responses to sexual violence in sport.

31 What is unique about our research findings is the ways in which we use Smith's ruling relations as a framework that reveals how gender operates in higher education institutions to privilege some bodies over others. Using this framework highlights how the need to win can overshadow the need for ethical responses to sexual violence in sport. This is a major problem that serves to silence sexual violence in varsity sport. Although there is limited research on institutional responses to sexual violence and the ruling relations that underpin these responses, the two cases we examine demonstrate that there is much room for improvement in dealing with sexual violence in sport. Masculinity and varsity sports participation have been shown to be associated with sexual violence (Murnen and Kohlman). Understanding this association through the lens of ruling relations allows us to create solutions and address sexual violence in ways that can meaningfully shift sports culture.

32 The limitations of this study are that it is based on two cases; yet we would argue that these cases are emblematic of the kind of ruling relations that Smith argues "informs experiences and serves to privilege some bodies over others" (75). One fruitful approach to ending the silence of sexual violence in Canadian university sport may be to create a system of allies within teams. This could include discussions around appropriate and inappropriate behaviours, responses to sexual violence, and supports for victims/survivors that foster a sense of community. Thus, instead of

focusing on an individual leader, conversations amongst teams may foster not only greater leadership among university athletes, but also a change in institutional culture and individual behavior. While this may be a good response at the player level, suggestions at the institutional level are also required.

33 Institutions have to be willing to make ethical decisions by putting the safety and body autonomy of students above the reputation of athletic programs. One way to facilitate this shift in Canadian institutions is to adopt guidelines, following the example of *Title IX* in the United States. This would require athletic departments to be transparent in their handling of sexual assault and make explicit that sexual assault is not tolerated within athletics. Accountability has to be built into the policies, as well as prevention measures, so that institutions only response is not limited to simply firing a coach and removing athletes.

34 After review of these cases, it is evident that work needs to be done to ensure that athletic departments improve the way they deal with the issues of sexual violence in sport. Prevention programs designed specifically for athletes is one strategy, creating a bystander program is another, but cultural change needs to change at a deeper level. In many varsity programs, winning at all costs can create a toxic culture that fails to address sexual violence. Thus, athletes, coaches, and athletic departments need to step up to ensure this ruling relation is recognized, and work to effect cultural change by way of policies, personal practices, and institutional responses to sexual violence.

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Marching Forward with #MeToo:

The Representations of Women in American Political Television Series

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Abstract:

One year has passed since the #MeToo movement started to spread on social media in October, 2017. This powerful movement has connected women not only in the United States but also around the globe to form a strong alliance to renegotiate women's roles and status in contemporary society in which sexism and misogyny are becoming a rising trend and women are challenged by the threat of sexual assault and harassment in the workplace. In the recent October issue of *The Economist*, a front-page op-ed puts forward that #Metoo "is not about sex so much as about power—how power is distributed, and how people are held accountable when power is abused" ("#MeToo, One Year On" 13). In the world of law and politics, such biased power distribution between men and women is even more apparent. Struggling at the periphery of legal and political fields, women have been challenged by gender stereotypes and have been insulated from power and leadership. Over the past decades, American women have made significant progresses in legal and political professions. In the 2018 election, Sharice Davids and Deb Haaland became the first two Native American women elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. More and more women politicians rise up to seize power, subvert the male-centric system, and, therefore, provide real-life examples for numerous American television series featuring women's advancement in law and politics.

The present article aims to investigate the representations of women in two American political television series—*House of Cards* (Netflix, 2013-2018) and *The Good Wife* (CBS, 2009-2016)—by tackling one major question, namely, the representations of women and how they deal with the sexual assault cases. In particular, the analysis concentrates on the female rape victims (including one female politician) who have experienced sexual assault, and women lawyers who represent and help the female rape victims. By focusing on the rape-centered episodes in these two television dramas, this article also attempts to connect with some real-life incidents, for instance, the #MeToo movement, so as to contemplate existing problems with respect to women's empowerment, gender equality, sexual misconducts, and social justice in and beyond legal and political fields.

"Everything in the world is about sex except sex. Sex is about power."
—Oscar Wilde

"You've got to deny, deny, deny and push back on these women,"
[Trump] said. "If you admit to anything and any culpability, then you're dead. That was a big mistake you made. You didn't come out guns blazing and just challenge them. You showed weakness. You've got to be strong. You've got to be aggressive. You've got to push back hard. You've got to deny anything that's said about you. Never admit."
—Bob Woodward

1 Since October, 2017, triggered by the Weinstein scandal, the #MeToo movement “has moved from word of mouth to social media and across the world” with the aim to protect women's rights and end sexual harassment and assault against women in the workplace (Frye, “From Politics to Policy” n.p.). This powerful new social media movement has connected women not only in the United States but also around the globe. In a recent October issue of *The Economist*, a front-page op-ed puts forward that #MeToo “is not about sex so much as about power—how power is distributed, and how people are held accountable when power is abused” (“#MeToo, One Year On” 13). A recent 2018 Pew Research Center survey on sexual harassment in the workplace in the United States shows that there are more women who have experienced sexual harassment than men: “Some 44% of Americans say they have received unwanted sexual advances or verbal or physical harassment of a sexual nature. About six-in-ten women (59%) say they have experienced this, while 27% of men say the same” (Graf n.p.). To resist against gender inequality and gender power imbalance, #MeToo has formed a strong alliance to renegotiate women's roles and status in today's society and has given a voice to those women who have been challenged by the threats or the experiences of sexual assault and harassment. In this movement, women who had been sexually assaulted but had kept silent in fear of public criticism and scrutiny began to share their past and speak up for women with similar experiences.

2 In recent years, television series have become “more open about treating political issues and social controversies” despite their inclination towards entertaining subjects as well as “less emotional and less controversial” topics (Cuklanz 1). Specifically, prime-time television series often include up-to-date controversial subjects within the shows very carefully so as to “avoid offending potential audience members” (Cuklanz 1). Nevertheless, by mirroring some of the most debated social issues, television series serve as platforms for the audiences to participate in the dialogues discussing social and political changes and problems. In *Rape on Prime Time: Television, Masculinity, and Sexual Violence*, Lisa M. Cuklanz points out that “issue-oriented or issue-based” research with respect to television series is significant in connecting the audiences with “public issue advocacy with fictional dramatic programming on prime time” (2). Paul Bergman considers popular legal and political television dramas as important components of “popular legal culture” which can “[transmit] powerful messages about such topics as the fairness of a justice system, the content of legal rules, the processes by which laws are made and cases decided, and the work and attitudes of lawyers and judges” (n.p.). The television shows' influence on the public's “beliefs about the content and functioning of rape evidence” is particularly crucial, as they can create opportunities for the viewers to discuss and

debate about the existing problems both in terms of legal and cultural aspects that may harm the victims again:

rules protecting rape complainants may exist on paper but are of little use in the real world. This is especially true given the breadth and strength of the pre-existing attitude that the legal system is a ‘second rapist.’ (. . .) To the extent that rape complainants’ reluctance to report their attackers to the police is due to their beliefs that the formal legal system will treat all rape complainants like them harshly and unfairly, the television portrayals do constitute a third rapist. (Bergman, n.p.)

Besides, as the topic of rape still largely “remains as an ‘unspeakable’ event” in present days (qtd. in Projansky 90), television series which present narratives of sexual crimes break this cultural taboo by “[providing] an opportunity to both observe and question a multitude of societal forces that shape our attitudes, beliefs, and identities” (Bloom 6).

3 Particularly, legal and political television series positioning women’s rights and status at center stage can be considered as meaningful cultural products not only in constructing a discourse challenging patriarchal ideologies and systems, but also in influencing people’s “attitudes about gender, rape, [and] raped women” (Bloom 6), connecting them with social movements and advocacies which aim to eliminate gender stereotypes and bring gender equality to different fields in the public sphere. The present article aims to examine the representations of women in two American political television series—*House of Cards* and *The Good Wife*—by tackling one major question, namely, the representations of women and how they deal with the sexual assault cases. In particular, the analysis focuses not only on the female rape victims (including one female politician) who have experienced sexual assault, but also on women lawyers who represent and help female rape victims. The narratives of rape cases in both series can be closely connected with recent social issues and movements, providing “a unique and important opportunity for the study of relationships between television programming and social change” (Cuklanz 2). Therefore, this article also attempts to connect with some recent real-life incidents, for instance, the #MeToo movement, so as to contemplate on the existing problems with respect to women’s empowerment, gender equality, sexual misconducts, and social justice in and beyond legal and political fields.

4 *House of Cards* (Netflix, 2013-2018) is a recent American political thriller centered on how the political couple Francis and Claire Underwood survives, struggles, and strives for the presidency in a corrupted Washington. In particular, the show features Claire Underwood as the leading female protagonist with greater significance than any other female characters in former American political television series. The emergence of such a female leading role like

Claire Underwood is an inevitable cultural phenomenon. In recent years, especially after the 2016 U.S. presidential election, many scholars have noticed the increasing influence of Hillary Clinton as the first female presidential candidate nominated by a major political party in American history, and have, therefore, considered such Hillary-esque character to be an indispensable and unavoidable trend in American political television series (Tally 125). Throughout the series, Claire is not featured stereotypically as “the frustrated striver, the political wife, [or] the unlikely winner” as in any previous American political drama. She no longer stays on the sidelines, watching the male politicians playing the political game at the center of the political stage. Instead, she is given the opportunity to use her ambition and competence to rise to ultimate power. In this way, Claire Underwood fulfils the public expectations for “a Clinton presidency through the fictional representations of powerful women in Washington” (ibid).

5 As a political drama, *House of Cards* amplifies the subject on gender and rape through its representation of women and sexual assault incidents in the political sphere. By providing different portrayals of women living in the aftermath of sexual misconduct, the series unfolds the obstacles that women have to overcome when constantly challenged by gender inequality and stereotypes. In this part, the focus will be put upon two rape victims in terms of how they voice their experiences and struggle to protect their own rights and benefits. The first rape victim revealed in the series is Claire Underwood. In season 2, while taking a live televisual interview, in order to cover up her former experiences of three abortions, Claire takes her adviser’s suggestion and lies about her past, claiming that she just had one abortion as a result of a sexual assault conducted by General Dalton McGinnis, who raped Claire when she was in her freshman year:

Claire: I became pregnant as a result of a sexual assault.

Reporter: Are you saying that you—you were—

Claire: Raped.

Reporter: You’ve never spoken publicly about this before.

Claire: No one ever asked.

Reporter: Can you tell us what happened?

Claire: Uh, it was college. A classmate, we were dating. And it happened on a— We had a fight, and he forced himself on me.

Reporter: Did you tell anybody about it, and did he—was he charged?

Claire: No. Because at the time I felt that I was somehow at fault. I knew I wasn’t, but... I just didn’t want to be stared at. I didn’t want to be known as “the girl who got raped.” And when I became pregnant, I wasn’t going to drop out of school. I wasn’t going to let this man ruin my life. So I made a choice. I ended it. (S02E04)

As Claire admits that, in fear of being labeled as a rape victim at such a young age, she did not dare to reveal this experience to anyone at that time. Nevertheless, despite the fact that Claire has made up a false story by implanting the experience of abortion into the consequences of that rape, she is brave enough to seize this chance to mention this incident publicly on television.

6 The show presents a series of reactions towards Claire's candid retelling of the rape and her abortion. On the one hand, conservative citizens harshly criticize Claire for making the decision to abort her baby. Specifically, Claire's honesty about this incident has provoked hatred from the anti-abortion supporters—protests and death threats come to follow her wherever she goes. Consequently, her experience of abortion has, to some extent, threatened her future political career. On the other hand, others, including the reporter, are concerned about whether justice has been served, or what has happened afterwards with the assailant:

Reporter: But if you never told anybody about it, the assailant could still be out there. Can you tell us anything about him?

Claire: I saw him, uh, for the first time in almost 30 years just a few months ago.

Reporter: Where?

Claire: At a commissioning ceremony that Francis and I attended.

Reporter: You speak to him?

Claire: Briefly. Francis pinned stars on him.

Reporter: He was being commissioned?

Claire: General Dalton McGinnis. And for the record, Francis has always known about the assault. He just didn't know the name. And he's been nothing but supportive all these years. (S02E04)

Unfortunately, as it can be seen from this interview, Claire, as the rape victim, could not do anything but to witness her assailant rise to power as a high-ranking military general and live a successful life. When she attends the commissioning ceremony only to find out that General McGinnis, the rapist, behaves aggressively while talking to her, Claire is on the verge of losing control and retreats to the restroom, trying to pull herself together. Compared to Claire's restrained emotion, having finally known the name of that man, Francis is filled with indignation and "instantly wants to have a go at the rapist" (Sorlin 41). Knowing that making a scene on such an official occasion will not be beneficial to their reputation, Claire dissuades Francis from confronting the rapist and convinces him to focus on their political future.

7 This is the first time in the series that Claire's vulnerability is shown in such a straightforward way. In retrospect of that painful experience, regardless of her being a woman with a strong mental state, Claire reveals that she still suffers from the aftermath of the rape, which "has the power to leave a person in a state of imbalance and emotional turmoil" (Daniels 24):

Claire: You think I don't want to smash things? I know that that anger is more than you can imagine. When he was on top of me...

Frank: We don't have to talk about it.

Claire: No, I want to. When he was on top of me, I pressed my hand—with everything I could, I pressed it into his face. I pressed it so hard I broke his nose. That didn't stop him. He shoved the sheets in my mouth. I could barely breathe. Every time I think of her pinned down like that, I strangle her, Francis. So she doesn't strangle me. I have to. We have to. The alternative is—it's unliveable. You should go to sleep.

Frank: I'm not sure if I can.

Claire: Then you should go back downstairs. (S02E02)

While retelling this painful experience to Frank, Claire changes the subject in the middle from first-person pronoun to third-person pronoun, indicating her intention “to dissociate herself from the girl that was raped” and “to subdue this past version of herself in order not to be deterred from her present goal” (Sorlin 41). After years of immersing herself in political manipulation and rivalry, Claire has evolved into a strong-minded female politician who “developed around herself” “a coat of armor three inches thick” (Palm and Stickers 45) which can “[keep] her from feeling hurtful emotions” (Sorlin 41).

8 In spite of the fact that she knows her words will cause a backlash from anti-abortion groups, Claire seeks to take full advantage of this interview as an opportunity not only for the purpose of taking revenge, but also in hope of leaving a political legacy of her own. The turning point happens when she receives calls from at least three other victims who were sexually assaulted by McGinnis during his service in the army. However, most of these women share their experiences with Claire just as a way to show their understanding, and dare not to say ‘me too’ to admit that they are rape victims to the public, not to mention openly supporting Claire, who is, at the time, considered by the public as a notorious and controversial female politician. In this crisis, only Megan Hennessey, a young veteran who has suffered from mental problems after a sexual assault, agrees to make a public appearance. For the fear of further exposing her private life, Claire persuades Megan to represent all the sexual assault victims to speak in televisual interviews, thus leaving Megan alone to face public criticism and scrutiny. Meanwhile, staying at the backstage of this incident, Claire uses her leverage to win the support of First Lady Tricia Walker and starts to initiate and promote a bill which aims “to impose civilian oversight” on sexual misconducts in the military (Phillips 77). However, this initiative is opposed by another military woman, Jackie Sharp, who just succeeds in Francis’s position as Majority Whip in Congress but wants to keep distance from the Underwoods’ political activities. Besides, Francis also objects to Claire’s initiative as it jeopardizes his political objective of “winning the presidency” (Sorlin 95). The situation then becomes worse as Tricia

Walker, in fear of undermining her husband's political career if she endorses his political rival's wife, also withdraws her support. As a result, Claire reluctantly reaches a compromise with Jackie and Frank and gives up both Megan and the bill, leaving Megan to face the dilemma on her own.

9 Here, the fundamental differences between the two rape victims are becoming more and more apparent. As a woman who is mentally strong enough to face such a traumatic experience, Claire Underwood has survived the crime of rape as well as the aftermath of that terrible incident. Also, as an upper-ranking female politician who stands so close to the highest political power, she has the capability to keep herself immune from public trolling and criticism. Claire soon recovers from this negligible failure and continues her promising goal to gain political power and consolidate public influence, regardless of what she has left behind or who she has sacrificed for her own benefits.

Megan: You sound like Jackie Sharp.

Claire: I'm actually working with her now. She is a powerful ally for us to have.

Megan: After what she did to me? After what she said about you?

Claire: If I let the things people say about me get under my skin, I wouldn't be able to leave my own home. (...) I'm sorry. There were political realities we couldn't ignore.

Megan: Do you ever wonder why so many people hate Washington? It's 'cause of people like you using phrases like that. (S02E12)

Therefore, as Megan claims in her argument with Claire, Claire's words are typical politicians' double-talk and are not trustworthy as she takes the political reality as an excuse. Claire's intention of promoting the bill is never as simple as supporting rape victims or making contributions to women in the military. Her real motivation is to use the bill as a leverage to upgrade her professional experience and pave the way for her political career in Washington.

10 Meanwhile, unlike Claire who has been hiding from the public's eye so as to prevent the harsh criticism from harming her again, Megan Hennessey is not strong enough to survive the aftermath of the sexual assault. Her mental state deteriorates because of the trauma of the sexual assault, the fierce public criticism, the questioning from other women in the military, the silence of the accused assailant, and Claire's withdrawal of the bill. Among all these causes, it is Claire's betrayal that has become the last straw and leads to Megan's final mental breakdown:

Claire: I care very much.

Megan: No, you don't. You don't use somebody you care about. 'Whore.' 'Slut.' 'Bitch.' 'Traitor.' That's what they call me, in my mail, online. I wish I had never called. I wish I had never met you. I feel so stupid, believing what you told me, thinking that you did care. I was getting better. You did this to me.

[picking up her pill bottle] Every time I take one of these, I think of him. And the next face I think of? It's yours. (S02E13)

In this conversation, Megan states that the harm is not just caused by the rapist or the public, but also by another rape victim—Claire, whose behavior is just as damaging as those of the former two. Just as Palm and Stickers argue that “[w]hen Megan compares Claire’s violation of her to her rapist’s, it hits home” (49), the fact that Claire chooses self-preservation and abandons Megan alone facing public scrutiny in such a vulnerable state can be interpreted as another form of rape damaging Megan’s faith and hope for life. As “[r]ape and sexual assault are not about sex or a sexual relationship, [but] are serious crimes about power, control, humiliation and domination” (Daniels 23), in this war against the powerful male assailant, both Claire and Megan have sacrificed something they have treasured most—Claire has sacrificed her sense of integrity and justice, and Megan her life and spirit. After a short visit to see Megan who becomes suicidal again, Claire goes back home and sheds some tears for this young woman “who so closely resembles herself,” “who adhered to loftier values than power and wealth,” “who would have fought for what was right,” and who would never live like a normal person again (Palm and Stickers 49).

11 However, as Sandrine Sorlin points out, “Claire’s few tears that were shed after wrecking Megan’s life are very short-lived; she soon regains her no-emotion mask” (218). This short moment of Claire revealing her emotion—regret, compassion, sympathy, and humanity—is soon replaced by her updated plan to gain power and influence. Afterwards, Claire uncompromisingly requires Frank to fulfil his promise of winning the presidency: “Trying is not enough, Francis. I’ve done what I had to do. Now you do what you have to do” (S02E13). In this case, what Claire has been chasing after becomes obvious—as a fundamental Machiavellian, “[s]he has no patience for his failure, not after all she has sacrificed. (...) [N]ow it is time for him to do the same” (Palm and Stickers 49). The trauma of the rape or the guilt of betraying Megan no longer bother Claire any more as Claire has transformed herself into a strong minded woman politician. This shows the ambivalent and multi-faceted characterizations of Claire in the series—“[i]t’s not that women like Claire don’t get raped,” and “in the face of Claire’s ruthlessness” there is “such an excruciating foundation” (qtd. in Phillips 78). These polarizing aspects reflect the ambivalent characteristics of Claire’s identity—she has experienced a terrible and even destructive incident, but she has constructed her own version of gaining power:

She doesn’t crumble at the sight of the man who temporarily stole her power—though she does quiver. She hasn’t forgotten what happened to her or blocked it

from her mind, but she also hasn't taken her attacker down. Instead, her revenge is that she's built a life of power and influence—however ruthless that life may be—and she's unwilling to let this man keep her from realizing her goals. Her silence isn't weakness, it's strength. (qtd. in Phillips 78)

12 Regardless of the unfinished goal of Claire and Megan in promoting the sexual assault bill, because they have revealed the truth, General McGinnis pays the price for numerous sexual misconducts and is found guilty in a court-martial with a sentence up to forty years (S02E12). This short plotline in *House of Cards* depicting the sexual assault case can remind its viewers of the real-life example of New York senator Kirsten Gillibrand's endeavor "to remove the decision to prosecute serious crimes in the military from the chain of command and implement independent prosecutors" (Phillips 77). At the same time, the differences in the struggles and fates of Claire and Megan have "prompted a 'rape culture critical analysis'" in American society. Nickie D. Phillips comments on the Colorado Coalition against Sexual Assault's critics regarding the rape case presented in *House of Cards*:

The organization concluded that while the show should be praised for 'accurately reflect[ing] the lifelong healing process and re-emergence of triggers that many sexual trauma survivors experience,' it also conflated dishonesty (not about the rape, but about the abortion) in a way that likely contributes to questions of credibility around rape survivors. (Phillips 78)

13 Different from *House of Cards*, which is a dystopian political thriller exposing manipulation and corruption among Washington elites, *The Good Wife* (CBS, 2009-2016) is a legal and political television series which centers more on the everyday work and life of lawyers. In particular, *The Good Wife* can be seen as a groundbreaker which emphasizes women's significant roles in the legal context by staging a woman as its "main character" with "her struggles and triumphs inside and outside the law office"; meanwhile, it distinguishes itself from "the other pre-Good Wife law shows" by presenting "men and women alike" (Baltzer-Jaray and Arp x-xi). The main plotline of the series focuses on its female protagonist Alicia Florrick's growth "to rebuild her life, economically as well as psychologically" after her husband Peter Florrick's sex scandal and corruption (Kanzler 70). As a middle-aged woman who has been a housewife for thirteen years, Alicia decides to rejoin the workforce in order to support her family to get through this crisis caused by her husband's scandal. A new stage of Alicia's life starts when she eventually reenters into the professional field and starts afresh as a first-year attorney with the help of her old college friend Will Gardner. The show features Alicia's coming-of-age story through the development of the plot, highlighting her

transformation from a housewife into a professional attorney with multi-dimensional characteristics and strengths, just as Baltzer-Jaray and Arp underline,

[W]e see Alicia growing as a woman, a mother, and a lawyer. This growth happens as she sheds false and unrealistic expectations of what a mother or a wife should be, as she realizes that her own wants should be important and valued, and as she carves out her unique niche at the firm and in the practice of law itself. Alicia, like so many middle-aged professional women, is rediscovering who she is and questioning the things she once accepted as true. As she does this, we do it too, and many preconceived social norms about women get challenged. (xi)

14 The following analysis unravels the representations of two leading female lawyers—Alicia Florrick and Diane Lockhart, specifically Alicia’s reaction to the influences of a sex scandal and how she and Diane, who is one of the co-founders of their law firm, unite together to assist women in sexual assault cases. Regarding the relationship between gender and scandals, female lawyers or politicians often have to face strict public scrutiny in their career paths and have to make compromises due to the negative influences of scandals, even some of which are related to them but not conducted by them. According to Hinda Mandell, while the male politicians might have some chances to survive scandals, “women caught in scandal have only the slightest chance of moving beyond their catastrophe. Instead, their private romps consume their public office and shatter in nearly all cases their chances of political survival” (35). This seems particularly present in *The Good Wife*, in which Peter Florrick can survive several scandals and continue to pursue his political career, whereas Alicia Florrick is rejected by almost every law firm she applies to because of the negative influence of her husband’s sex and corruption scandal. Similarly, while taking advice from a consultant, Diane Lockhart is counselled not to mention her fiancé’s name in public interviews since his opposing political stance can undermine her chance to be nominated as Supreme Court Justice (S04E20).

15 In the series, the professional world that Alicia has stepped into is inevitably a male-dominated one which poses lots of obstacles for women. Just as Laura Mulvey states that “[u]ltimately, the meaning of woman is sexual difference” (21), for Alicia, being a woman means that she has to face the challenge of being considered as the other or the outsider of the legal profession and has to confront different standards and stereotypical views. While at work, Alicia comes to know the fact that her husband’s scandal as well as her identity as his wife are undeniable drawbacks which can block her from making progresses in her career. As a result, she often feels a sense of uneasiness and insecurity while faced with the male gaze, which reinforces “the power relations inscribed within the gendered act of looking” (Woodward 90), and, therefore, exists ubiquitously at the workplace examining and judging women’s behavior.

These unbalanced power relations are exemplified by Alicia's conversation with Diane. On Alicia's first day at work, Diane volunteers to be Alicia's mentor and kindly offers advice on how to survive in this male-centric field:

Diane: I want you to think of me as a mentor, Alicia. It's the closest thing we have to an old boys' network in this town. Women helping women, Okay?

Alicia: Okay.

Diane: When I was starting out, I got one great piece of advice. Men can be lazy. Women can't. And I think that goes double for you. Not only are you coming back to the workplace fairly late, but you have some very prominent baggage. [pointing to a picture of her with Hillary Clinton] But, hey, if she can do it, so can you. (S01E01)

Diane's advice reveals that the male gaze always exists to judge women, not only looking at their appearance, but also examining their performances with higher standards. Comparing this male-dominated profession to a game of "roulette," Katja Kanzler underlines the frustration and uncertainty that Alicia and Diane both share as well as how they, especially Alicia, overcome these difficulties:

The feeling of impotence and frustration by which [Alicia] Florrick and [Diane] Lockhart respond to this quality of the law are, however, not framed by a narrative of resignation or surrender to cynicism. Rather, the characters—Florrick less promptly than Lockhart—resolve to participate in this system, to play, to stand the uncertainties, and within this context, to try to reconnect the law to the values and 'realities' it is supposed to represent. The narrative demarcates their efforts to accept these challenges (. . .). (Kanzler 77)

16 The challenges and obstacles in her work as well as her private life have gradually made Alicia stronger and have made her recognize her value and importance. She soon realizes the fact that her marriage and her life are "never going back to normal," and she is determined to work out her own path (S01E01). Hence, in her conversation with Jackie, her mother-in-law, Alicia makes it clear that she is disappointed with herself being a good and obedient wife for the past fifteen years, and, furthermore, admits that it is difficult for her to forgive her husband's betrayal:

Jackie: I need you to forgive him, Alicia.

Alicia: Jackie, I spent 15 years doing his laundry, cleaning his house, never asking a single question, because I didn't think I had to. He took everything I thought we had, and he just put it out there for everyone.

Jackie: He didn't want that. The press—

Alicia: Oh, Jackie, stop it, please. Peter wasn't thinking of us.

Jackie: It takes time, Alicia. Give it time.

Alicia: The only time I have right now is for them [the kids]. (S01E01)

Similarly, in another conversation with an old friend from her former social circle of housewives, Alicia, being more certain about her future and her identity, refuses to go back to her old life and walks away decisively:

Friend: Now that this is over, we should... I don't know, maybe have lunch. Pretend none of this ever happened. I'll call you, okay?

Alicia: You are not going to call, and we're not going to have lunch. And that's okay. It really is. Take care. (S01E03)

17 Nevertheless, the series finale presents a closure, depicting how Alicia fails to fully reconstruct her identity and obtain real independence. In the last scene, Alicia is slapped by Diane in the face as a result of the former's betrayal, echoing the pilot episode when Alicia slaps Peter because of his sex scandal. This time, it is difficult to observe shame or guilt from Alicia's eyes since she has become a real "political animal" who is used to playing with the rules set by men (Tally 129). Therefore, apart from what Alicia has accomplished in constructing an independent life and a successful career, her limitations become obvious whenever she is involved with Peter's political life. As such, Alicia's endeavor to achieve real autonomy gives way to her lies and betrayals due to the invisible influences that Peter has on her life and her future political career

Almost without meaning to, Alicia finds herself on the verge of entering politics. It's a natural next step in her ascension, not just because she's brilliant and charismatic, but because, despite his betrayal, she is still part of Peter's political world. Not divorcing him has paid off. (qtd. in Tally, 130).

On the contrary, Diane, although faced with more challenges and obstacles due to Alicia's betrayal, has been firmly standing with her faith, and, therefore, gives confidence to the viewers who are in hope of a strong female character challenging the rules and values in the male-dominated legal and political fields.

18 Regardless of the weaknesses or limitations that these female lawyers may come across while surviving in the legal and political arena, both Alicia and Diane have had significant roles in assisting women while coping with sexual assault cases. Both of them have offered affable encouragements as well as professional suggestions to help rape victims have their voices heard and justice served as "nearly every instance of a rape narrative throughout the first four seasons of the series depicts main characters working to amplify the voices of rape victims, help them tell their stories, and give them their day in court" (Magestro 145). Unlike *House of Cards*, which puts more emphasis on political corruption and manipulation, *The Good Wife* is a court show which includes sexual assault cases of various kinds, such as in "Affairs of State" (S03E06), "VIP Treatment" (S02E05), "The Art of War" (S04E06), "Rape: A Modern

Perspective” (S04E20), “Outside the Bubble” (S05E04), and “Red Zone” (S06E08). Besides, quite different from the rape cases represented in *House of Cards*, which focuses on the rape victims’ sexual trauma and struggles in the aftermath of the crime, *The Good Wife* offers “few representations of rape victims [that] focus on the immediate aftermath of their attacks” but concentrates more on the court trials (Magestro 164). This is due to the fact that “the nature of the show” has determined that it can provide a different angle, not simply from the perspectives of the prosecutors or other authorities of the judicial system, but from the perspectives of the victims and their attorneys, as “Alicia and Lockhart/Gardner come in to work with rape victims to help them regain control and a voice, to help them take the next step,” and “to amplify the voices of rape victims and force the courts to pay attention to what these women have to say” (Magestro 164-65). More specifically, the rape victims in *The Good Wife* “have already begun the work of recovering and moving on after experiencing trauma,” and have wrested the initiative to control their own lives after “that has been stolen from them” (Magestro 165).

19 Taking the episode “Rape: A Modern Perspective” as a case in point, the following two conversations between the rape victim, Rainey Selwin, and her attorneys—Alicia and Will—reflect a strong state of mind that Rainey has constructed for herself in her war against the accused rapist:

Rainey: He’s not in jail. He raped me and got a plea bargain with the prosecution, so he’s going to Princeton, not prison. I don’t think he should get off scot-free.

Will: So the money, the amount you’re suing him for?

Rainey: It’s going to Rape Victim Advocates. I...just want it to cost him something. I don’t want any... (S04E20)

Rainey: But the prosecutors had a good case, and Todd Brasher is free. So let’s say this goes against me. Then what’s out there is not “Todd Brasher is a rapist.” What’s out there is “I’m sorry for calling Todd Brasher a rapist.”

Alicia: The gag order will only last as long as the trial. Afterwards, you can say anything you want.

Rainey: But it will be out there that I apologized for calling Todd Brasher a rapist. I’m sorry. I’m scared to be in here, but I... I can’t live with myself apologizing for saying something that is true. (S04E20)

It can be observed that Rainey holds a firm stance and refuses to apologize in court for claiming that Todd Brasher is a rapist on Twitter, which is a violation of the gag order. Since giving an apology for telling the truth contradicts her sense of justice and harms her credibility, Rainey resists against making an apologetic statement and is, therefore, imprisoned during the length of the trial for being in contempt of the court. However, although she “gives up her freedom for the length of the trial, she retains control of her own speech, of what she will do with the voice she has been given within the scope of this second trial of Todd Brasher” (Magestro 156).

Rainey's insistence on ensuring that her voice has to be heard by the public and her courage of standing up against what might jeopardize her appeal make her become a significant role model for others, especially those who hesitate to voice the truth and are in fear of paying any form of price.

20 In another episode "The Art of War," Alicia and Diana have both played important roles in helping the sexual assault victim, Sergeant Laura Hellinger. In her appeal, Sergeant Hellinger accuses Ricky Waters, a private security contractor, for sexual assault while she was serving in Afghanistan. However, Hellinger's appeal is rejected since Waters was still on service and protected by the military law at the time of the assault. This case shares some similarities with the rape case of Megan Hennessey in *House of Cards* as they both reveal women's minority status in the military. Also, both cases depict how the rape victims cope with sexual trauma, social prejudices, and legal actions in the aftermath of the crime. In this episode, it is not until the middle of the trial that the viewers are offered some details of this crime by a witness, Sergeant Compton, who testifies: "Yes, I heard them struggle. I think he ripped her clothes, and she kicked him, and then he called her a 'bitch.' A 'nasty bitch,' I think is what he said. And then... she ran out of there" (S04E06). Instead of presenting the "vulnerable and fragile" side of the rape victim after the sexual assault, "The Art of War" showcases a positive example of how Hellinger, with the help of her female attorneys, rises up to express herself and uses the law to protect her own rights, which is a realistic reflection of "what all rape victims really are: people trying to move forward in their lives" (Magestro 164).

21 Apart from the victim's relentless efforts in moving on with her life, this episode gives the viewers a glimpse of how women unite together to strive against institutional obstacles. In the beginning, chances to win this case are low, Alicia, however, still confidently encourages her client by saying: "Let's win this" (S04E06). Also, when the accused rapist denies the charge and directly addresses the victim in an aggressive manner at court, Alicia immediately fires back towards this provocative behavior: "Sir, two things. Don't address my client. And when you do refer to her, it's Captain Hellinger" (S04E06). While confronting the greatest challenge during the trial on whether this crime is a prolonged assault, both Alicia and Diana try their best to find a better approach to tackle this problem:

Alicia: Do you think that he had the same intent at the bar as he did in the office?
To have sex, or force you to have sex?

Hellinger: Yes, but legally, it doesn't matter. The only thing that matter is whether I experienced it as one attack.

Diane: Laura, you need to stop thinking as a lawyer. We're your lawyers.
Experience it as a woman. (S04E06)

In the end, even though the case is dismissed due to the the accused rapist being protected by military law at the time of the assault, Hellinger is still satisfied *with* and proud *of* what she and her attorneys have accomplished. The conversation between Hellinger and Alicia after the trial stands out as one significant scene of this episode—their words manifest their strengths even when justice is not served. Hellinger, the rape victim, kindly replies to Alicia’s apology by emphasizing that it is already a significant progress for her to voice herself by legal means; meanwhile, Alicia, when asked about what to do next when the case ends, encourages her client to bravely start afresh: “You start up again” (S04E06). After all, the series *The Good Wife* not only depicts in this episode how the rape victim, Hellinger, survives the sexual trauma and fights for justice with her female attorneys at court, but also presents how she moves on afterwards in her life: “In her, viewers have an example of what can come next for a woman who was raped, even after she doesn’t receive the kind of justice she deserves” (Magestro 164). More importantly, the female attorneys’ work as reflected in these rape cases provides opportunities for the viewers to contemplate on how the institutional systems function “for or against rape victims” and how the social environment leaves an impact in the aftermath of rape crimes, and, moreover, how these episodes of rape narratives connect with the real-life incidents that may exhibit similar problems (Megestro 165).

22 Compared with the bleak, dystopian representation of the political world in *House of Cards* in which upper-ranking female politicians, as represented by Claire Underwood, are obsessed with political power and abuse their privilege to undermine lower-ranking women’s rights, *The Good Wife* constructs comparatively more positivistic representations of female lawyers and politicians¹, especially in the cases of Alicia and Diane assisting those rape victims who are in obviously disadvantaged positions. The contrast between Alicia’s former status as a housewife married to “a philandering husband” and her status as a successful lawyer helping women and seeking for a political career functions as role model and encouragement to women (Tally 130). In particular, as “a private person, almost always reserved and guarded,” and with “no prior history with sexual violence,” Alicia provides great understanding and generous support for the rape complainants since she has entered the legal profession, as Megestro

¹ The characterization of Alicia Florrick also reflects “moral ambiguity” which puts an emphasis on the main character’s problematic polarizing identity which is similar to Claire Underwood—on the one hand, Alicia is hardworking and competent lawyer exceeding many other colleagues in her profession, while on the other hand, no matter how saint-like she appears to be, she still cannot distance her from the manipulative and corruptive world that her “villainous” (ex-)husband have constructed around her, as “there is no success without corruption” (Tally 129-30).

suggests, “[s]he seems to understand what they face during the process of a trial, and she works to ensure they have as much of a voice as they want within the justice system” (152).

23 Most of all, all the rape victims or rape complainants in both television series present themselves as courageous, strong-minded, and stereotype-breaking figures challenging patriarchal institutions and cultures. According to Lisa Fitzpatrick, “the testimony of the victim as well as fictional and dramatic versions of it inevitably engage with hegemonic patriarchal discourse of sexuality and gender relations” (83). In both shows, the rape victims are challenged by a legal or political system which is male-centric and male-dominated, and most of them find it difficult to make their voices understood and valued by others. This is particularly evident in the case of Claire Underwood in *House of Cards* when most conservatives ignore her status as a rape victim while accusing her of the abortion instead.

24 Meanwhile, as Sally Burke emphasizes, “a rapist ethic,” which often “blames the victim, not the perpetrator, of sexual assault” and “provides a rationale for male behavior,” still exists “in modern American drama as it is in modern American culture” (Burke 206; qtd. in Bloom 6). Such a ‘rapist ethic’ not only can be negatively influenced by the rape cases which presents submissive women and aggressive men, but also breeds stereotypical representations of female rape victims and male rapists in cultural productions:

The rapist ethic is enhanced by (...) the gendering of sexuality—in other words, when masculine aggressive sexuality and feminine passive submission are eroticized. This gendering of sexuality informs male/female relationships by representing masculine domination as “natural” at the same time, the social construction of masculinity and femininity influences the construction of male and female characters in plays. (Bloom 6)

Sergeant Laura Hellinger’s case in *The Good Wife* present a typical exemplification of how this mentality of ‘rapist ethic’ can influence the result of a rape case and harm the female rape victim. Simply because the text message of the rape victim shows no sign of being threatened before the crime happens, the defence attorney harshly questions the victim, “It doesn’t sound like you were in fear for your safety, though,” and then successfully prevents this crime to be identified as “one prolonged assault” (S04E06). In spite of their confidence and persistence, it is visible that during and at the end of this trial, both Alicia and the rape victim tend to show sentiments of self-blame for having made such mistakes; meanwhile, such senses of guilt cannot be observed on the side of the accused rapist, who appears to be aggressive, dominant, and confident most of the time. It is also worth mentioning that both the judge and the defence attorney are male, which explains the reason why this text message is considered by them to be convincing enough to prove that Hellinger does not feel unsafe when she is being followed by

the accused rapist. Nevertheless, in the episodes that follow, the show presents Hellinger's rebirth from a rape victim to a successful professional woman. Such a positivistic portrayal of a rape victim who has lost her lawsuit against the accused rapist challenges the conventional stereotypical images of rape victims who generally stay silent and submissive "rather than to subject themselves to a criminal justice system that allows one-sided and degrading, hostile and irrelevant questioning" (Bergman n.p.).

25 In conclusion, *House of Cards* and *The Good Wife* underscore the significant power of female politicians/lawyers and rape victims, taking action to voice their concerns and uniting together to resist gender stereotypes, public shaming, victim blaming, and many other challenges in the aftermath of sexual assault. Meanwhile, both series provide platforms for the viewers to question, debate, and reflect on real-life incidents, and can also serve as valuable cultural resources for social movements that aim to make public the knowledge regarding the subject of rape and the protection of the rape victims' rights

because the movement for rape reform has been long-lived, well publicized, and successful on many fronts, resulting in drastic changes in law, courtroom procedure, evidence gathering, crisis counseling, and victim care. More important, the movement proposed a model for understanding rape that directly and purposely opposed the traditional conception, thus clearly challenging dominant ideology with a coherent alternative. (Cuklanz 2)

26 As Carla J. McDonough argues, how gender is featured in theater and drama "is relevant to an understanding of how gender is figured in the culture" (14). In both television series analyzed in this article, the courage of the rape victims as well as female politicians and lawyers in voicing their concerns align themselves with the recent public discourse on sex/gender and power debated during the #MeToo movement. Since 2017 when #MeToo was triggered by the Weinstein scandal, there have been several allegations of sexual misconduct against "[t]wo White House officials" and "three congressional candidates" who have, consequently, lost political careers for their misconducts ("#MeToo and Politics" 37). Nevertheless, justice is not always served since the changes brought about by the #MeToo movement appears to be "unevenly distributed across the political spectrum":

Republicans remain devoted to President Donald Trump, who has been recorded boasting about sexual assault and whom at least 19 women have accused of sexual misconduct. His second Supreme Court nominee, Brett Kavanaugh, has been accused of sexual misconduct by at least four women. The furor surrounding his nomination has become a partisan referendum on the #MeToo movement, which itself has become the defining cultural phenomenon of the Trump era. ("#MeToo and Politics" 37)

After all, the representations of women in legal and political television series such as *House of Cards* and *The Good Wife* produce contexts that the viewers can relate to and participate in, motivate people to think about them, and help people to raise awareness on issues of gender inequality, sexual assault, and victim shaming or blaming. By extensively engaging with the subjects on women's rights, the public can, consequently, enhance some concrete understanding and critical perspectives of gender and equality in and outside legal and political fields, and, eventually, form stronger alliances, marching forward along with women's movements and fighting for a better future for women in general.

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1 When I moved to Miami, Florida in 2008 as an eager anti-rape activist and academic-in-training, I was confronted by the “scene under the Julia Tuttle Causeway” that Roger Lancaster documents in his contribution to David M. Halperin and Trevor Hoppe’s necessary 2017 edited collection *The War on Sex* (Duke University Press, 92). Due to the now iconic 1,000 feet laws which still prohibit “all sex offenders from living within a thousand feet” from places “where children gather,” there was a “small camp of sex offenders [who] took up residency under the Miami bridge” (ibid.). What made this cohabitation even stranger was that the Miami authorities “charged with monitoring sex offenders allowed” the illegal squatting, “because they could find no other place for the men to live” (92-93). By 2009, “the camp had swelled to as many as 140 squatters” (92). This compelling, confusing scene of abjection was essential to forming my abolitionist politics and reorienting the way I thought and spoke out against sexual violence, sexual offence laws, and the carceral state.

2 *The War on Sex* is essential reading now—a fundamental addition to the 21st century abolitionist’s toolbox. Positioned at the intersection of queer theory and abolition, this collection builds on the call to dismantle the prison industrial complex that was established and popularized by Angela Davis’s groundbreaking 2005 *Are Prisons Obsolete?*, Michelle Alexander’s prescient 2012 *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, and of course the Black Lives Matter Movement (2013). All three are watershed ‘texts’ that blend academic and activist work and are designed to reach a wide audience of scholars, policy makers, community organizers, and people who are incarcerated. The public, political conversation generated by these thinkers makes clear that the prison system is designed to disenfranchise people of color. Duke University Press’s 2017 Lambda Literary Award Finalist, *The War on Sex*, rethinks mass incarceration by centering the identities, experiences, and unique vulnerabilities of sexual outsiders.

3 These academic and activist contributors bring into public view the egregious, avoidable harm done by the sexual offence registry, a tracking system that Beth E. Richie describes as a “prison nation without the prison” (129). In 1994, Congress voted to expand the sexual offence registry to all fifty states, and in 1996 they voted to make the registry public and added federal

tracking (261). Erica R. Meiners, who has worked with people exiting prisons in Chicago for sixteen years, argues that for “those convicted of sexual offences the requirement to register [...] ensures that finding a job and a place to live will be almost impossible” (177). The contributors meticulously research the impact that sexual offence laws, and the moral panics which propel them into public favor, have unjustly had on those who are most marginalized—including minors, queer people, people living with HIV, and sex workers. They argue that increased minimum sentences and lifetime federal tracking have not discouraged sex crimes—the majority of which *still* continue to occur by those whom we trust the most: partners, parents, co-workers, and other ‘loved’ ones (175, 259). Instead of preventing crime, *The War on Sex* demonstrates that sex offence laws respond to this crisis of coercion by deliberately scapegoating the behavior of sexual outsiders under the guise of keeping us safe.

4 Daniel-McCarter, Meiners, and Noll plainly acknowledge in their chapter the real ‘ask’ of this collection: the work of abolition for sexual outsiders requires us to build solidarity with sex offenders—a figure that has been cast in the public imaginary as “supposedly worst of the worst” (175). As a formal response, much of *The War on Sex* is filled with facts designed to deconstruct this monstrous figure. For instance, in 2000 the “single age with the greatest number of [sexual] offenders [...] was age 14” (153). By 2009, 35.6% of all documented sexual offenders were juveniles (180). These government statistics are public knowledge; and yet there is something unknowable about them—a horrifying truth kept far from public view. Meiners contextualizes that there is a new class of sex laws which now targets minors and their sexual expression, again, under the guise of keeping them safe. In Illinois, for instance, “a minor texting a nude selfie, an act done by one in five teenagers, is creating and circulating child pornography” (175). But Meiners contends that the problem goes beyond laws which criminalize youth desire, pointing out that the sexual expression of non-adults is highly regulated by parents, school, and institutions of faith (180). Since the contributors know that youth are especially vulnerable to sexual coercion, they argue we should inform and advocate for, rather than police, youth sexual empowerment. As Judith Levin says in her chapter: “if we are to end sexual violence by cracking down on sexual freedom, we are trading one oppression for another” (158).

5 Also spotlighted in this collection is the *unscientific* and political fear mongering that continues to cast people living with HIV as predators and their bodily fluids as weapons (365). Rather than providing HIV care, people living with HIV are criminalized—even in cases when the person is unaware of their HIV status, even when there is no chance of HIV transmission, and

even when laws already exist which police specific behaviors (357). The Nebraska legislature, for instance, passed statute 28-934, which specifically describes the act of “striking” a “public safety officer” with bodily fluids as assault. This is just one example of a cluster of redundant legal efforts which demonize people living with HIV. As Sean Strub points out, “an individual who demonstrates a premeditated malicious intent to harm another person can be prosecuted under existing assault statutes, whether they use a gun, a baseball bat, their fists, or a virus” (350). Gregory Tomso concludes that “[w]e are afraid of sexually active people with HIV” and persuasively legislate from this position of ignorance and fear (361).

6 Over and again, the collection asks why “the war on sex” isn’t on the radars of mainstream feminist and LGBTQ rights movements, especially when “it has had grave consequences for the autonomy and agency of women, young people, the disadvantaged, and the vulnerable” (Halperin 1). Meiners regrets that the “facts don’t sway people” (183). Elizabeth Bernstein argues that, what she calls, “protective feminism” has bought into the illusion of prison and punishment as protection, even when incarceration has shown no evidence of eliminating the problem of sexual violence (301). Hoppe begins the collection by honoring Gayle Rubin’s “now famous 1984” essay “Thinking Sex.” Rubin argues that “nineteenth-century morality crusades” solidified social norms through law and resulted in anti-obscenity and sodomy laws, as well as white slavery acts (144). Rubin argues that “the consequences” of these laws “are still with us” and make a “deep imprint,” on the social construction of sexuality and public perception of crime in the present (144). I see *The War on Sex* as taking up Rubin’s call for increased ethical analysis of “sex on its own terms” by filling in the gaps between 1984 and the Present. *The War on Sex* is an invaluable teaching tool for queer and feminist studies courses seeking to place Gayle Rubin’s foundational essay into a more contemporary, critical conversation. Written by both academics and activists, the collection adds an important, often overlooked thread to the wider, national conversation about prison abolition and the problem of mass incarceration. The contributors are deeply invested in addressing sexual violence prevention in ways that do not target, stigmatize, or criminalize sexual outsiders.

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